

# Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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## *Playing from the Heart*

By  
Charles Way

*Playing from the Heart* was originally commissioned and produced by the Polka Theatre for Children, Wimbledon, London in 1998.

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## **Characters:**

- Evelyn
- Mum
- Dad
- Colin
- Roger
- Mrs. Rachlin
- Reporter
- Photographer
- Editor
- Teacher
- Doctor 1
- Doctor 2
- Careers Officer
- Woman
- Floss, the dog

Doubling is possible- originally performed with five actors.

## **Setting:**

The play is set in Scotland. The action of the play takes place in various settings, which may be suggested minimally, and non-realistically. The set can be thought of as one large percussive opportunity.

## ACT ONE

*Darkness. Sound of an orchestra tuning up. Light rises on a young woman in a concert dress:  
Evelyn. A single pure note.*

### EVELYN

I can hear you thinking-  
I can hear you thinking-  
What's going on?  
What on earth is she about to do-  
This girl in a party dress?  
This is it, you see.  
The moment.  
All my life I've worked  
for this moment.  
They say I will never be a musician  
today I will prove them wrong.  
This is it.  
The orchestra's ready.  
The audience applaud  
as the conductor walks  
in his black suit across the stage.  
I feel his steps  
in the wood beneath my feet.  
I feel the sound of clapping  
in the tense air of the concert hall.  
I watch the faces of the people,  
the movement of their hands.

Of course it could all go wrong.  
I could lose my way  
in the great forest of notes.  
No! I must concentrate.  
I must succeed.  
I will succeed.  
I am me-  
Me is a very determined person.  
This is it - the moment.  
The conductor raises his baton,  
The audience breathe in-  
*(An intake of air)*  
- the baton hovers in the air  
Holding time  
Holding time.  
A bead of sweat runs down  
the conductor's cheek.  
How slowly it falls...  
How slowly...  
*(Sound of heart beat)*  
But wait!  
What's happening?  
What sound is that?

The sound of my heart  
slowing down...  
slowing down...

*She approaches the conductor who is now frozen in time. She moves around the orchestra, then she hears whispers, voices from her childhood.*

### EVELYN

Wait! What sound is that?  
The sound of my thoughts  
running back, running back  
to the place of beginning-  
the place where my heart  
learnt its sure rhythm. Home.  
Home. Come with me.  
It will only take a moment...

*The conductor/orchestra ensemble break out of their frozen positions. A movement section follows – transforming them into the characters in Evelyn’s life. She is whisked out of her party dress. She is now eight years old wearing wellies and a duffle coat and a bobble hat.*

### EVELYN

When I was a child I lived on a farm.  
When I was a child  
I climbed the grain tower  
it was ever so high.  
Tall as a tower  
in a fairy story.  
When I was a child  
I had a red wheelbarrow.  
There it is.  
When I was a child  
we had a dog called Floss.  
There she is.  
When I was eight years old  
I climbed to the top of the grain tower...  
*(sound of wind)*  
I tried to pull down clouds.  
When I was a child  
I could hear fields waking up  
stretching their muddy arms.  
I could hear the wind  
comb the long grass all day.  
I could hear the world sigh  
at four o'clock  
and the slow breathing of the earth  
at night.

From the top of the tower  
I could see the whole farm  
and beyond the farm – the fields  
beyond the fields

the future...  
When I was a child  
I climbed to the top of the grain tower  
and was queen of everything I saw...

*Mum enters.*

**MUM**

Evelyn.

**EVELYN**

That's my mother.

**MUM**

What are you doing?

**EVELYN**

I'm fine.

**MUM**

You'll be fine down here too on solid ground. Get down! Get down.

**EVELYN**

But her voice was blown away-

*Dad enters with dog.*

**DAD**

What now?

**MUM**

Evelyn's climbed to the top of the grain tower.

**DAD**

It's not the first time.

*Floss the dog follows the father around everywhere – the dog belongs to him.*

**EVELYN**

My father-

**MUM**

She's only eight.

**DAD**

Old enough to climb up, old enough to climb down.

**MUM**

It's thirty feet.

**DAD**

Aye. It's a tall tower.

**EVELYN**

Thirty feet up – a girl in the sky. Look Mum! (*Mum screams*) No hands.

She's testing herself. **DAD**

She's testing me. **MUM**

I'm testing myself. **EVELYN**

Come down now. **MUM**

She'll come down- **DAD**

Where are you going? **MUM**

I have to fee the pigs. **DAD**

**MUM**  
Pigs, you care more about the pigs than your daughter up the grain tower.

**DAD**  
That isn't true.  
I care more about you than I care about the pigs, and I care about the pigs a great deal.

**MUM**  
Oh flattered I am.

*He grabs her momentarily and they waltz in their work clothes.*

**EVELYN**  
My parents – dancing in the yard  
Very strange.  
I watch them from the grain tower-  
My Mother  
full of fret  
worrying about the future-  
her movements quick, busy.

**MUM**  
Go on fee the pigs, before I fall down dizzy.

**EVELYN**  
My Father always walks at the same pace  
his movements measured,  
appearing calm...It's a trick.  
He says...

Patience is a virtue. **DAD**

*Enter two brothers, chasing each other.*

Slow down there. **DAD**

Why? **COLIN**

Why? Why indeed? Why not? **DAD**

*Father moves away. The boys resume their chase, which develops into a pattern.*

**EVELYN**  
Two brothers,  
chalk and cheese  
cheese and chalk-  
different,  
like low ground and high ground  
Like loud and quiet  
always fighting  
cat and dog.

**DAD**  
*(to Colin and Roger) Stop that!*

**MUM**  
Evelyn – get down.

**EVELYN**  
My family.

*Evelyn beats out a rhythm on the grain tower – initiating a movement section that is about the family: love, reprimands, patterns of behavior and support. It stops suddenly. Silence. Evelyn comes down.*

**EVELYN**  
My ears hurt.

**MUM**  
What kind of hurt?

**EVELYN**  
The kind that hurts.

**MUM**  
I'm not surprised  
hanging up there in the sky

in a howling wind,  
letting the whole of Scotland  
blow right through you.

**COLIN**

She's always complaining about her ears-

**EVELYN**

No I'm not.

**COLIN**

Are too.

**EVELYN**

Not.

**ROGER**

You said your ears hurt yesterday.

**COLIN**

After riding your bike.

**ROGER**

In the cold.

**COLIN**

And after swimming.

**EVELYN**

They just hurt, that's all.

**COLIN**

You're going deaf.

**EVELYN**

No, I'm not.

**COLIN**

Are too.

**EVELYN**

Stop saying that.

**COLIN**

Sometimes I speak to you and you don't hear a word I say.

**EVELYN**

That's cos all you say is – 'Are too! Are too!'

**COLIN**

No, I don't.

Do too! Do too!

**EVELYN**

Stop!

**MUM**

I'm not going deaf, am I Mum?

**EVELYN**

Course not – just got sore ears, that's all. But stay out of the cold wind and don't dive down deep in the swimming pool.

**MUM**

Ooooh. *(in disappointment)*

**EVELYN**

Hush now...Hush – feel that?

**DAD**

What?

**MUM**

That.

**DAD**

That what?

**MUM**

Something's coming.

**DAD**

What's coming?

**MUM**

Wait...there...it's arrived.

**DAD**

What?

**MUM**

The summer... *(lights change)*  
I can feel it in my bones  
smell it on the breeze.  
Besides it says so in the paper-  
Today is the first day of summer – official.  
*He exits. The youngsters stand perplexed.*

**DAD**

Stop arguing.

**MUM**

We're not arguing.

**ROGER**

You think I can't tell an argument when I hear one? Silent or not.

**MUM**

*She exits. The summer light gets stronger.*

I love the summer.

**COLIN**

We could put a tent up.

**ROGER**

Yeah, spend the night in the garden.

**COLIN**

And me.

**EVELYN**

You're too young.

**ROGER**

No I'm not.

**EVELYN**

You're afraid of the dark.

**ROGER**

That's a secret.

**EVELYN**

Not anymore.

**COLIN**

Stop it.

**EVELYN**

What?

**ROGER**

Teasing.

**EVELYN**

Tarenzeening.

**ROGER/COLIN**

Please?

**EVELYN**

No.

**COLIN**

I'll tell on you.

**EVELYN**

Tell what?

**COLIN**

There's nothing to tell.

**ROGER**

I'll make it up.

**EVELYN**

You wouldn't dare.

**ROGER**

I always dare.

**EVELYN**

*Silence.*

**ROGER**

Alright.

*They set up the tent – this action demonstrates their rivalry and affection – it's comical and musical. Roger is the practical one, Colin more of a dreamer. Night falls.*

**EVELYN**

I love my brothers.  
I hate my brothers.  
I love my brothers.

*In the tent: Roger is making a lego plane, Colin is reading.*

**COLIN**

I'm going to be an astronaut.

**EVELYN**

When?

**COLIN**

When I'm grown up, like the man in this book. He goes to different planets.

**EVELYN**

What for?

**COLIN**

To see what's there.

**ROGER**

I'm going to be a farmer, like dad. What are you going to do Ev?

**EVELYN**

Don't know...

*She decides to beat a toy drum.*

Shh! **COLIN**

Why shh? **EVELYN**

I'm trying to read. **COLIN**

Try harder. *(She plays on)* **EVELYN**

Shh. **ROGER**

Why shh? **EVELYN**

I can't hear myself think. **ROGER**

Think louder. *(She plays on)* **EVELYN**

Shh! **COLIN/ROGER**

*She plays louder. Colin storms off, comes back with a trombone. He creeps behind Evelyn and blows it in her ear. She screams. Roger falls about laughing. Evelyn hits him. Colin hides the drum.*

Where is it? **EVELYN**

Where's what? **COLIN**

My drum. **EVELYN**

I never saw a drum. Did you see a drum? **COLIN**

Well it was – no, no. **ROGER**

**EVELYN**  
(picks up the plane) Did you ever see a plane with one wing?

**ROGER**

You wouldn't dare.

*She snaps off the wing. She picks up Colin's book and is about to rip it in two. Colin swiftly gives the drum back.*

**EVELYN**

I'm going to be a musician.

**ROGER**

You broke my plane. *(He hits her with a pillow.)*

**EVELYN**

You stole my drum.

**ROGER**

He stole your drum.

**COLIN**

It's not my fault she broke your stupid plane.

**ROGER**

It's not stupid.

**COLIN**

It is now – it's only got one wing.

*(A pillow fight develops between the two brothers. Enter Mum with a rolled up newspaper.)*

**MUM**

Stop! Stop! You will stop that now.

*(They continue. Evelyn stands by in an innocent pose.)*

Stop!

*(She starts to chase them with the rolled up newspaper. Dad enters with the dog, barking – chaos.)*

**COLIN**

She started it.

**EVELYN**

I never did.

**ROGER**

She did! She did!

**EVELYN**

I hate my brothers

I love my brothers

I hate my brothers.

*The scene changes, folds into a new section. Evelyn gets on her bicycle*