

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Eye of the Storm

by Charles Way

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Characters:

- Prospero
- Miranda
- Ariel
- Trinculo
- Stephano/Stephanie

Setting:

The play takes place on a magic island somewhere off the coast of Italy. It is a place that reflects, in speech and costume, a union between Shakespeare's world and our own.

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

SCENE 1

A song is heard.

Come unto these yellow sands
whereon our play begins.
An island rich, an island poor
where Prospero is King.

Now join we all our thoughts as one
to conjure up our art,
to tell a tale of sea and storm
and many a troubled heart.

Voices whisper. Prospero! Prospero!

Prospero's island. Midnight. Moonlight shines on Miranda, asleep. The gentle wash of waves can be heard and soft beautiful music. Prospero carries a long wooden staff.

PROSPERO My daughter, asleep, her midnight eyes full of childish views, but tomorrow her childhood ends. Tomorrow is her fourteenth birthday and on that day I have promised to tell her the true nature of her past and how we came to live on this enchanted isle.

For fourteen years I have secured her here where I, Prospero, am Father, Lord and King. Once, in another life I was the worldly Prince of Milan, but that was long ago.

What manner of man am I now? I'm like no man you've ever known; sorcerer, magician, conjuror, scientist. All of these but still a man like any other. A father. In all my actions I am guided by the love I feel for this one being who dreams, at my feet. This island is our home. It's a place of running streams, of birds and beasts beyond compare, wild woods, tamed by my magic hand. A sanctuary, where no harm may befall my innocent daughter. Oh she is innocent. She knows nothing of the world that lies beyond the mist that I have wrapped around this island like a winter scarf. Within its boundary I have created eternal spring. The power of my spell is such that no man may detect our presence here and I will jealously guard these shores even unto my own death. My spell will not be broken. Ariel?

Ariel at this time is a voice only.

ARIEL Yes master?

PROSPERO Is all the island sleeping?

ARIEL Even the rock on which you stand.

PROSPERO Wake me an inch before dawn so I may greet my daughter as she rises.

ARIEL I will my master, for I am here to answer your best pleasure, be it to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire, to ride on the curl'd clouds...

PROSPERO Yes, yes. Goodnight. *(He exits.)*

SCENE 2

Midnight. A few miles from the island on the mainland of Italy. Trinculo, a young sailor pulls a boat to the water's edge. It's a small boat, but large enough for a small sail. It's called, 'The Happy Youth.' Trinculo sings to himself as he prepares the vessel for sea.

TRINCULO Ten gold pieces, ten gold pieces
 what would I do for ten gold pieces?
 I'd sell my ma, I'd sell my pa
 and as for my uncles, aunts an' nieces,
 I'd sell them all, cos I'm in a thrall
 of ten gold pieces to call my own.
 But I'd never sell my love
 for my love is as true
 as the salty sea, is blue, blue, blue-
 Oh I'd never part with her
 cos that's what love is...fer *(end of song.)*

TRINCULO Ah love? What's that indeed but a poor rhyme? Come on, Stephano. Midnight he said... What can't people keep appointments?

Stephanie enters, dressed as a boy called Stephano. On seeing Trinculo, she hides in the shadows.

TRINCULO Who's there? Is that you Stephano? (*He looks but finds no one.*) This lad you see, Stephano, comes to me out of a dark night, says he has to run away from home. Run where I says? He's got no idea, so I says, 'Do as I done son, join the navy, see the world, learn a trade, meet some girls.' The Cap'n needs a cabin boy, a fresh faced beardless boy, and I need ten gold pieces. Well, that's a fair price for leavin' home. Could say it was the 'goin' rate.' Ha. So here I is. Midnight by the water's edge. The King's fleet lies five mile out to sea an' I'm waiting on a lad who has most likely changed his mind and dreams warm in his bed.

STEPHANIE Now perhaps, I shall change my mind. Go back, go home, go now.

TRINCULO My nose is turning blue.

STEPHANIE No, no I must stay, be strong.

TRINCULO My gran, the old prune, always said we Italians feel the cold more than our northern neighbors.

STEPHANIE I'll stay and tell you what's important here.

TRINCULO I'm as cold as cod now.

STEPHANIE This sailor called Trinculo...

TRINCULO I'll give the boy one minute for every gold piece. After that, I'm home.

STEPHANIE He's waiting on a boy who's not a boy at all. Not 'Stephano' as he thinks but Stephanie, a girl. I had no time to think of a wiser way. This is a desperate measure to escape my mother, and as for this Trinculo, he wouldn't row me one stroke from home, if he know who I was, for he and I were once more intimate than now. But all that was between us once, as girl and boy, has gone. Be assured. How I shall maintain this thin disguise on board his captain's ship I have no plan. My only plan was to leave home, but now I'm nervous of it. Perhaps I should go back for this is reckless, and if I'm discovered – a woman amongst so many men, what then?

TRINCULO Who's there? Stephano! Come forward, don't stand in the shadows lad.

STEPHANIE *(aside)* Forward then.

TRINCULO did anyone follow you?

STEPHANIE No.

TRINCULO Good. A life at sea awaits you, but first you pay the ferryman.

STEPHANIE *(looks at boat)* What's that?

TRINCULO What's what?

STEPHANIE That.

TRINCULO Don't kick it.

STEPHANIE It's got water in it.

TRINCULO What's water to a boat?

STEPHANIE Pardon me for saying sailor, but isn't the water meant to be on the outside?

TRINCULO It's ballast. You'll learn all about ballast soon enough. Ten gold pieces.

STEPHANIE What's this?

TRINCULO That's a bucket.

STEPHANIE A bucket?

TRINCULO You're so quick.

STEPHANIE Which bucket are we setting sail in exactly?

TRINCULO This bucket is important. You have to bail out the-

STEPHANIE Me?

TRINCULO Yes. You, have to bail out the ballast over the gunnels by the rollrocks. Technical isn't it? Now I want my money.

STEPHANIE When. I mean, if, we reach the King's fleet.

TRINCULO If? If? How dare you insult this, 'Happy Youth' with an 'if'.

STEPHANIE Well?

TRINCULO I'm thinking.

STEPHANIE I'm sorry, I couldn't tell.

TRINCULO Hey! *(aside)* He's getting on my knuckles now.

STEPHANIE *(aside)* I overplay the part. Hold back or be discovered.

TRINCULO Half now, half on arrival.

STEPHANIE Done. May we leave?

TRINCULO We may. If we haven't missed the tide with talk. *(aside)* I'll have him, and his money.

STEPHANIE *(aside)* He's the same as ever, all pride and promises.

TRINCULO Are you coming or what? (She gets in the boat) By the full moon, you look familiar. Have we met before?

STEPHANIE No, for if we had it would have come to blows.

TRINCULO *(laughs)* Aye, ain't that the truth. Still I likes you well enough. Don't forget the bucket boson. *(He rows)* What's the matter now?

STEPHANIE Nothing.

TRINCULO You're free in't ya?

STEPHANIE Yes. *(aside)* Too late to turn back now. The shoreline fades by the stroke. What have I done? What have I done?

TRINCULO *(sings)* Sail away, sail away
What can I do but sail away?
So far from home, a man may roam
and may not return for many a day.
So I'll sing you a song
as we sail along
'bout the girl I left behind me.

SCENE 3

Dawn. The island. Miranda still sleeps as Prospero enters.

PROSPERO Miranda. Miranda, wake up. *(She does not stir.)* Ariel?

ARIEL Yes master.

PROSPERO Combine in harmony the sweetest elements of the isle, so that its song
will, with gentle persistence, wake my daughter.

ARIEL It is done.

Music. Miranda wakes up.

PROSPERO Good morning.

MIRANDA What time is it?

PROSPERO Time to wake up.

MIRANDA Must you always wake me?

PROSPERO It's your birthday.

MIRANDA It'll still be my birthday at breakfast.

PROSPERO You mustn't waste the dawn, especially when you're young.

MIRANDA Let me sleep. Let me sleep.

PROSPERO Miranda! Miranda! Get up!

He bangs his staff on the ground, which makes an unnaturally loud noise.

MIRANDA Don't do that. I hate it when you do that.

PROSPERO Please, let's not begin today as we finished yesterday, in hot tempers.
A new day, a new beginning.

MIRANDA I'm just tired, that's all.

PROSPERO Then go to bed earlier.

MIRANDA What have you got me? For my birthday?

He gives her a shell necklace.

MIRANDA (*flatly*) Thank you. Will you stop that music father? It's getting on my nerves.

PROSPERO Ariel?

The music stops.

MIRANDA Must she be here, always?

PROSPERO Ariel, prepare a fresh spring for Miranda. Scent it with lavender and celandine...

MIRANDA Etcetera. She's done it before you know.

ARIEL Yes my master.

MIRANDA (*imitates*) Yes my master.

PROSPERO She's gone.

MIRANDA Has she?

PROSPERO I don't understand why you find her presence so annoying.

MIRANDA I can't see her. I can't trust her.

PROSPERO Please try on the necklace. The shells come from the deepest part of the ocean, beyond mortal reach.

MIRANDA So?

PROSPERO Our need of Ariel is great. She knows this land and all its mysteries. She is the very spirit of it.

MIRANDA I know, I know.

PROSPERO When you were a child she was your constant friend.

MIRANDA *When* I was a child.

PROSPERO Treat her kindly Miranda, for she loves you as I do.

MIRANDA (*aside*) Every year since I can remember he gives me a necklace of shells such as this. It's beautiful, but the same present year after year must be greeted with the same smile. (*She turns to him*) Thank you for my present. It is really nice. I'll put it with the others.

PROSPERO No. Wear it.

MIRANDA Why?

PROSPERO It would please me.

MIRANDA Then it must be done. Now, there is some other birthday business to attend to? Have you forgotten then?

PROSPERO No.

MIRANDA This is my fourteenth birthday, isn't it?

PROSPERO Yes.

MIRANDA The fulfill your promise. Answer all my questions. Why are we on this island? How did we get here? What's the world like that lies beyond the mist? Who was my mother and what happened to her? All these things you promised to tell me today.

PROSPERO Miranda, for twelve years we lived happily here, but then, as if summoned by a bell, upon your thirteenth birthday you changed. Some awkward, confused and churlish spirit entered your heart. You are in constant opposition.

MIRANDA This isn't what you promised to tell me.

PROSPERO All day you sleep. At night, you force yourself awake, I don't know why, unless you prefer the company of owls.

MIRANDA Oh yes... I like owls – they're a hoot.

PROSPERO And then you wonder why you wake so heavily and discontent. You have become unruly, ungracious, unkempt.

MIRANDA All the un words.

PROSPERO And rude beyond compare.

MIRANDA I have waited patiently.

PROSPERO Patiently? You're not patient. Your days are too short or too long, too hot, too cold. Even the sea is too wet for your liking. When I offer you a remedy of any of these ills, you throw my advice to the winds. You are quarrelsome, untidy, ungrateful...

MIRANDA Un, un, un.

PROSPERO Insolent, moody, tetchy, self-willed and selfish too.

MIRANDA Not to mention, bored.

PROSPERO I had hoped that at fourteen years old you would be mature enough to know the answers to your questions.

MIRANDA I am.

PROSPERO Each day you prove yourself a child.

MIRANDA Don't deny me father, please.

PROSPERO I have decided therefore...

MIRANDA You promised me.

PROSPERO To postpone this conversation.

MIRANDA No!

PROSPERO A year. (*Miranda screams in fury, stamps her feet and pulls her hair.*) Be still, lest you unbalance with your fury the gentle fabric of the isle.

MIRANDA You promised me.

PROSPERO Be silent.

MIRANDA Liar, liar.

She continues to rage. He points his staff directly at her. She stops as if frozen. The spell chokes her and she is in considerable pain.

PROSPERO You are possessed.

MIRANDA My limbs, my heart grow cold. Father, please... as I am your daughter...

PROSPERO You have her face, her voice, but who you are I can only guess at.

MIRANDA It hurts me Father.

PROSPERO Then remember it, and when you see fit to raise another storm bear in mind the power of this, my staff.

He releases her. She collapses.

PROSPERO Miranda...

MIRANDA Leave me alone.

PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT