



PROLOGUE: A Castle

(#1 ORCHESTRA TUNE-UP begins the show, followed immediately by #2 PROLOGUE. A young PRINCE stands in the doorway of a majestic castle. NARRATORS address the audience.)

NARRATOR 1

Once upon a time in a faraway land, a young prince lived in a shining castle.

NARRATOR 2

Although he had everything his heart desired, the Prince was spoiled, selfish and unkind.

(An OLD BEGGAR WOMAN enters.)

NARRATOR 3

But then, one winter's night, an old beggar woman came to the castle and offered him a single rose in return for shelter from the bitter cold.

(The PRINCE and OLD BEGGAR WOMAN pantomime the following action.)

NARRATOR 4

Repulsed by her haggard appearance, the Prince sneered at the gift and turned the old woman away.

NARRATOR 1

But she warned him not to be deceived by appearances, for beauty is found within.

NARRATOR 3

And when he dismissed her again, the old woman's ugliness melted away to reveal a beautiful enchantress.

NARRATOR 4

The Prince tried to apologize, but it was too late, for she had seen that there was no love in his heart.

NARRATOR 2

As punishment, she transformed him into a hideous beast and placed a powerful spell on the castle and all who lived there.

(The ENCHANTRESS exits. The PRINCE has been transformed into the BEAST.)

NARRATOR 3

Ashamed of his monstrous form, the Beast concealed himself inside his castle with a magic mirror as his only window to the outside world.

(The rose appears.)

NARRATOR 1

The rose she had offered him was truly an enchanted rose, which would bloom for many years.

(The BEAST covers the rose with a glass dome for protection.)

NARRATOR 4

If he could learn to love another and earn her love in return by the time the last petal fell, then the spell would be broken.

NARRATOR 2

If not... he would be doomed to remain a beast for all time.

(The BEAST gazes at the rose... trapped, forlorn and hopeless.)

NARRATOR 1

As the years passed, he fell into despair and lost all hope.

NARRATORS

For who could ever learn to love a beast?

(The BEAST and the NARRATORS exit.)

SCENE 1: The Village

(A charming, provincial French village. Sunrise. BELLE enters. #3 BELLE.)