

EXCALIBUR!

THE STORY OF YOUNG KING ARTHUR

By Michele L. Vacca

(Based on ancient British legend)

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CLASSICS ON STAGE! – ON STAGE!

P.O. Box 25365

Chicago, IL 60625 (USA)

Tel: 1 773 989-0532

E-mail: classtage@aol.com

Website – <http://www.classiconstage.com/>

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EXCALIBUR! THE STORY OF YOUNG KING ARTHUR
PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS:

ARTHUR – a young boy of about 14, intelligent and unusually sensitive for his age.

MERLIN – an ageless wise man and magician. He is mysterious, humorous, both strong and gentle. His talents are many; he can see the future and perform magic tricks at the same time.

SIR ECTOR – a knight of the realm of Britain. He is loyal and good-hearted.

KAYE – Sir Ector’s son, older than Arthur. Kaye is enthusiastic though somewhat selfish. His one ambition is to be a good knight.

ELAINE – Kaye’s younger sister.

MORGAN LE FAY – an evil sorceress, also Arthur’s aunt. She is beautiful, but deadly. Greedy for power, she plots jealously against Merlin, but her powers are too limited.

DRAGONFLY and KATYDIDD – Devoted followers of Morgan Le Fay. They do whatever she bids them to do; obeying her is their deepest pleasure.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY – a godly man, devoted to Britain. His greatest aim is to peacefully settle the country’s strifes.

A WOMAN OF THE PALACE – (can be doubled by the actress who plays Elaine) She is an attendant of the Queen’s, a loyal woman who helps secure the safety of the child, Arthur.

KNIGHTS AND LORDS AND LADIES OF THE REALM –

PLACE: ANCIENT BRITAIN

TIME: THE FIFTH CENTURY A.D.

SETTINGS: ACT I: MERLIN’S CAVE
A FOREST, NEAR SIR ECTOR’S HOME
ACT II: MERLIN’S CAVE
COURTYARD OF ST. PAUL’S CATHEDRAL
A PLACE NEAR THE CHURCH

Throughout the entire play one portion of the set, i.e., Merlin's Cave, remains permanent. The area allocated for the cave should contain a chair or two, a table, a number of odd containers and heavy looking books, and also possibly a crystal ball. For the first Act the rest of the setting is merely a forest area, which can contain trees, and possibly a bench as well. The second Act requires more scenery. Much of the action takes place in a place near the church courtyard. The sword in the stone is also part of this setting. The sword that is imbedded in the stone should be a realistic looking prop, or the effectiveness is lost. The sizes of the stone and sword depend upon the individual theatre.

COSTUMES:

Clothing of the era was quite simple, and the costuming can be also. For the men, simple tunics work well. Elaine should wear a long dress, though nothing elaborate. Merlin's costume should be more luxurious – possibly a long robe in a fabric that has some glitter to it. Morgan le Fay's costume should be in black, reds, and purples, and the lines should be flowing rather than fitted. She must emanate evil whereas Merlin, though mysterious, should emanate goodness. The armor Kaye wears in the second Act need not be elaborate or even realistic. It just needs to be awkward. The Archbishop wears traditional Roman Catholic clerical robes.

THE "MAGIC" TRICKS:

Most of the tricks needed are very basic ones. Numerous scarf tricks, the rope tricks, the linking rings and so on, can be found in any good magic book in the library. The services of a local magician (and there are many amateurs – just call a costume house or novelty shop) may be desired. Just remember that the tricks themselves are only intended as gimmicks to entertain. The real function of Merlin is as a character, an actor in the play. Just try to find an actor with above average manual dexterity, and he can learn the tricks in a reasonable length of time. (Note: Play script includes a 10-page detailed appendix with information and guidelines for optional magic illusions for those who choose to incorporate them.)

SPECIAL:

The use of music, live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play.

EXCALIBUR! The Story Of Young KING ARTHUR

By Michele L. Vacca

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(A FOREST IN SOUTHWESTERN BRITAIN IN THE FIFTH CENTURY A.D., AND MERLIN'S MAGIC CAVE, WHICH CONTAINS A CRYSTAL BALL, BOOKS, AND SHELVES AND A TABLE COVERED WITH BOTTLES AND POTIONS AND VARIOUS MAGIC EQUIPMENT. MUSIC. STRANGE LIGHTS, FOG, LARGE SHADOWS, AND ODD NOISES. FOREST ANIMAL SOUNDS, AND THEN SUDDENLY AMID ALL THE SMOKE MERLIN APPEARS AND CAUSES A STRANGE BRIGHT FLASH TO APPEAR.)

MERLIN: (AS THE SMOKE CLEARS AND THE AUDIENCE CALMS DOWN, HE IGNORES THEM, AND PUTTERS AROUND IN HIS MAGIC CAVE FOR A FEW MOMENTS. HE OPENS A FEW BOOKS, MUTTERING TO HIMSELF, AND AS HE INSPECTS SOME OF HIS BOTTLES AND JARS, HE CHUCKLES TO HIMSELF. LOOKING AT BOOK TITLES.) REXIBUS MAXIMUS . . . SHIBBOLETHS AND OMENS . . . ASTROLOGICAL CONJURATIONS AND SPELLS . . . (LOOKING OVER HIS BOTTLES AND JARS – AND AS HE TOUCHES THEM, STRANGE COLORS FLASH IN HIS HANDS.) Hmmmm. Some stardust . . . (STARTS TO MIX A POTION.) . . . and a pinch of ground moonlight . . . a dash of pickled pepper plant . . . and a sprinkle of crystallized chrysanthemums . . . and a dash of mixed metaphor . . . (TURNS TO HIS CRYSTAL BALL AND AS HE GAZES INTO IT THE COLORS BEGIN TO CHANGE AND SPIN AND FLASH – HE WATCHES A MOMENT, CHUCKLES TO HIMSELF – AND THEN HE FINALLY NOTICES THE AUDIENCE AND ADDRESSES THEM.) Ah! There you are. I've been waiting for you. In fact, I've been waiting for hundreds of years. I suppose you find that

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difficult to believe, but whether you believe it or not – here I am. My name is Merlin. Long, long ago, I lived in a country called Britain. By your reckoning of time, that was fifteen centuries ago. Much happened in Britain in the year 470. I've been waiting to tell you the story of that time, and the time that followed. I have a part in this story – some would say a large part; some would say a small one. It matters little. Some have called this story legend, and others have called it history. You may judge for yourself. In the course of my lifetime I have been called many things – magician, sorcerer, false prophet and true – (HE RAPIDLY PERFORMS A MAGIC “TRICK” OR TWO, SUCH AS TURNING A PITCHER OF LIQUID INTO CONFETTI. THEN HE MAKES A SILK SCARF DISAPPEAR AND REAPPEAR IN THE MIDDLE OF TWO OTHERS. AS HE FINISHES.) Now perhaps that is magic and perhaps it is not. Perhaps it's just that my hand is quicker than your eye. But whatever I may be, or have been, or will be – the good of the land of Britain was always my first concern. But – I digress – this is not my story. Today you will see how a mere boy accomplished what many strong men failed to do. This boy was destined to live for many centuries in history and in legend. But-I'm telling too much of the story. I must begin at the beginning – which is not always the best place to begin, but often the most logical . . . (AS MUSIC PLAYS AND LIGHTS DIM, HE GAZES INTO THE GLOWING CRYSTAL BALL.) Some years ago, Uther Pendragon was King of Britain. A boy was born to the King and Queen. However, the country was unsettled and it was a time of confusion and danger. Therefore, to preserve the future of the country, King Uther agreed to let me take his infant son to a place of safety. Thus he could keep the child hidden from those who might wish him harm. So it was done. When the King's son was but a day old – late in the night I assumed a disguise, and went to the forest near the castle of the King. (DURING HIS LAST FEW LINES HE HAS DONNED A DARK MONK'S ROBE WITH A LARGE HOOD.)

(A PUFF OF SMOKE AND THE LIGHTS GROW VERY DIM. IT IS NIGHT. MERLIN STEPS INTO THE FOREST AREA, AND NOW IN HIS DISGUISE,

HE “TRAVELS” TO THE KING’S CASTLE. AFTER A MOMENT THE FIGURE OF A WOMAN APPEARS. SHE ALSO WEARS A LONG DARK CLOAK, AND HER FACE IS COMPLETELY HIDDEN. SHE CARRIES A BUNDLE IN HER ARMS; THE ROYAL BABY. SHE GLANCES AROUND THE FOREST FEARFULLY.)

MERLIN: (TO THE WOMAN.) Hist!

WOMAN: (FRIGHTENED.) Oh! Help! Help!

MERLIN: Be not afraid, good woman. I am the one you came to meet. (HE STEPS CLOSER.)

WOMAN: Forgive me, Sir Monk. We are always afraid in these troubled days. Enemies are behind every tree.

MERLIN: You have brought the baby?

WOMAN: Yes, here he is. A good baby, too. Not a sound has he made since we left the castle.

MERLIN: (TAKES THE BABY.) Ah! Good boy. Already he has a taste for adventure.

WOMAN: Her Majesty begs you take good care of her son.

MERLIN: Tell the Queen that the child will have the best of love and care.

WOMAN: I will do so. (SHE GOES.)

MERLIN: (TO BABY.) Come, my boy, we must be far away from here before morning. (MUSIC AND FOG AGAIN AS HE “TRAVELS” ONCE MORE. HE TALKS TO THE BABY.) Ah, my boy, what a wonderful life awaits you! Adventures! Fame! Wealth! But that is not for now. First we must find you a home – a good home where you will be happy as you grow up. (HE HAS “ARRIVED” AT A CORNER OF THE FOREST NEAR SIR ECTOR’S HOME. MERLIN LOOKS AROUND CAREFULLY.) Where is he? He said he could meet me here at this hour. Ah! A sound! Perhaps that is he! (HIDES BEHIND A TREE.)

SIR ECTOR: (APPEARS, APPROACHES CAUTIOUSLY, LOOKING FOR MERLIN IN THE DARKNESS. HE IS A GENIAL, PLEASANT LOOKING MAN IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES – SPEAKS IN A WHISPER.) Merlin? Merlin, are you there? (TO HIMSELF.) That’s strange. I thought I heard someone out here. (CALLS OUT.) Merlin! Merlin, are you there?

MERLIN: (APPROACHES HIM.) Shh! Not so loudly! Someone

may have followed me.

SIR ECTOR: There you are!

MERLIN: Shhh! We must be very quiet.

SIR ECTOR: (IN A LOWER VOICE.) Why? What is this all about, Merlin? Why did you send me a message asking that I meet you here tonight?

MERLIN: Why? Because of – (HOLDS OUT BABY.) – this!

SIR ECTOR: A baby? Where – That is – ! What – ? That is – ! Who – ? I mean – Why –??

MERLIN: Who the child may be, and from whence he came – must remain a secret. As to “why” – I have brought him here to you.

SIR ECTOR: To me!? But – !

MERLIN: This child’s safety is very important to all of Britain. Keep him from all harm for ten and four years, and your rewards will be beyond belief.

SIR ECTOR: All this seems very mysterious, Merlin. The child must be very important indeed.

MERLIN: He is. To all of us.

SIR ECTOR: Very well, then. I shall take him to my house.

MERLIN: I knew you could be trusted, Sir Ector. When the boy is old enough, he must visit me every day, so that he will receive the education he needs.

SIR ECTOR: Needs for what?

MERLIN: That I cannot tell you. Say nothing about the child to anyone. Only you and your lady wife shall know he is not your true born son.

SIR ECTOR: Very well, Merlin. Our Kings have trusted you, and therefore, so must I. The child will be as my own son.

MERLIN: Excellent.

SIR ECTOR: And in time, you will teach him.

MERLIN: Yes.

SIR ECTOR: I will take the child home now. He mustn’t stay out in the cold any longer. (STARTS OUT, THEN STOPS.) Merlin, how is the child to be called? Does he have a name?

MERLIN: His name is – Arthur.

SIR ECTOR: Arthur. A strange name. I’ve never heard it before.

MERLIN: This child will make the name live forever.

SIR ECTOR: Arthur. A good, strong name. Well, good night, Merlin. (HE GOES OUT WITH THE BABY.)

MERLIN: Good night, Sir Ector.

(MERLIN CROSSES BACK TO HIS MAGIC CAVE, AND AS HE REMOVES HIS DISGUISE THERE IS MUSIC. GRADUALLY THE LIGHTS BRIGHTEN, AS HE SPEAKS, INDICATING THE PASSAGE OF SOME YEARS THE WHOLE ATMOSPHERE BECOMES MORE PLEASANT AS THE DAYLIGHT GROWS BRIGHTER.)

MERLIN: And so the years passed by. Arthur was happy with Sir Ector's family. Sir Ector and his wife were the only ones - other than myself - who knew that Arthur was not truly their son. Even Sir Ector's son, Kaye, and his daughter, Elaine, thought that Arthur was truly their brother. And Arthur himself never doubted that he was Sir Ector's true born son.

Then Arthur was fourteen years old . . . and the day approached when he would - but - there I go again, getting ahead of the story. You must see for yourselves Kaye and Arthur and Elaine are playing. The boys are pretending that they are at a tournament - a mock battle in which knights show off their skills, and compete for valuable prizes . . . (HE GOES.)

(AS MERLIN GESTURES THE CHILDREN APPEAR. KAYE, THE OLDEST, A BOY WHO IS SPOILED AND RUDE AT TIMES, BUT WHO IS REALLY A GOOD, LOYAL BROTHER TO ARTHUR. ARTHUR IS A PLEASANT YOUNG BOY. HE IS INCLINED TO THOUGHTFULNESS, AND ALWAYS TRIES TO BE FAIR. ELAINE IS AT THE AWKWARD AGE OF TWELVE, AND NOT TERRIBLY PRETTY. SHE CANNOT DECIDE WHETHER SHE WOULD RATHER BE A BOY OR A GIRL AT THIS POINT IN HER LIFE, AND THEREFORE SOMETIMES BEHAVES LIKE A TOMBOY, AND AT OTHER TIMES SHE IS VERY PRIM AND LADY-LIKE. THE BOYS RUSH IN AND SHE FOLLOWS. BOTH KAYE AND ARTHUR CARRY STICKS, WHICH THEY ARE USING FOR LANCES.)

KAYE: Come on, Arthur!

ARTHUR: Here I am, Kaye.
ELAINE: Kaye? Arthur? What are you doing? Can I play, too?
KAYE: No! Now, Arthur, we have to set up the battle lines.
Which side of the clearing do you want?
ARTHUR: Either side will do.
ELAINE: Kaye!
KAYE: Be quiet, Elaine!
ELAINE: No! I won't!
KAYE: (TO ARTHUR.) I'll take this side. Are you ready?
ELAINE: I'm ready!
KAYE: Not you! I mean Arthur.
ARTHUR: Almost ready. (THE TWO BOYS EACH GO TO THEIR SIDES OF THE BATTLEFIELD, AND THEY GO THROUGH A SERIES OF PREPARATIONS, WARM-UPS, ETC.)
ELAINE: I want to fight in the tournament, too!
KAYE: Well, you can't! So there!
ELAINE: Why not?
KAYE: Go back home, Elaine.
ELAINE: You can't make me go home! Mother said that you and Arthur are supposed to take care of me.
KAYE: Huh! Who wants to take care of you?
ELAINE: (TEARFULLY.) And you'd better be nice to me, too!
Because Papa said that if you want to be a brave and noble knight, you have to learn to be polite to ladies.
KAYE: Then why don't you act like a lady? Ladies don't fight in tournaments. They sit on the side and cheer the knights. They don't go whining and crying into the battlefield, complaining because they can't fight, too.
ELAINE: (CRYING AND WHINING.) I'm not crying and whining!
KAYE: You are, too! Make up your mind, Elaine. If you want to be a lady, then you can't fight in our tournament. So there!
ELAINE: I want to be a lady!
KAYE: Very well, then.
ELAINE: And I want to fight, too!
KAYE: Well, you can't!
ELAINE: (STARTS TO CRY LOUDLY.) Kaye! I want to fight, too! Arthur! Make him let me play! No one ever lets me do anything!
ARTHUR: Elaine? Now, Elaine, stop crying. There. That's better. Now, Elaine, Kaye and I like to have you play in some of

our games –

KAYE: Ha!

ARTHUR: (TO KAYE.) Shhh! (TO ELAINE.) – But this game is just too dangerous for you.

ELAINE: No, it isn't!

ARTHUR: Of course it is. You're smaller than we are, and you could be hurt.

ELAINE: I'd be all right.

ARTHUR: And if you fought with us, which side would you be on?

KAYE: Not mine!

ELAINE: Yours, Arthur!

ARTHUR: Now that wouldn't be fair. Two against one.

ELAINE: I don't care!

ARTHUR: Well, I do. Brave knights must always fight as fairly as they can. Besides, if you fought with us, we couldn't really enjoy ourselves, because we'd have to be so careful not to hurt you.

ELAINE: Really?

KAYE: Ha!

ARTHUR: (TO KAYE.) Shhh! (TO ELAINE.) You see, Elaine, Father is right. Knights must be chivalrous to ladies, and that means that they can't strike down a lady in a tournament. We'd just have to let you win – out of good manners.

KAYE: Well, I wouldn't let her win!

ELAINE: (TO ARTHUR.) Well, if you let me win, Arthur, that wouldn't be any fun at all.

ARTHUR: No, it wouldn't.

ELAINE: Well, then I won't play.

KAYE: Good!

ELAINE: Not because you say so, Kaye, but because Arthur is such a gentleman.

KAYE: Phooey!

ELAINE: Phooey – yourself! And I hope Arthur wins!

ARTHUR: (WITH A BOW.) I thank you, Lady Elaine.

KAYE: I don't care what you hope, Elaine; I'm going to win!

ELAINE: We shall see.

KAYE: Come on, Arthur. We've wasted enough time. Let's begin the tournament.

ARTHUR: (WITH ANOTHER BOW TO ELAINE.) Milady.

ELAINE: (GIGGLES.) Sir Knight.

KAYE: Arthur!

ARTHUR: All right.

(THEY TAKE STANCES SEVERAL FEET APART AND PREPARE TO CHARGE.)

ELAINE: Charge!

(THEY BOTH GIVE LOUD BATTLE CRIES AND CHARGE, MISSING EACH OTHER COMPLETELY.)

ELAINE: (LAUGHS AND APPLAUDS.) Well done, Sir Knights!

KAYE: Be quiet, Elaine! Ready, Arthur?

ARTHUR: Ready!

ELAINE: Charge!

(THEY RUSH AT EACH OTHER AGAIN, AND CIRCLE, LUNGING AND FEINTING.)

ELAINE: (CHEERS.) Bravo! well done, Sir Arthur!

KAYE: (AS HE LUNGES AT ARTHUR.) Be quiet, Elaine!

ARTHUR: Back off! (THEY BOTH WITHDRAW TO CHARGE AGAIN.)

KAYE: Ready?

ARTHUR: Ready!

ELAINE: Charge!

(AGAIN THEY CHARGE, AND THIS TIME THEY LOCK "LANCES". THEN THEY BOTH FALL TO THE GROUND.)

KAYE: I win!

ELAINE: No! Arthur wins!

KAYE: I win!

ELAINE: Arthur wins!

ARTHUR: I think we must all admit that it was a tie. Neither of us won.

KAYE: Oh, I suppose you're right.

ELAINE: Of course he is!

KAYE: Be quiet, Elaine!

ELAINE: No, I won't!

SIR ECTOR: (OFF.) Arthur! Kaye! Elaine! Arthur!

ARTHUR: Yes, Father!

SIR ECTOR: (ENTERS, SOMEWHAT OLDER THAN IN HIS FIRST SCENE.) Children, where have you been? Arthur, it's

almost time for your lessons. Merlin is waiting for you.

ARTHUR: Yes, Father.

SIR ECTOR: Hurry along, now. (STARTS TO GO.)

ELAINE: Papa! Wait for me!

SIR ECTOR: Elaine, you should go inside now. Your mother has been looking for you.

ELAINE: She must want me to do some stupid sewing. Papa, why can't I learn to ride a horse and fight with a sword the way Kaye does?

SIR ECTOR: That's much too dangerous for you, my dear.

ELAINE: Then why can't I study strange books and the stars the way Arthur does?

SIR ECTOR: Merlin only chose Arthur to be his student, Elaine. Now, come along, child.

ELAINE: Yes, Papa. (THEY GO.)

KAYE: (TO ARTHUR – MOCKINGLY.) Ah-ha! Arthur has to go to his lessons! Don't you wish you could go ride the horses with me, instead of reading stupid books with Merlin?

ARTHUR: I would like to ride a horse with you, Kaye, but I don't mind the lessons with Merlin.

KAYE: I don't see why you're the one Merlin chose to teach. After all, I'm the oldest. If anyone has lessons with Merlin, it should be me.

ARTHUR: I don't know why Merlin chose me. Would you like to be the one he teaches?

KAYE: Me? No, not really. I don't like books. I'd rather ride a horse and have fun.

ARTHUR: Well, then maybe Merlin made the right choice between us.

KAYE: Well, maybe so.

ARTHUR: It's time for me to go now. Merlin is waiting.

KAYE: Well, I'm going hunting this afternoon! (THEY GO.)

MERLIN: (REAPPEARS, WATCHES THE BOYS OFF - MUSIC.)

And so the time passed. Arthur grew and studied his lessons, and played with Kaye and Elaine. However, I knew that this happiness couldn't last forever. It never does. And so one day . . .

(HE GESTURES, AND AS THE LIGHTS DIM ON HIM CRASHING MUSIC IS HEARD. THUNDER CLAPS, THE LIGHTS FLASH, AND MORGAN LE FAY ENTERS ACCOMPANIED BY A SWIRL OF FOG.)

SHE IS ALSO ACCOMPANIED BY TWO OTHERWORLDLY CREATURES: HER DEVOTED HENCHWOMEN, DRAGONFLY AND KATYDIDD. MORGAN IS ARTHUR'S AUNT, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT KNOW THIS. SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL SORCERESS, CAPABLE OF GREAT SELFISHNESS AND GREAT CHARM. SHE IS AN EVIL WOMAN, BUT FORTUNATELY, SHE POSSESSES SOMEWHAT LIMITED MAGICAL POWERS. SHE IS VERY ATTRACTIVE IN HER DEADLY WAY – SHE WEARS A FLOWING BLACK GOWN PERHAPS WITH TOUCHES OF REDS AND PURPLES . . .)

- MORGAN: (LAUGHS AT THE AUDIENCE) Well, what are you gaping at? Haven't you ever seen a sorceress before?
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: (LAUGH)
- MORGAN: (TO THEM) Be silent! (LOOKS AROUND.) Well, well. Where am I? A strange forest. The spell was supposed to bring me to Merlin, but I don't see him. (LAUGHS.) Unless he's disguised as a tree – or a mushroom!
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: (LAUGH)
- MORGAN: (LEANS OVER MOCKINGLY ADDRESSES A PLANT ON THE GROUND.) Hark, you! Merlin? Is that you?
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: Yoo-hoo! Merlin!
- MORGAN: Great Merlin, I – Morgan Le Fay – wish to speak to you! Soon I will be greater than even you, Merlin! Merlin! Do you hear me?! I will find you!
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: Yoo-hoo! Merlin!
- MORGAN: (TO HERSELF.) The conjuror told me I would find Merlin here. What has he been doing these past years? He disappeared at the same time the baby disappeared. My sister, the Queen, always said that gypsies had stolen the baby, but I never believed that.
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: (THEY NEVER BELIEVED IT EITHER)
- MORGAN: Also, the conjuror told me that Merlin has a great secret. A powerful secret. I must find out what this secret can be. If I know what Merlin knows, then I shall be as powerful as he!
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: (VERY ENTHUSIASTIC) Yesssss!
- MORGAN: (LAUGHS.) Aha! Voices! I must hide myself.
- DRAGONFLY & KATYDIDD: Hide!

(A CRASH OF THUNDER AND A DASH OF FOG
AND THEY ARE GONE.)

(SIR ECTOR ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY ARTHUR,
KAYE, AND ELAINE. MERLIN ENTERS AT THE
SAME TIME THEY DO, AND RETURNS TO HIS
CAVE.)

– END OF E-MAIL SCRIPT SEGMENT –

THERE ARE 49 PAGES IN *ON STAGE!*
EXCALIBUR! THE STORY OF YOUNG KING
ARTHUR.

(Note: Play script includes an additional 10-page
detailed appendix with information and guidelines for
optional magic illusions for those who choose to
incorporate them. The total playbook including
appendix is 59 pages.)

– A DISCUSSION OF SOME WAYS TO ‘EXPAND’
THE CAST FOLLOW –

Expanding the Cast Size of EXCALIBUR! THE STORY OF
YOUNG KING ARTHUR

Some of these ideas are based on methods used by other groups,
and some are generic suggestions applicable to many
circumstances. Suggestions to consider:

The "KNIGHTS, BARONS AND LADIES" in Act II are
deliberately scripted as a non-specified number of people. There

could be 3 of them or there could be 103 - or any number in between. This group can also be expanded conceptually to include children, and an equally unspecified number of "rank and file" citizens of the kingdom. Some groups have made this "crowd scene" group to be a mixture of upper class lords and ladies and a variety of merchants and peasants and beggars - a combination that most probably represents a relatively true historical accuracy typical of the time represented by the play.

The Act II setting further offers an opportunity for the creation of a Medieval Faire kind of atmosphere (depending upon the performing group's resources and talents). Any gathering of a mixture of social classes such as that represented in the play would have no doubt included vendors (of food and trinkets), entertainers (such as musicians, dancers, and jugglers), sightseers and tourists, as well as a number of beggars, pickpockets, gypsies, members of the clergy and so on. Plus, the Archbishop does mention that he plans to solicit the services of a choir or two or three - so there is another possibility to create activities for more performers.

Some productions of this play have chosen to "animate" the forest through which Merlin travels with the baby Arthur. Magical trees that change positions and even make attempts to grab at the child or at Merlin himself can create a fun atmosphere of magical adventure.

Just because Morgan Le Fay has only two "official" assistants in the script doesn't mean that she is limited to "just" the two. There is no reason at all why she can't have a whole chorus of assistants who devotedly travel with her and cheer her on in her mischief.

Also, Merlin as a powerful magician could certainly conjure up an assistant or two or three or more in the performing of some or all of his illusions.

Keep in mind that the origins of the story are Ancient Celtic - a belief system that gave "personalities" and names to almost everything - trees, rocks, rivers, etc - and further believed that all creatures had "powers" and capacities beyond the obvious. Adding "magical" creatures to the scenes of "magic" can only enhance your production and give it more depth and mystery.

Keep in mind, too, that given appropriate advance warning, I can create a list of names for your additional characters. (A specific "name" role is often so very dear to a young thespian's heart!) For example, you might say - I need names for 10 lords and ladies, a dozen male and female peasant names, and names for 7 more female "Morgan assistants."

Hopefully these thoughts will inspire you a bit. We can always further discuss any or all of these ideas to make them more specific to your situation and the talents and facilities available to you.