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## **Family Plays**

# **Charlie Foster**

**A play about swimming  
and theatre  
by Raymond King Shurtz**

**“I sometimes wonder  
what it would be like  
to be you  
for a day.”**

## **CHARLIE FOSTER, A play about swimming and theatre**

by Raymond King Shurtz

Charlie Foster was a kid no one knew or cared about until he accidentally drowned in the river. Or was it an accident? Ten young people try to remember, understand, and question each other after his death. They use the emotional tools that they understand to process the tragedy: the rules of swimming and improvisation.

Their journey becomes a powerful play about coming of age, and the sensitive nature of walking in someone else's shoes. Charlie Foster, the kid no one noticed, is the universal part of us all that strives to be understood and loved. Code: CH2.

**APPROX. RUNNING TIME:** 40 MINUTES

**CAST:** 10 ROLES (8F, 2M) THAT MAY BE PLAYED BY AS FEW AS 5.

**SETTING:** 10 CHAIRS FUNCTION AS THE SET. SUITABLE FOR TOURING

**COSTUMES:** CONTEMPORARY

**PLAYWRIGHT:** Raymond King Shurtz is director of the theatre and film program at Metro Arts Institute in Phoenix, Arizona. He has worked in the theatre and film industry for twenty years. Raymond designs, acts, directs, teaches and writes, and was awarded the Arizona Commission on the Arts Playwriting Fellowship in 2003. His plays have been published by Samuel French and his *AMY'S ATTIC* is another Anchorage Press PLAYS title. The artistic director of *cheap theatrix*, a producing company, Raymond has written thirty plays and has produced over eighty new plays. He is also a singer/songwriter, and has written over two hundred songs. Additionally, Raymond serves as the producing director of The Boulder Heritage Festival, a three day music and historic festival in southern Utah.

# **Family Plays**

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Charlie Foster

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RAYMOND KING SHURTZ

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

## ORIGINAL PRODUCTION CREDIT

**Charlie Foster, A play about swimming and theatre** was first produced in December, 2005 as part of the One-Act Play Festival at the Metropolitan Arts Institute in Phoenix, Arizona. The same players won the One-Act Play Festival at the Arizona Thespians Conference. The play was directed by the playwright.

### Red Cast

Juliet - Annie Thompson  
Jodie - Terena Hopkins  
Jeff - Daniel Bratcher  
Kyle - Richard Peña  
Trisha - Santina Thiel  
Nancy - Patty Hernandez  
Debbie - Laura Elder  
Stephanie - Ariel Biscoe  
Jana - Takenya Mayberry  
Melissa - Brit Bulger

### Blue Cast

Juliet - Liz Allen  
Jodie - Katrina Aldaco  
Jeff - Britt Baatan  
Kyle - Eddie Montalvo  
Trisha - Jordan Werner  
Nancy - Erica West  
Debbie - Elicia Gantverg  
Stephanie - Kimberly Pike  
Jana - Megan Moore  
Melissa - Britt Shostak

Stage Manager - Mara Tunnichliff  
Lights - 'Sandy Baby', Lex Miller  
Costumes - Cast

**Charlie Foster, A play about swimming and theatre** was also produced as a First Friday production of the Metropolitan Arts Institute in 2007, directed by Fernando Teson, with assistant director Jacob Burke.

Juliet - Lena McCain  
Jodie/Jose - Anthony Newell  
Trisha - Kayla Bickman  
Kyle - Jordan Musser  
Debbie - Zandra King  
Jeff - Hunter McDermott  
Nancy - Rose Littwin  
Stephanie - Victoria Lozoya  
Jana - Danica Walsh  
Melissa - Debbie Brace

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Juliet  
Jodie  
Jeff  
Kyle  
Trisha  
Nancy  
Debbie  
Stephanie  
Jana  
Melissa

## **TIME**

Fall

## **PLACE**

Familiar places

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

Ten chairs function as the set. They are moved in various positions as the text will indicate, or function as sitting places for the characters. The actors are dressed according to the personalities of each character, as the text will indicate. In a well-equipped theatre, lighting could be an asset, however, the play is designed to be played in various spaces. There are ten roles. A minimum of five actors could perform the play with doubling of some of the parts.



To my mother, Gerry King, who taught me  
how to see as a writer, and to reach out  
and communicate to the unnoticed.

# CHARLIE FOSTER

A play about swimming and theatre

By Raymond King Shurtz

Note: Stage directions are in parentheses and italics. All other text in italics is spoken by the actor.

*(At rise, Juliet stands DS, just left of center. Jodie sits in one of ten chairs DR. The chairs are positioned in various spots on the stage. Jodie looks at Juliet as she speaks to the audience.)*

**JULIET:** I learned to swim when I was four years old. I learned to swim because when I was three, I almost drowned. It isn't a complicated story, it was very simple, like most of them are. I went through an open gate and I reached for my ball in the pretty water. *Memory.* The cold water embraces my body and then fills my lungs as I try to breathe. In an instant I am cut off from life. My cousin, Skip, saves my life. He sees me from the upstairs window and pulls my tiny body out of the pool. *First rule of water safety: If you go near the water, you better know how to swim.*

**JODIE:** Is that a true story?

**JULIET:** Yes, why?

**JODIE:** I mean it sounded true, I was just asking.

**JULIET:** It's a true story.

**JODIE:** Why are you telling it?

**JULIET:** Oh, I was asked to.

**JODIE:** Isn't this a play about Charlie Foster?

**JULIET:** Yes.

**JODIE:** Oh, I get it.

**JULIET:** See?

**JODIE:** Did you know him?

**JULIET:** Did anyone?

**JODIE:** Where do I know *you* from?

**JULIET:** We were both in the same drama class at the beginning of the year.

**JODIE:** That's right! I transferred to the sixth hour class.

**JULIET:** (*With flair*) Theatre arts.

**JODIE:** Art imitating life. Remember improvisation?

**JULIET:** Real life rules.

**JODIE:** Serious pretending.

**JULIET:** (*Indicating each part*) Head, heart, body, spirit.

**JODIE:** Start with a feeling. The heart.

**JULIET:** *First rule of improvisation:* Find the truth in the given circumstance.

**JODIE:** Yes.

**JULIET:** What is truth?

**JODIE:** *Second rule of improvisation:* Listen carefully to the other actor or actors.

**JULIET:** *Okay, improv situation.* I am someone you've met before, but only briefly. We meet at a funeral. We are standing next to each other during the closing prayer. We look at each other at the end of the prayer.

*(Juliet and Jodie stand next to each other, heads bowed. The actor who plays Jeff does the voiceover from offstage.)*

**VOICEOVER:** Amen.

**JODIE:** Hello.

**JULIET:** Hi. You're Jodie McDermott.

**JODIE:** Juliet. I don't remember your last name.

**JULIET:** Norman. Like in, *Norman, is that you?*

**JODIE:** What?

**JULIET:** Joke. Never mind.

**JODIE:** Sad, isn't it?

**JULIET:** Oh, yes, very.

**JODIE:** He was so young.

**JULIET:** Youth is wasted on the young.

**JODIE:** George Bernard Shaw?

**JULIET:** I think so.

**JODIE:** What's next?

**JULIET:** The cemetery.

**JODIE:** *Third rule of improvisation:* Establish a relationship with the other characters.

**JULIET:** Are you going?

**JODIE:** Where?

**JULIET:** To the cemetery.

**JODIE:** I guess, you'll have to forgive me, my first funeral.

**JULIET:** You want to ride with me?

*(Trisha enters USC and finds her chair. She puts her leg up and pulls up her socks.)*

**TRISHA:** Charlie Foster was a nobody. He was dirty and never washed his hair. Don't even pretend to care about him because you don't. Charlie Foster brought it on himself.

*(Juliet looks at Jodie.)*

**JULIET:** *(A semi-warning)* Fourth rule of improvisation: Don't try to be clever, I mean, clever.

**JODIE:** Hello Trisha. Are your socks too tight?

**TRISHA:** My socks are none of your concern.

**JODIE:** What do you want?

**TRISHA:** Nobody touched Charlie Foster. No one would want to.

**JODIE:** Thanks for the information, Trish.

**JULIET:** *Improv situation.* We are at the river. You are closer to where it happens than I am.

*(Jodie looks out towards the river, and begins.)*

**JODIE:** Oh my God! Oh my God! Somebody do something! You guys! We can't just let him—

*(Jeff enters.)*

**JEFF:** CHARLIE!! You stupid idiot!!

*(Jeff starts taking off his shoes and socks. Stephanie, Jana and Nancy enter.)*

**STEPHANIE:** Jeff, what are you doing?

**JEFF:** He'll drown!

**JANA:** Jeff, it's stupid to go in that water!

**STEPHANIE:** The water is too fast, Jeff—

**JEFF:** Get some help—

**JODIE:** *Freeze!*

*(Jeff, Stephanie and Jana freeze. Nancy could say the next lines to the audience or to another character, depending on how the director wants to establish the storytelling.)*

**NANCY:** *Memory.* I am frozen. It was sort of like a bad dream when it happened. Like slow motion. I didn't hang out with this group of people—but *it was* a party after all. I was looking for Debbie Logan. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time, or maybe, I was in the right place at the wrong time. (*Looking at the water*) Wow...that's deep.

**STEPHANIE:** *Memory.* Charlie sat behind me in Earth Science. I don't know—I was nice to him—I mean, I never said anything bad to him—I was trying to remember whether I talked to him at all—there were these two kids that wouldn't leave him alone—I mean *he was* Charlie Foster—

**TRISHA:** Damned straight he was Charlie Foster!

(*Jeff continues taking off his shirt. The improv continues.*)

**JANA:** Jeff! I'll call 9-1-1. (*She pulls out her phone.*)

**JEFF:** I'm going in—

**STEPHANIE:** Don't go in—

**JEFF:** He's drowning!!

**STEPHANIE:** Shouldn't you wait—

**JULIET:** *Freeze!*

(*Jeff, Stephanie and Jana freeze.*)

**JODIE:** Every party has an end.

**JULIET:** *Second rule of water safety:* Drinking alcohol and water don't mix.

**JODIE:** Who's drinking?

**JANA:** Not me.

**STEPHANIE:** Not me.

**JEFF:** I don't drink.

(*Nancy raises her hand.*)

**NANCY:** I confess.

**TRISHA:** Charlie Foster was drunk off his ass.

**JODIE:** *Drinking alcohol and water don't mix.* Got it. What's your take?

**JULIET:** *Memory.* I am standing away from the riverbank. I can see Mike Berry and Charlie. They appear to be wrestling with each other. Someone is screaming but it isn't a scared scream, it's a—*(Trisha screams like a little girl.)* Yes, sort of like that—

**JODIE:** Those are the given circumstances. *Find the truth in the given circumstances.*

**JULIET:** Yes, and Kyle Rogers is—laughing, Kyle is laughing in the distance. *(Kyle enters laughing.)* Like that, Kyle is laughing like that. I am looking to see if Mike Berry is angry.

*(Kyle stops laughing.)*

**KYLE:** Mike wasn't mad at Charlie. He was just messing around. He was just—messing around, that's all.

**JULIET:** *Improvisation rule number five:* If you run out of options, go to a direct use of your five senses. I can still smell the rain at the river.

**KYLE:** I can see what Mike did perfectly.

**NANCY:** I can feel the wet grass on the bank.

**JANA:** I can hear the splash.

**TRISHA:** I can taste Carl Zimmerman's tongue down my throat.

*(Everyone looks at Trisha.)*

**DEBBIE:** *(Offstage)* Hello? Can anyone hear me down there?

**NANCY:** *(Loud)* Debbie!! Debbie!! Where are you?

**DEBBIE:** I'm over here!