

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY GREGORY PREST

FROM SEP 30 - OCT 26, 2025

BREMEN TOWN



TARRAGON THEATRE

A TARRAGON THEATRE PRODUCTION

September 30 - October 26
Mainspace

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Please Note: icons highlighted in green may be of particular interest to educators.

About the Playwright

Gregory Prest is an actor, director, and writer born and raised in Pictou, Nova Scotia. After graduating from The National Theatre School of Canada in Montreal, he relocated to Toronto, where he directed Anita Majumdar's *Fish Eyes* at SummerWorks. The production went on to be further developed and showcased at the Harbourfront Centre, Theatre Passe Muraille, toured across Canada, and internationally at The Other Festival in Chennai, India.

Most recently, Gregory wrote the book for and directed the acclaimed musical *De Profundis: Oscar Wilde in Jail* at Soulpepper, which earned six Dora Award nominations. The production won two awards for Outstanding New Musical and Outstanding Performance, in addition to a Toronto Theatre Critic's Award for Best Direction of a Musical. *Bremen Town*, which premiered at the Next Stage Festival, also garnered six Dora Award nominations, including Outstanding Production, Outstanding Direction, and Outstanding New Play.

A passionate advocate for artist training and mentorship, Gregory has taught at institutions such as Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Toronto, The National Theatre School, Neptune Theatre School, Soulpepper Academy, The 519, and various elementary, junior, and high schools across Toronto.

Gregory has been recognized twice in Now Magazine's Top Ten Theatre Artists of the Year list, has been nominated for eighteen Dora Mavor Moore Awards, and was shortlisted for the Pauline McGibbon Award for Emerging Director. He is a proud graduate of Acadia University, The National Theatre School, and the Soulpepper Academy.

Creative Team

Gregory Prest - Playwright & Director

Tatjana Cornij - Composer

Nancy Perrin - Set & Costumer Designer

Logan Cracknell - Lighting Designer

Arwen MacDonnell - Stage Manager

Jenna Borsato - Apprentice Stage Manager

Cast

Tatjana Cornij - Vogel

Oliver Dennis - Herr Hund

Farhang Ghajar - Various Roles

Sheila McCarthy - Frau Henne

Veronica Hortiguella - Various Roles

Dan Mousseau - Various Roles

Nancy Palk - Frau Esel

William Webster - Herr Katze

About the Play

Synopsis

After forty-five years of hard work and dedication, Frau Esel, the longest serving housekeeper of Völksehaus, has been fired and sent out to pasture. In a rage, she sets out on a winding journey to Bremen to live with her estranged son.

Gregory Prest brings *Bremen Town*, a rural folk tragicomedy, to Tarragon Theatre.

Featuring Nancy Palk as Frau Esel, Oliver Dennis, William Webster, Sheila McCarthy, and an exceptional ensemble cast, *Bremen Town* brings music and storytelling together in this award-winning production!

Director's Note

Welcome to *Bremen Town*. I'm so happy you're here.

Folklorist Wilhelm Grimm described fairy tales as "fragments of ancient faith whose purpose was to awaken the feelings of the human heart."

I believe we all have fragments of ancient faiths collected inside us that come down to us through the generations in many different ways; most notably through the stories we are told. Some universal. Some very personal. They are little pieces of humour, inherited values, beliefs, deep fears, and beautiful inexplicable moments that gather into our psyche like a collection of junk on a table at a flea market. What we do with these fragments and whether we try to make any sense of them is our own business.

Some of my favourite stories growing up were the ones my mother and grandmother told to me about their mothers and grandmothers. Here's one of my fragments:

My mother tells the story of her grandmother, who once ran her house with great dignity and pride, when she was declining and having a difficult time, my grandmother would bring her to the kitchen, sit her in a chair, give her a bowl of peas to shell an hour or so before supper and ask her to help. My mother says she could maybe shell a dozen peas, and it took her the full hour, but she felt she was of use - like she was contributing - like she mattered.

In passing this story down to me, the more immediate message from my own mother was very clear: have patience with me and give me something to do because I know it's coming.

Quotes

"A Fairy Tale... speaks to the very heart and soul of the child. It admits to the child what so many parents and teachers spend hours trying to cover or avoid. The fairy tale confirms what the child has been thinking all along - that it is a cold, cruel world out there and it's waiting to eat them alive."

- **Jim Trelease**

Fairy tales: "fragments of ancient faith whose purpose was to awaken the feelings of the human heart." - **Wilhelm Grimm**

Quotes from an interview with journalist and activist June Callwood and George Stroumboulopoulos

"You don't believe in a God, I guess, if there's nothing after life?" - **George Stroumboulopoulos**

"I believe in kindness. I think it's very communicable, just as meanness is. But even more so, more powerful. Strangers hold doors for one another in the downtown area. Always, almost always. And sometimes they say thank you and sometimes they don't, but there's something in us that says, if I hold this door, it helps this other person, and that person comes through the door is a little bit changed, tiny tiny shift...in the plates that someone held a door for me instead of it shutting. Great consideration for one another - that's what's going to save the world."

- **June Callwood**

[Check out the full interview here.](#)

The Bremen Town Musicians



1

Read the Story

2

Listen to the Story



3

Watch the Story

4

**The Bremen Town Musicians:
Lessons from Germany's Endearing Folktale**
A short summary of take-aways.



5



**Displacement and Poverty:
The Town Musicians of Bremen**
A more in-depth analysis regarding Germany
and the Napoleonic Wars.

The Power of Folktales

1



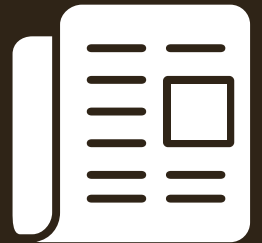
Myths, Folklore and Legends: Why We Still Need Our Fairy Tales

A TEDx talk from award-winning author and lawyer, Heidi Shamsuddin.

2

We Need New Fairy Stories and Folk Tales to Guide Us Out of Today's Dark Woods

Progressives must create narratives that shine a light on crises such as climate change and the plight of refugee.



3

How Fairy Tales Shape Fighting Spirit

Ukraine's children hear bedtime stories of underdog heroes, while Russian children hear tales of magical success.



4

Ageing and Death in Folklore

From the University of Pittsburg's *Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts* collection.



5

Folklore and the Nation

A reading list examining the links between folklore and nationalism.



Ageing & Connection



1

Why Later Life Can Be A Golden Age for Friendship

Friendship can bring powerful benefits in later life.

2

How Our Social World Shapes Healthy Aging

From the Mayo Clinic's *Aging Forward Podcast*.



3

Fear Ageism, Not Ageing

How an ageist society is failing its elders.

4

On Ageing: Canadian Conversations

Healthy Aging CORE and HelpAge Canada present a series of conversations on ageing.



5

Ageing in America: Survive or Thrive

A PBS documentary.

6

It's Time to Unleash the Power of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities in Canada

A study from TMU's National Institute on Ageing.



Scherenschnitte (German Folk Art of Paper Cutting)



1

Scherenschnitte, The Art of Papercutting

A brief history of global styles.

2

Introduction to Paper Cutting

Artist Grace Hart demonstrates this beautiful practice.



3

Scherenschnitte & Quilting

The influence of Scherenschnitte on American quilting practice.



4

Paper Cuts

From *The New York Times*.



Kites!



1

Hopeville Kite Festival
Ontario's largest kite festival.

2

Weifang International Kite Festival



The Guinness
World Record
holder.



9 min video



3

Fanø International Kite Festival
Celebrates it's 40th anniversary.

4

The Joy of Kites
From the American Kiteflyers Association



Conversation Starters

Do you see similarities between certain characters in the play and the animals from the original folktale?

What are they?

What do you think Frau Esel's relationship with her son was like before being fired from her job?

Why do you think some characters found it easier to connect with each other and others found it harder to connect?

What do you think happens to Frau Esel in the last scene?

How does the format of a folktale affect your understanding of the material?

GO FLY A KITE!

