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Family Plays

The Great Alphabet Adventure

by Julia Flood

"Every letter will lead us to something. It's
our job as explorers to find out what."

THE GREAT ALPHABET ADVENTURE, by Julia Flood, is a fresh and energetic adventure into the fantasy of stories told through books and the power of discovery that is unlocked through reading and learning. This play was originally presented by Eckerd Theater Company in Clearwater, Florida.

Summary: On a rainy afternoon, Alex comes home from school looking forward to playing video games before his mom gets home from work. When the power goes out and his only entertainment option is to read, Alex feels certain that he will die of boredom. Enter Zora, the new girl next door who is determined to go on an adventure. Zora discovers that Alex's old picture book, *The Great Alphabet Adventure*, is mysteriously blank and that their job as explorers will be to find the missing letters and return them to the book. Alex's ordinary room begins to reveal extraordinary hidden worlds and a cast of colorful and wacky characters who lead Alex, Zora and the audience on a treasure hunt through the alphabet. In the end, Alex and Zora learn something about the fun of reading and about the value of friendship. Code: GA1.

APPROX. RUNNING TIME: 40 MINUTES

CAST: 5 (1 F, 1 M, 3 Either) WITH DOUBLING OR UP TO 9 (1 F, 1 M, 7 Either) WITH ROLES DISTRIBUTED

SETTING: SIMPLE OR ELABORATE, AS DESIRED. SUITABLE FOR TOURING.

COSTUMES: CONTEMPORARY, ENCHANTED, AND ANIMAL

PLAYWRIGHT: **Julia Flood** has more than thirty years of experience in the professional theatre as playwright, producer, actor, director and teacher. She is a graduate of Northwestern University and has done post-graduate study with famed teachers Robert Lewis and Alvina Krause. Julia was a resident member of the Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble in Pennsylvania for the first seven years of the ensemble's existence. A native of the Boston area, Julia's life in the theatre has taken her to NYC, Los Angeles, and many points in between. Since 1998, Julia has served as Artistic Director of Eckerd Theater Company (ETC), a professional theatre for young audiences based at Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, Florida, where she has commissioned and produced many new works for young people. Julia is a member of Actors Equity Association and the Dramatists Guild and was the recipient of a 2009 professional development grant in playwriting from the Pinellas Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.

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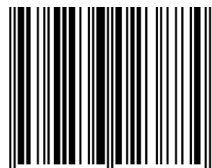
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Adventure

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(THE GREAT ALPHABET ADVENTURE)

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IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author(s) of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

For my mom, who always had a book in her hand.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

THE GREAT ALPHABET ADVENTURE was first presented by Eckerd Theater Company, the resident professional company at Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Florida. The play was presented in the Murray Studio Theater and on tour between November 30, 2006 and February, 2007. It was directed by Bruce Roach.

Original Cast:

Kevin Whalin	ALEX
Becky Dixon Eck	ZORA
Joshua Goff	CAPTAIN DOG/PURPLE PIRATE/ WIZARD
Tanya Moeller	FERDIE/DR SEINSTEIN/VOICE OF MOM
Jonathan Cho	KING LEO/ROBBIE

Original Production Crew:

Sandy Eppling	Set and Robot Design
Amy J Cianci	Costume Design and Robot Construction
Lee Ahlin	Sound Design
Ian Beck	Lighting Design
Melody Craven	Production Stage Manager

Play Script Layout Design: Randy Blevins, jrbdesign

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTING – Alex’s Room: Suggested layout-A window SR with window seat/toy box under it, a door to downstairs CR, a bed with a lamp beside it between the window and door, a closet door SL, a bookcase CL, a poster with the moon or other space-related image over the bed, another poster of Merlin or other such subject over the bookcase. There is a TV/entertainment center with X Box on the fourth wall, unseen by the audience, that Alex controls remotely from his bed.

The layout of Alex’s room may be changed to suit the needs of the production. The setting will need to retain the ability to go from ordinary to extraordinary in the course of the adventure and to provide options for the entrance of new characters to be surprising, each time.

TECHNOLOGY – As entertainment and toy technology changes, you may update the references included in the dialogue.

BOOK TITLES - A list of book titles are suggested in the props list and the dialogue. Some titles are integral to the action or dialogue, for the others it is permissible to have a substitute book title that will be recognizable to the children who will be your audience.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED CREDIT FOR THIS PLAY – In addition to the title, author, and publisher listing on programs and advertising, also include “**Premiered by Eckerd Theater Company, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, Florida.**”

PROPERTIES LIST

Letters A-Z (Two sets: one to go in the book; one to appear on the set)

Towel

Remotes

Cell phone

Backpack

Books: (Recommended titles)

The Great Alphabet Adventure

King Arthur

The Cat In The Hat

Huckleberry Finn

Harry Potter

Aesop's Fables

One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish

Robots Don't Catch Chicken Pox

Captains Courageous

Treasure Island

Colors of the Rainbow

Lamp

Umbrella

Rope

Sea bag

Ferdie's eyeglasses

Hat & galoshes

Seaweed

Journal

2 pens in cup

Two fish nets (One with letters, one without)

Large bunch of yellow flowers

King's list

Treasure chest

Crown

Pirate's doubloon on a chain

Note from Queen

Map

Seinstein's folder with letters

Briefcase

Telescope

Wizard's wand

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALEX	A boy of 11
ZORA	A girl of similar age
CAPTAIN DOG	An old sea captain fisherman who is a dog
FERDIE	A nearsighted young fisherman with a poet's soul
KING LEO	A royal lion who is lost
THE PURPLE PIRATE	A swashbuckling buccaneer with a parrot on his shoulder
ROBBIE	A very fast, very frightened robot
DR SEINSTEIN	Rhymes with Einstein, a serious scientist
MR WIZARD	A weird guy with a wand
ALEX'S MOM	Offstage voice

(With the exception of Alex and Zora, the gender of the characters is flexible. If the alternate ending is used, there is no need for Alex's mom's voice.)

Doubling for Five Actors (1 F, 1 M, 3 Either)

ACTOR 1: ALEX

ACTOR 2: ZORA

ACTOR 3: CAPTAIN DOG/PURPLE PIRATE/WIZARD

ACTOR 4: FERDIE/DR SEINSTEIN/VOICE OF MOM

ACTOR 5: KING LEO/ROBBIE

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by Julia Flood

(Alex's room. It is afternoon. There is a storm outside. Alex enters, excited. Throws his backpack into the closet. He dries off a bit with a towel hanging in the closet.)

ALEX: All right! Two whole hours to play video games before Mom gets home from work. Yes!

(He turns on the lamp, grabs the remote(s) and plays; he's close to winning. Power goes out. TV sounds stop and lamp beside the bed goes out.)

Oh, no! *(He tries to turn on the TV, DVD, etc; no luck.)* Oh, man! The power is completely out. Must be the storm.

(He goes to the closet and gets cell phone out of his backpack; dials Mom.)

Mom! The power's out. I dunno. A couple of minutes. Wait? How long? Well, when will you be home? Two hours! What am I supposed to do for two hours? You realize the TV doesn't work, not even the DVD? And I can't play my video games either. But Mom, it's totally boring here! Read? You mean a book? No way. I'm not going to read. This isn't school, you know. Enjoyment?! I don't read for enjoyment, I read because my teacher makes me. I . . . Mom? Mom?

(Looks at the phone)

Oh, great. The battery's dead. I must have forgot to plug it in last night. *(Flings backpack into closet & closes door)* Now what? *(Throws himself on the bed dramatically)* Ugggh. My life is soooo boring. I'll probably die of boredom before Mom comes home. Uuuuuuggggggh.

(Sits up)

Read a book! She's nuts. About the only thing that could make my life more boring. Duh. *(He pulls a book off the shelf.)* This looks dumb. *(Continues to pull books off the shelf, looks at them and discards them randomly around the room)* Oh, this one has got to be boring. *(Another)* Boring. *(Another)* Boring. *(Another)* Boring. *(Another)* And this one, oh, forget it.

(Flops on the bed again. He sees one on the bottom shelf.)

Hey! I remember this one. I had this when I was little. I used to really like it. *The Great Alphabet Adventure*. An-nd, it's a picture book, hardly any words in it, so it isn't really reading.

(A tap on the window)

ALEX: Huh?

(Another tap, Alex goes to the window; opens it.)

ALEX: What the... who are you... how did you...?

(Zora has the umbrella that she was using for tapping. She climbs through the window.)

ZORA: Give me a hand, will you? *(Alex does without really noticing; she shakes rain off the umbrella.)* Thanks!

ALEX: How did you get up here?

ZORA: I saw your light, before the power went off of course, and I thought you might like some company.

ALEX: But how...?

ZORA: I climbed your tree, of course. Simple!

ALEX: *(It's a big tree.)* Simple...?

ZORA: I live next door. My mom and me. We just moved in.

ALEX: Next door? But the old Jenkins place is next door. No one has lived there for years.

ZORA: Well, someone does now.

ALEX: Isn't it creepy? I mean it's so old and I heard that maybe it has ghosts.

ZORA: Oh, I wish it did! I haven't seen any ghosts. It's old alright.

ALEX: Yeah.

ZORA: It has a lot of history in it.

ALEX: (*Snorts*) If you want to call it that...

ZORA: And, besides where we used to live— well, it isn't there anymore so we're really lucky to have it.

ALEX: Oh.

ZORA: It might have some magic, too.

ALEX: Magic! The Jenkins place?

ZORA: It might. You never know until you explore it. (*Zora starts to look around the room.*)

ALEX: Uugh. It's too creepy to explore.

ZORA: I'm Zora. (*Continuing to look around*)

ALEX: Hi.

ZORA: Wow, look at all these books! (*She starts to pick them up and look at them.*)

ALEX: Yeah.

ZORA: (*Picking them up one by one*) *King Arthur. The Cat in the Hat. Huckleberry Finn.*

ALEX: Mmm.

ZORA: Are they yours?

ALEX: Yeah.

ZORA: Wow. *Harry Potter.... Aesop's Fables. One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish.*

ALEX: Yeah.

ZORA: *Robots Don't Catch Chicken Pox?* Ha! Have you read them all?

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ALEX: Are you kidding? No, I've hardly read any of them.

ZORA: Are you kidding? If they were mine I'd be reading all night and day until I read every one of them.

ALEX: Why? Don't you have a TV?

ZORA: *(Sees the ABC picture book in Alex's hand)* What's that?

ALEX: This? *(He's embarrassed to be caught with a baby book.)*
Oh, nothing.

ZORA: Nothing! Yeah, right. I know what it is.

ALEX: You do?

ZORA: Of course I do. I've seen one before.

ALEX: Well...

ZORA: It's a treasure map.

ALEX: I... a what?

ZORA: A treasure map! *(Reads)* *The Great Alphabet Adventure.*
Oh, wow, this is great.

ALEX: You're nuts!

ZORA: Please, please let me go on the adventure.

ALEX: There is no adventure.

ZORA: Please, I'll be a big help, you'll see. I'm really good at figuring out clues.

ALEX: I don't think so.

ZORA: Why not?

ALEX: I'm not going on an adventure.

ZORA: Why? Have you got something better to do?

ALEX: No.

ZORA: Well, then...! *(She grabs the book and looks inside the cover.)*

ALEX: Listen, my mom will be home in a couple of hours and...

ZORA: A-l-e-x.

ALEX: Yeah?

ZORA: Alex.

ALEX: Yeah.

ZORA: Alex. What's that?

ALEX: Not what, who. Alex, that's me, that's my name.

ZORA: A-l-e-x, that's you?!!

ALEX: Well, I wrote it when I was really young. My penmanship is much better now.

ZORA: Alex, A!

ALEX: Yeah?

ZORA: A! You are the beginning of the adventure!

ALEX: What are you talking about?

ZORA: *The Great Alphabet Adventure!*

ALEX: So?

ZORA: So... every adventure has to have a beginning. The beginning of an alphabet adventure is A. A for Alex, A-l-e-x! Don't you see?

ALEX: Not really.

ZORA: Every letter will lead us to something. It's our job as explorers to find out what.

ALEX: Listen, Zora, I hate to break it to you, but I'm not an explorer.

ZORA: Alex.

ALEX: Yeah.

ZORA: What have you got to lose?

ALEX: You have a point.

ZORA: A. A for Alex. So the next clue has to start with...

ALEX: Start with...?

ZORA: Wi-i-i-th...?

ALEX: Wi-i-i-th... B?

ZORA: With B! Of course. Oh! That's weird.

ALEX: What?

ZORA: Did you notice anything funny about this map?

ALEX: It's not a map, it's a book.

ZORA: Whatever it is. Did you notice anything funny about it?

ALEX: Funny? No. It's an ABC book. What's to notice?

ZORA: Exactly. An ABC book. With no ABC's.

ALEX: Huh?

ZORA: Except for your name written in the front. A-L-E-X...

ALEX: Alex, right.

ZORA: The pages are all blank!

ALEX: What!?

ZORA: That must be it! The adventure.

ALEX: This is so weird...

ZORA: We've got to find the missing letters and put them back on the map.

ALEX: In the book.

ZORA: Whatever. Put them back where they belong. Great! Now, where were we?

ALEX: Um... B?

ZORA: B. Of course. B. Which is easy.

ALEX: It is?

ZORA: Of course it is. B, as we all know, is for book.

ALEX: B is for book. That's true enough.

ZORA: But which book? One of these books will lead to the next clue. Well, don't just stand there, help me look.

ALEX: Um, okay. What exactly are we looking for?

ZORA: A clue, a clue in one of these books.

ALEX: A clue... if you say so. *(He picks up a book.)*

ZORA: *(A whistle)* Listen! Did you hear that?

ALEX: What was that?

ZORA: It sounded like it came from in here. What's behind this door?

ALEX: Nothing, just my closet.

ZORA: Closet! C! What book do you have in your hand?

ALEX: *Captains Courageous.*

ZORA: C and C again! That must be the one!

ALEX: Huh?

ZORA: B for book, C for closet and for captains and courageous. Come on! *(She grabs the doorknob of the closet door.)* Ready?

ALEX: Ready? Ready for what?

(Zora flings open the closet door revealing the "ocean", sounds of the sea.)

CAPTAIN: *(Off)* Ahoy there!

ZORA: Ahoy, Captain!

ALEX: Captain? What is going on?

CAPTAIN: *(Off)* Permission to come aboard.

ZORA: Aye, aye, sir! *(Zora catches a nautical rope thrown out of the closet. She grabs it and hands part of it to Alex.)* Come on Alex, pull! *(They do.)* Heave ho!

(The captain comes out of the closet. He is a dog in a yellow slicker and a sea captain's hat.)

CAPTAIN: Thanks, maties! It's not a fit day out there for man nor beast! *(He shakes all over like a wet dog drying off.)*

ALEX: *(Gets all wet from the shaking)* U-u-ughh. You're a dog!

CAPTAIN: Well, of course, I'm a dog. An old sea dog. Captain Dog to you, sir.

ALEX: *(Gets the towel)* Uuugh. Everything is wet. My mother is going to kill me when she sees this mess.

ZORA: A pleasure to have you aboard, Cap'n!

CAPTAIN: I need your help, mates, and there is no time to waste.

ZORA: Our help?

CAPTAIN: My first mate, Ferdie, has gone missing!

ALEX: Ferdie?

CAPTAIN: Yes, Ferdie the fisherman. Though, to tell truth, he never catches any.

ZORA: What do you mean he's gone missing?

CAPTAIN: A huge wave struck the ship and then, Ferdie was

nowhere to be found.

ZORA: Oh, no!

ALEX: But what can we do?

CAPTAIN: I searched the ship from stem to stern. No Ferdie.

ALEX: So?

CAPTAIN: So, he must have washed up here.

ALEX: What?

(Zora and Captain begin to search the room.)

ALEX: But that's crazy! If someone was in my room, if a fisherman, a fisherman thrown from a boat, was in my room, I would know it.

CAPTAIN: Aha!

ZORA: What is it, Captain?

CAPTAIN: Ferdie's seabag!

ALEX: What? How did that get in here?

ZORA: Look, a fisherman's hat and galoshes!

CAPTAIN: Ferdie's!

ALEX: How do you know that they're Ferdie's? They could be anyone's.

ZORA: A pair of eyeglasses!

CAPTAIN: Ferdie's eyeglasses. He can't see a thing without them. We're very close now, mates, very close.

ALEX: This is ridiculous! A shipwrecked sailor can't possibly be in my room without me knowing about it.

ZORA: And a book!

ALEX: A book?

CAPTAIN: What sort of book?

ZORA: It looks like a journal. You know, a book to write in.

CAPTAIN: Ferdie was writing in a book? Let me see that.

ZORA: *(Checking under the bed)* He's not under here, Cap'n.

ALEX: Zora, he's not here, I told you—

CAPTAIN: *(Reading, excited)* "Batten the hatches, Ferdie," the captain bellowed, "quickly now, before the wind..." *(He flips pages; there is no more.)* Before the wind WHAT? The writing stops!

ZORA: *(Looks over his shoulder)* Huh. Maybe the wind blew him overboard.

CAPTAIN: Or the wave took him out to sea.

ALEX: Maybe he ran out of ideas.

FERDIE: *(Off)* Or maybe he ran out of INK.

CAPTAIN & ZORA: Ferdie!

(They pull him out of the toy box. He looks wet and is draped with seaweed. He shakes like a dog, getting Alex wet. Cap'n shakes, too. Zora, too)

ALEX: Uuugh. *(Grabs the towel again)*

CAPTAIN: Ferdie, my lad, you're all right!

FERDIE: *(He can't see without his glasses.)* Is that you, Captain?

CAPTAIN: Well, of course, it's me. What's wrong with you?

ZORA: Here, Ferdie. *(She gives him his glasses.)*

FERDIE: Thank you. *(Puts them on)* Oh! Hello, Captain.

CAPTAIN: Ferdie, my lad.

FERDIE: My journal! *(He takes it.)*