

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

*Playing from the
Heart*

by Charles Way

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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.

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

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 fee.

DAD Aye. It's a tall tower.

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

DAD She's testing herself.

MUM She's testing me.

EVELYN I'm testing myself.

MUM Come down now.

DAD She'll come down-

MUM Where are you going?

DAD I have to feed the pigs.

MUM Figs, 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...

DAD Patience is a virtue.

Enter two brothers, chasing each other.

DAD Slow down there.

COLIN Why?

DAD Why? Why indeed? Why not?

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.

EVELYN Do too! Do too!

MUM Stop!

EVELYN I'm not going deaf, am I Mum?

MUM 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.

EVELYN Ooooh. (*in disappointment*)

DAD Hush now...Hush – feel that?

MUM What?

DAD That.

MUM That what?

DAD Something's coming.

MUM What's coming?

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

MUM What?

DAD 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.

MUM Stop arguing.

ROGER We're not arguing.

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

She exits. The summer light gets stronger.

COLIN I love the summer.

ROGER We could put a tent up.

COLIN Yeah, spend the night in the garden.

EVELYN And me.

ROGER You're too young.

EVELYN No I'm not.

ROGER You're afraid of the dark.

EVELYN That's a secret.

COLIN Not anymore.

EVELYN Stop it.

ROGER What?

EVELYN Teasing.

ROGER/COLIN Tarenzeening.

EVELYN Please?

COLIN No.

EVELYN I'll tell on you.

COLIN Tell what?

ROGER There's nothing to tell.

EVELYN I'll make it up.

ROGER You wouldn't dare.

EVELYN I always dare. (*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.)*

COLIN Shh!

EVELYN Why shh?

COLIN I'm trying to read.

EVELYN Try harder. *(She plays on)*

ROGER Shh.

EVELYN Why shh?

ROGER I can't hear myself think.

EVELYN Think louder. *(She plays on)*

COLIN/ROGER Shh!

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.

EVELYN Where is it?

COLIN Where's what?

EVELYN My drum.

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

ROGER Well it was – no, no.

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