

FEATHERTOP narration

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Anthony Abeson, and among many shows I directed for Columbia Players during my years at Columbia, I was the director and one of the creators of *Feathertop*.

Although *Feathertop* was the Varsity Show of 1967, it was written by two members of tonight's illustrious class of 1966, John Litvack and Bruce Trinkley. Those of us who worked with John and valued his friendship are sorry that John passed away in March 2015. John had a very distinguished career in television as a writer, director and producer, most notably for the long-running *Hill Street Blues*.

The musical *Feathertop*, based on the short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne, opens with a prologue set in a New England forest at night. A witch, Mother Rigby, is making some mysterious pact with the local magistrate, Judge Goodkin. The scene shifts to Mother Rigby's hut, located far from town. We find Mother Rigby working with her servant and familiar spirit, Dickon. Together the two of them construct a scarecrow whom the witch finds exceedingly handsome. She thrusts her pipe into the strawman's mouth and commands him to puff. Miraculously, the scarecrow comes to life! Mother Rigby has plans for this magical creature. She sends him into town to woo Elizabeth, the lovely daughter of Judge Goodkin.

The next scene is set in the local tavern. The bar maid, Katherine Osgood, is the daughter of the owners, and she is treated shabbily by all the patrons, as nothing better than a wench. We will now hear the song that these very bored townspeople sing at the bar: NOTHING EVER HAPPENS HERE, led by the innkeeper, William Osgood. That lament will be followed by Katherine's Song, in which the Osgood daughter sings of her hard fate and of her lofty dreams....

NOTHING EVER HAPPENS HERE/KATHERINE'S SONG

Feathertop arrives in town, and goes directly to Judge Goodkin's house. The Judge's daughter, Elizabeth, is immediately smitten with this handsome and mysterious stranger. Things seem to be going well for Feathertop. But he quickly starts to have doubts about his success in society. He sings of his fears in his ARIOSOS...

ARIOSOS

We now meet the owners of the bar, William Osgood and his wife Estelle. They used to be actors on the London stage, and they both long to tread the boards again. To keep in practice, the Osgoods keep breaking into scenes from their long-ago performance as Antony and Cleopatra. But their scene is always cut short just as William Osgood is about to die. He has some problems dying, as we will now see.

OSGOOD SCENE - FIRST PART

Sir Peter Palfrey has recently arrived from Boston, where they know all the latest things. Like how to handle the social problem of witchcraft. Sir Peter plies Mother Rigby's servant Dickon with spiritous beverages. As the naive Dickon gets drunk, he lets slip that Mother Rigby is the "mother" of the dashing stranger Feathertop. Dickon explains all that he knows of witches and Sir Peter collects this damning evidence in their duet: HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED FOR A WITCH...

HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED FOR A WITCH? (Music sneaks in.)

OSGOOD SCENE - SECOND PART (No introduction)

Meanwhile, back to our hero, Feathertop. After even more doubts about himself and his prospects with Elizabeth and society, he returns to Mother Rigby, disconsolate. Feathertop expresses his doubts. In a trio with Mother Rigby and her assistant Dickon, Feathertop voices his uncertainties:

PUPPET.PUPPET (Music sneaks in.)

Elizabeth, the Judge's daughter, has received an anonymous letter. She thinks it is from Feathertop. Actually, Mother Rigby wrote it. For her own nefarious reasons, the witch wants Feathertop to marry Judge Goodkin's daughter. Elizabeth shares the text of the letter with us in SONNET FOR ELIZABETH.

SONNET FOR ELIZABETH

Feathertop, greatly cheered by Mother Rigby and Dickon, returns to Elizabeth, and they pledge their love. But at the climax of their love duet, they glance into the mirror and both are horrified to see Feathertop's true visage, a creature of sticks and straw. He flees from his love and goes back to Mother Rigby. The witch regrettably deems her experiment a failure. Feathertop will not find his true calling as a man about town, but as a scarecrow in the field. She and Dickon put Feathertop up on a cross in the cornfield, between her two newest scarecrows: Peter Palfrey and Judge Goodkin, on whom she has used her pipe to reverse effect, turning them from puffed-up vain humans into straw-stuffed scarecrows. But perhaps, as the Hawthorne story suggests, there is not such a terribly long distance between the two.

FAR FROM THE CROWD

BOWS from NARRATOR AND SOLOISTS