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VIDEO REVIEWS

Travis Edward Pike's *Grumpuss*

color, 99 min. Otherworld Entertainment Corp. 1746 S. Kingsley Dr.

Los Angeles, CA 90006; 323 733 1074. 1999 ISBN 1-892900-00-9. \$19.95 LIT

The oral storytelling tradition flourishes in *Grumpuss*, an award-winning staged reading of a knight-in-shining-armor epic poem conceived, written, produced, and performed by Pike. It is Allhallows Eve in the forest when a wanderer trespasses on the fairy mound of the Queen of the Sidh. His fate, on account of this innocent impropriety, is to meet one of three ends: become mad, die, or receive the gift of poetry. The wanderer (Pike), choosing the latter, thus offers up the story of *Grumpuss*, a behemoth kitty cat reputed to have terrorized the kingdom, and Sir Ellery, the brave knight who is sent to capture him.

This is a live theater production, gussied up and staged as a benefit for Save the Children Foundation. The initial acting that sets the scene is weak and a bit clumsy. But the epic poem itself, which unwinds slowly, engages the wary listener, proving to be touching and suspenseful. Pike's clever language is easy for all to understand and, at times, downright Dr. Seussian. He plays several characters and is convincing, in large part owing to his voice work. There are musical interludes (directed by David Carr) during the four-act story, which lend playful, almost Pink Panther humor to the tale and break up the long narrative. One questions the need for the Queen of the Sidh framing device; the strength of *Grumpuss*, in fact, is its oral narrative. It is a good fairy tale with an underlying contemporary message — respect our wild animals. A marginal video purchase, this could prove most rewarding on audiotape (ISBN 1-8929-02-5. \$16.95), where listeners can add their own “visuals.”—*Janet Faller Sassi, New York*

Since this review was posted 20-years-ago, technological advances dictated that the VHS version be replaced by a remastered *Grumpuss* 20th Anniversary Platinum Edition on DVD. The live benefit performance at Blenheim Palace for the Save the Children Fund was originally shot digitally, with the result that this new DVD is vastly superior to the VHS release, and the price has actually been reduced to \$19.95! You're invited to review clips from the DVD posted on Youtube at <https://grumpuss.com/VIDSAMPLES.html>.