

ADVENTURE ON ALGENIB is a play designed for juniors, Years 5 or 6 for the main parts, but plenty of opportunity for the inclusion of younger ones too.

CAST

Most of the cast can be played by either sex.

ROBOTS 1,2,& 3: 'tinny voices required, a metallic near-monotone. Jerky movement, absolutely no smooth gestures.

COMMANDER -IN-CHIEF OF INTERGALACTIC FLEET a strangely hesitant character, bumbling and awkward. Posh stiff-upper-lip voice and posture. Very old-fashioned and chauvinist. Sixty-plus in age. Male.

AIDES 1,2,& 3 Polite, patient and efficient. Aide 3 must be male.

THE ASTRONAUTS: 1,2,3,4,5 & 6 Astronaut 3 must be a girl. All very keen and gung-ho. 1, 2 & 5 not especially bright.

CAPTAIN CHURCH & LIEUTENANT SPOKE also keen and gung-ho. Rather naive and certainly not very aware of the world, people and how they tick. Too pompous to realise their own mistakes and assessments of every situation. Spoke is a girl. These two are major roles. It is their journey towards 'enlightenment' of a sort that we follow.

COMPUROB the most intelligent being on this mission - half robot, half human, whose know-it-all attitude gets right up the noses of the humans. Could have a limp, to show that he has a 'pain in his left diodes' but his movement is not robotic. Often grumpy and sarcastic. A major role. He accompanies Church and Spoke.

THE EARTHKEEP CHILDREN must appear bright, intelligent without being in any way dislikeable. They must quickly establish that, even though just children, they are streets ahead of the humans in everything. They are:

CAPELLA, DUBHE, VEGA, SPICA, DENEK, HAMAR, IZAR, SEGINUS & ALDEBARAN

THE EARTHKEEP ADULTS: ALGOL, CAPH, ARCTURUS & RIGEL are obviously being polite and tactful, despite the shortcomings of the Earth people. They are serene and dignified, marks of superiority! Caph must be female.

OTHER EARTHKEEP ADULTS: KOCHAB, MEREK, & ALIOTH

SPLATNAIL & BODGER - comedy duo. **TWO REPAIRMEN** Might help if they have an accent - such as East End perhaps, just to differentiate them from the elders. They have the kind of doom and gloom voices common amongst the kind of tradesmen who like to make a meal out of a problem in order to 'big themselves up'.

OP2K, NO6, YT4D & JO3T: robots

ALIENS GRUMBLETHUMP, GRIMBLETWEAK & TANGLEPELT - three-headed monsters worked by three people, so six arms too. Not frightening but 'honey-monsterish'. Pantomime style of performance - leading audience in song, etc.

DWAYNE, FROYD, STODD, JASONI futuristic versions of uncultured louts.

Happiest when playing tricks on each other and laughing rather cruelly at other people. All must be male.

STRACII, SHARONA & ZARANDRA futuristic versions of bimbos. Female.

THE GREAT LEADERS 1,2 & 3 - all dignified and impressive.

So there are 57 speaking parts for a mixed cast [including 3 per alien] which can be reduced considerably by doubling to as few as 20 [many characters are only on in one scene], or expanded with extras such as the Star Dancers, making this an adaptable script. Some parts can be merged too, e.g. the three Aides could be played as one, or the three three-headed Aliens likewise.

The play runs at approx one and a half hours. So it can be a short full-length, with interval, or can be lengthened in such areas as the Star Dances, or by the addition of other songs and dances which are indicated in the script.

The play is often pantomime in style, getting more so as it goes along. The moral is not

to judge by appearances. Church and Spoke are taken on a humiliating journey where they learn this moral the hard way. Particularly in the first half, there are clear satirical comments about so-called civilisation's presumptions towards 'primitive' races. The second half relies for its satire on making links between the lower spectrum of the new planet and aspects of our culture, especially popular TV shows. There are green issues here too, though not overt. The Earthkeep people thrive by going back to the basics of land management; in contrast, the city folk are inferior and much the same as we are.

EXTRACT ONE

ROBOT 1 Always leave it to the last minute.

ROBOT 2 Every time.

ROBOT 3 We tell them, but will they listen? Oh no. Plenty of time to clear up, they say. And then what happens?

ROBOT 2 Same every time. The Commander of the British Inter-Galactic Fleet is due to arrive in five minutes. Go and clear up the mess!

ROBOT 1 Polish the floors!

ROBOT 3 Lay a red carpet while you're at it!

ALL We can't let the Commander see it in this state!

ROBOT 1 Do him good to see what the place normally looks like.

ROBOT 2 Send up a few rockets, that would.

ROBOT 3 Quiet! That's them coming now.

They take up stiff robot positions. Enter the Astronauts. They march on, singing a suitable song. The song ends with the appearance of the Commander. The spacemen stand in ranks to greet him.

COMMANDER At ease men! [***Clears throat, speech-making voice.***] Men - er, ladies and - er - men - this is an historic occasion. We are gathered here today to celebrate British achievement in the launch of the first ever fleet to cross the solar system and head for the hitherto unvisited planet of Ursa Minor. You, gentlemen and - er, ladies too of course - are going - er [***He is obviously stuck.***]

AIDE 1 An important mission, sir.

COMMANDER Yes, that's it. [***Declaiming again.***] Going on an important mission: to boldly go where no man - or woman -

ASTRONAUT 3 They didn't have women astronauts when he was trained.

COMMANDER Or woman has ever gone before - to seek out new - new - what was it?

SIDE 2 Civilisations, sir.

COMMANDER Civilisations, that's it. Seek out new civilisations and er - [***He visibly gives up the attempt at a formal speech. Could search for notes.***] - civilise them. Teach them to play cricket and all that sort of thing. For Queen and country. Jolly good show!

EXTRACT TWO

Spica comes forward. Pushes buttons on belt which bleep. Lights on belt flash. Crackling noise. Others gather round, except Hamar, who is still examining the ship.

SPICA There's something odd in the hayfield. We think it's a spaceship.

ALGOL ***off*** Leave it alone; we'll come and look.

HAMAR It is a spaceship, you know - look, there're the propulsion tubes and here are the steering fins - what's left of them.

IZAR Yah! Whoever saw a spaceship like that?

SEGINUS It must have come out of the ark!

IZAR Or somebody made it at home from a kit.
SEGINUS It's probably some little kid's school project.
VEGA Do you suppose it was manned?
DENEb Nah! Never!
CAPELLA Nobody would be daft enough to take off in a crate like this.
DUBHE If they managed to get it to take off at all.
CAPELLA It must have done - it came down again, didn't it?
HAMAR **peering in at windows** It's monodirectional glass - I can't see if there's anyone inside. [**Knocks.**] Hey, is there anyone there? Hey!
DENEb I can hear someone moving.
CAPELLA There's a door in this side. Hello in there!

The children fall back as Captain Church, Lieutenant Spoke and Computer Robot MX3224457 [Compurob] come out. Church and Spoke look dishevelled. They have their helmets on. Spoke takes readings, then nods to Church.

VEGA What are they doing?
HAMAR Testing the air, I think.

Spoke and Church take their helmets off.

SPOKE Oxygen levels similar to Earth, sir.
COMPUROB Lucky that, isn't it? [**To audience.**] Have you ever noticed how many planets seem to have oxygen levels similar to Earth? You never see the crew of the Enterprise messing about with helmets, do you? [**He turns slowly, bleeping.**]
CHURCH Where do you suppose we are?
SPOKE We could be anywhere, sir. That meteor storm just swept us away -
CHURCH Towards the centre of the universe -
SPOKE The places where no man has boldly gone -
VEGA You don't suppose they're concussed, do you?
DENEb They're certainly talking a bit funny.
CHURCH Exploring new galaxies -
SPOKE Seeking out new civilisations -
SPICA I hope the adults come soon.
DUBHE Do you think they're dangerous?
COMPUROB Don't worry about them. [**To Church.**] We're on Algenib. It's one of the points of the square of Pegasus. A very advanced civilisation.
CHURCH Advanced? You call this advanced? Why, I haven't seen haystacks on Earth for over thirty years.
SPOKE And that's a handcart if ever I saw one.
COMPUROB **showing them the reading** A very advanced civilisation.
CHURCH Remind me to get your circuits looked at once the mother ship arrives....

EXTRACT THREE

ALGOL... [**He presses buttons on his belt - bleeping - he speaks to his belt.**]
Splatnail? Algol here. Sorry to disturb you, but something rather interesting's just landed in our hayfield - engine trouble. Thought you and Bodger might be able to help, if you're not too busy.

Splatnail, off, makes a series of indistinguishable quacking noises.

ALGOL Great. See you soon then. [**To Church.**] You're in luck, they're just on their way to look at a malfunctioning robot. They'll stop as they pass.
CHURCH That's very good of you. Just a few spare bits of aluminium.
CAPH I'm sure they'll be able to do better than that. They're used to working with all

kinds of technology, you know.

SPOKE Yes, I'm sure they'll do their best. [**To Church.**] How can we make it clear, tactfully, that we don't want them messing it about?

CHURCH Just stand in front of it.

Church and Spoke move, trying to be unobtrusive - but not succeeding - to stand in front of the ship. A loud backfire and sputtering noises are heard.

RIGEL That sounds like them now.

ALGOL That was quick.

More noise, then a yellow van with Splatnail and Bodger Ltd. painted on it, lurches on and shudders to a halt. Splatnail and Bodger get out. They are dressed in dungarees and carry a toolkit.

SPLATNAIL Aye, aye, Algol. Now then - what's the problem?

ALGOL Our visitors here ... [**He waves his hand at the ship. Splatnail and Bodger react disbelievingly.**] ... have a problem with their steering sub-joint system and wondered if you might be able to help.

BODGER Boyohboy!

SPLATNAIL Look at that now!

CHURCH I realise it's not quite what you're used to...

SPLATNAIL You can say that again.

SPOKE I realise it's not quite what you're used to.

COMPUROB Oh dear.

BODGER Now, listen here. When Splatnail said you can say that again he didn't mean you were to say it again ... got that? [**To Splatnail.**] You gotta keep customers in their place.

SPLATNAIL Now, Bodger, I told you afore, don't overdo it. In their place is one thing - I don't object to that. If there's one customer I can't abide, it's the sort who hangs over me to see I'm doing it right. But not too frightened to bring us tea and biscuits at elevenses time.

They both turn and give Spoke and Church a big, would-be-friendly grin.

SPOKE I'm not sure I like this.

CHURCH Just smile back.

SPLATNAIL Now - if you gents'll just get out of the way, we can have a look at what's wrong. Come far, have you?

BODGER Look at it! Does it look as if it'd go far?

SPLATNAIL Now, Bodger, don't talk like that. The boys likely built it themselves and are very proud of it. Nice piece of work, gents. Goodness knows where they got the parts.

SPOKE You will be careful, won't you?

SPLATNAIL We're not going to touch it yet, sir... we just need to have a look at it first ... assess the exterior damage.

BODGER Boyohboyohboy, we're never going to be able to do anything with this!

SPLATNAIL It's the parts, you see, gents. Something like this, now - it's not easy to get spares for.

CHURCH If you'll only give us some aluminium.

SPOKE Our robot can adapt it ...

SPLATNAIL All very nice, I'm sure, but it's at the stage where it'll cost to repair. They don't make them any more, you see.

BODGER Twenty years out of date.

SPLATNAIL At least.

SPOKE Twenty years!

SPLATNAIL Well, I'm being kind to you, gents. Likely, nearer thirty.

CHURCH I'll have you know this is the very latest technology.

SPOKE It's not a car, you know, it's a spaceship.
CHURCH Thirty years out of date!
SPOKE From someone who drives a ...!
SPLATNAIL Now then, I'll have you know my van's a classic, lovingly restored by me and Bodger. She's the only one on the planet, where spaceships are two a penny....

EXTRACT FOUR

[The humans have been told the way to Leadercity, the capital of Algenib, on foot, but - in order to teach them a bit of humility - they have also been told that robots are the ruling class of the planet. So Compurob, formerly little more than a servant, mustn't carry any of their baggage, since it is not his place. However, just before this extract Compurob has kindly helped them. Their attitude to him has already changed in consequence. He has become a companion, not a slave.]

CHURCH Thanks for saving us there, Rob.
SPOKE I'm a little tired with lugging all this stuff. How about a rest?
CHURCH Why not stop here for the night? It'll soon be too dark to see where we're going anyway.
COMPUROB Good idea.
CHURCH How are the diodes holding out?
COMPUROB Not bad at all. Thanks for asking.

Spoke stretches, yawns and leans back.

SPOKE Dull, isn't it? Think of the Earth sky...
CHURCH All those little pin[points of light...
SPOKE ... from city windows, the sodium glow of streetlights ...
CHURCH The red and green of aeroplanes passing overhead... [***He yawns.***]
SPOKE Satellites like comets crossing the sky... [***She too yawns.***]
CHURCH Look at this. [***Yawn.***] Not a light in sight... [***And he's asleep.***]
SPOKE Not one little yellow streetlight ... [***And she is asleep too.***]

The lights dim. Whilst they are asleep there is a parade of lights of all kinds, flashing ones, spaceships passing, etc. All accompanied by busy sounds. Eventually there are birdsounds and the lights brighten. Dawn. Church and Spoke wake, yawn and stretch.

Enter Alien Grumblethump from end of the auditorium. This is a three-headed monster [worked by three people], large and furry - honey-monsterish rather than scary. As it speaks it keeps changing shape so that heads are appearing in all sorts of strange positions. It comes down the aisle in a friendly fashion, saying 'Hello, are you enjoying the show' and such like to people in the audience. Two other monsters, Grimbletweak and Tanglepelt, similarly with three heads, enter from the sides and stand below the stage, to each side of it, when Grumblethump goes on the stage. Church and Spoke react alarmed to the entrance of Grumblethump.

SPOKE What on earth's that?
COMPUROB A civilised and intelligent life-form. Non- hostile.
CHURCH Now, keep calm, Spoke. We can try - er - friendly negotiation... Stand still or I shoot...