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Family Plays



THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS

**Folktale/Comedy by
Patricia Barry Rumble**

**Based on a Russian folktale,
“Go I Know Not Whither and Fetch
I Know Not What.”**

THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS

“Your show was a tremendous success.”

(D. L. Mollise, Pixie Players, Mobile, Ala.)

“My students played to more than 2,000 schoolchildren from kindergarten through 8th grade and received a terrific response with each performance.”

(Kerry Lockwood, Arkansas Teacher of the Year, Hot Springs High School)

“Excellent adaptation of this unusual Russian folktale ... I recommend *The Archer and the Princess* as a solid show for young audiences.”

(Rebecca Udden, Main Street Theater, Houston, Texas)

Folktale/Comedy. By Patricia Barry Rumble. Based on a Russian folktale, “Go I Know Not Whither and Fetch I Know Not What.” *Cast: 4 to 6m., 3 to 5w. Performers may be children or adults.* This happy, scary play tells the story of Andrei the archer, whose wife, Maria, is so lovely the tsar wants to marry her. Before he can do that, however, he must get rid of Andrei. The tsar sends Andrei on three seemingly impossible errands, including one to the witch Baba Yaga and one to the beautiful but treacherous Croon Cat. Andrei foils the greedy tsar and succeeds all three times. Each character is a choice role, including the clumsy counselor, the bungling wizard and the tsar, who tries to prolong his life with a Methuselah diet that eventually turns him into a giant chicken. The Croon Cat enchants his/her victims with a funny song (sung a cappella in the premiere; notes provided in the playbook) and an ugly witch who offers to turn the chicken-tsar back into a human if he will marry her. *Unit set. The action takes place in Russia once upon a time, long ago. Imaginative costumes suggesting the Russia of long ago were used in the premiere. Russian costumes of any pre-Lenin period would be appropriate. Suitable for touring. Approximate running time: 60 to 80 minutes. “Croon Cat Song” CD available. Code: AH6.*

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308

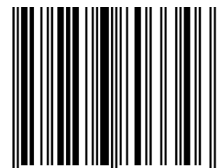
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Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

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The Archer and the Princess



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**Music and lyrics of "Croon Cat Song"
by Rock S. Barry**

**Based on a Russian folktale,
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(THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS)

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DEDICATION

**To my little son Rob, who inspired me
to write plays for children**

THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS

Cast of Characters

Andrei, archer to the Tsar
Maria, Andrei's beautiful wife
Tsar Ivan, the egocentric ruler
Counselor, the Tsar's right-hand man
Wizard, bungling but nice
Croon Cat, Andrei's first quest
Old Tsar, the Tsar's dead father, in the Next World
Baba Yaga, an extremely ugly witch
Boris, the hunchback, Baba Yaga's sidekick

Δ

The action takes place in Russia once upon a time, long, long ago.

• Δ •

First produced by Main Street Theater, Houston, Texas, under the direction of Kim Gribble with the following cast:

Andrei	Christopher C. Conway
Maria	Gwendolyn McLarty
Tsar	Graham Holland
Counselor	Kenny Joe Spivey
Wizard	Eloy Escobar
Croon Cat	Sarah Louise Hudgins
Old Tsar	John Early
Baba Yaga	Natalie R. Williams
Boris	John Early

ABOUT THE PLAY

From the land that gave us Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov comes this romantic folk tale about Andrei, a humble archer, and his beautiful wife Maria. The rupture in the romance comes when the Tsar (or Czar—take your choice) sees Maria and wants her for his wife. With the help of his Counselor and Wizard, the Tsar tries to get rid of Andrei by sending him on three journeys, each increasingly difficult and dangerous.

Each character is a choice role. The Counselor is clownishly clumsy; the Wizard is a bungling whiz. There is a Croon Cat who enchants her victims with a funny song. The Tsar tries to prolong his life with a Methuselah diet which eventually turns him into a giant chicken. And there is a horribly ugly witch named Baba Yaga who will turn the Tsar-chicken back into a human if he will marry her.

Although the action takes place in several different locations, a unit set makes scene changes and long blackouts unnecessary (see the floor plan on page 37).

In the premiere the Croon Cat's song was sung *a cappella*. A demonstration/accompaniment tape is available to help the actor learn the tune and to provide guitar accompaniment at performances if desired. The vocal and guitar score may be found at the back of this book.

The Archer and the Princess entertains audiences of all ages from kindergarten up. Performers may be children or adults, and the play is easily toured. Playing time is 60-80 minutes.

Comments from Pre-Publication Producers

"Main Street Theater produced Patricia Rumble's play, **THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS**, with very satisfying results. Her excellent adaptation of this unusual Russian folk tale was very well received by our young audiences as well as their parents, and the characters in the play were a pleasure for the actors to create ... I recommend **THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS** as a solid show for Young Audiences."—Rebecca Green Udden, Main Street Theater, Houston

“My students played to over 2000 school children from K through 8th grade & received a terrific response with each performance. Your words allowed flexibility & freedom with costumes, sets, and even cast numbers, that both the performers’ and audiences’ imaginations were allowed to be as free & whimsical as their minds could allow. The dialogue encouraged very simple blocking & the whole presentation was very simply packaged and transported.”—Kerry Lockwood Owen, 1986 Arkansas Teacher of the Year, Hot Springs High School

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Available from the Publisher:

Demonstration/Accompaniment tape of “Croon Cat Song”

Video tape of Main Street Theater’s production

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Bow and arrows—Andrei
 Picnic basket containing food, wine, cups—Maria
 Patterned rug with a piece cut off—Maria
 Medals—Tsar
 Crown—Counselor
 Mustard-plaster type cloth—inside Tsar's blouse
 Bottles, test tubes, powders, wine mugs, ladle—on Wizard's lab table
 Book for recording lab experiments—on Wizard's table
 Large lollipops, colored rocks—in experiment cauldron and lab table
 Lunch tray containing chicken—Tsar's chamber
 Chicken feathers—scattered about and applied to Tsar's back and neck
 Toy animals—thrown on stage during Croon Cat scene
 Black "Hamlet" robe—offstage for Croon Cat
 Rope—Andrei
 Scarf—around Andrei's neck
 Pouch, containing "glowing" stone and "sparkling" yarn—Maria
 Signet ring—Old Tsar
 Book of "Taxes"—on lab table
 Multi-colored Indian headdress (child's version)—in experiment cauldron
 Cauldron—placed on stage for Baba Yaga's scene
 Knife, fork, bib—Boris
 Net, rope—Boris
 Recipe book—Boris
 2 crowns—Counselor

Costumes

Imaginative costumes suggesting the Russia of long ago were used in the premiere. Obviously, Russian costumes of any pre-Lenin period would be appropriate. Main Street Theater dressed the **Wizard** in a long robe and matching pointed hat decorated with stars and quarter moons. Long gray hair flowed out of his hat. **Andrei** wore a Russian peasant costume with full-cut trousers tucked into short boots, a long sleeveless vest confined at the waist with a leather belt or sash, and a peasant blouse. **Maria** wore a long dress which enhanced her beauty. Royal robes for the **Tsar** and **Counselor** plus a crown for the Tsar. **Croon Cat** wore a body suit of leopard-patterned cloth. The **Old Tsar** wore a hood that covered everything except for his skeleton-masked face. The Tsar's **chicken** costume included a feathered robe which covered his entire body, a separate feathered mask with a chicken beak, and chicken-feet boots; he continued to wear his crown (see photo, p. 35). **Baba Yaga's** witch's costume was unkempt and her facial make-up was hideous. On the back of her cloak is the missing piece of Maria's rug. **Boris** wore peasant pants and blouse with a hump on his back.

Music and Sound Effects

Russian music—especially balalaika instrumental—is appropriate at many places, some noted in the script. Several offstage **crashes** are called for. The sound of **soldiers marching** is also heard. The Tsar's offstage **chicken clucking and cackling** may be authentic recorded sound effects, or they

may be made by the actor. The "Croon Cat Song" was sung *a cappella* in the premiere. Guitar accompaniment is available on tape. The vocal score begins on page 38 of this book.

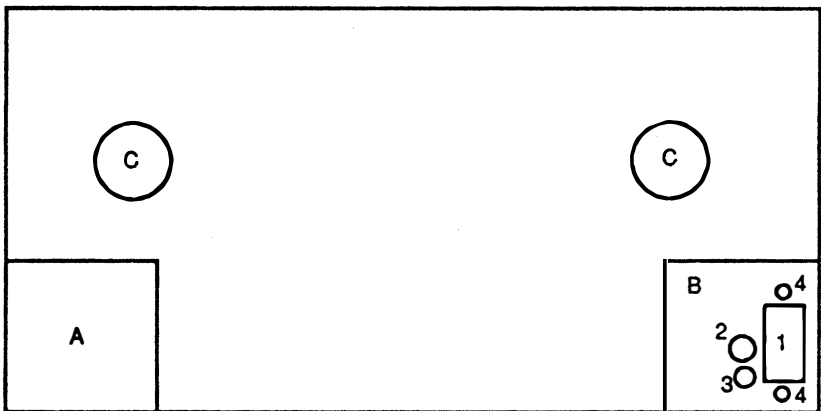
Lighting

Area lighting may be used to direct focus on the various stage areas pictured on the Floor Plan. Stage directions call for blue spotlights on Maria's bedroom and on Andrei in Croon Cat's forest. There is also gloomy lighting for the "Next World" scene, page 20.

The Set

The set is designed so that action can proceed without long pauses or blackouts. With careful planning, no blackout should have to last more than five seconds. The Main Street Theater production was played on an arena stage.

Floor Plan



- A—Andrei and Maria's picnic area; later, Maria's bedroom
- B—Wizard's lab:
 - 1—Workbench
 - 2—Experiment cauldron
 - 3—Small cauldron containing mulled wine
 - 4—Low stools
- C—Columns, which symbolize the court in castle scenes and trees in Croon Cat and Baba Yaga scenes

The main acting area serves as the castle interior, Croon Cat's home, the Next World, and Baba Yaga's forest. Windows and doors are mimed.

THE ARCHER AND THE PRINCESS

Scene 1

[Midday. The grounds directly outside the Tsar's castle. This area is visible from the Tsar's chamber.]

AT RISE: LIGHTS up to reveal an old WIZARD]

WIZARD. Drahs-t-vooy-t'yeh. That means "hello" in Russian. And today we want to tell you a Russian folk tale. Once upon a time, in that far-away land, there lived a young archer by the name of Andrei . . . *[ANDREI, the archer, enters. He moves stealthily, his bow and arrow ready, as he stalks prey]* Now Andrei was in the service of the Tsar. A tsar, by the way, is another name for the king of Russia, that is, when Russia had kings. And every day Andrei had to work very hard, hunting all types of game—like pheasant, wild boar, or black bear that the Tsar liked for his dinner. And today is just like any other day except for one thing. The Tsar is on a very strict diet, so Andrei is not particularly busy. Let's watch and see what happens. *[WIZARD disappears]*

[ANDREI stops for a moment and sets down his bow and arrows. He stands surveying the scene. MARIA, his beautiful young wife, enters, carrying a picnic basket. She also carries a rug. Seeing Andrei with his back to her, MARIA decides to surprise him. She sets down the basket and rug and sneaks up behind him, reaching her hands around his face to cover his eyes. She speaks in a disguised deep voice:]

MARIA. Guess who?

ANDREI. *[Surprised at first, then feeling her hands]* Ah, let's see . . . soft hands, no hairy knuckles. Then you're not a bear.

MARIA. Only in the morning before breakfast.

ANDREI. Not a bear. A wood nymph?

MARIA. You're getting warmer.

ANDREI. Warmer, eh? Well then, you must be the most beautiful woman in the world, my wife Maria. *[He pulls her hands away and turns to look at her]*

MARIA. You'd better have gotten that right, my handsome husband. *[She kisses him, then they both begin to speak at the same time, overlapping:]*

MARIA. Well, aren't you surprised to . . . *[laughing]* You first . . . No, you . . .

ANDREI. Well, I'm really surprised to . . . You first . . . No, you . . .

MARIA. *[Putting a hand over his mouth]* You go first. *[She removes her hand]*

ANDREI. All right. I'm glad you're here. It's such a pretty day and I was hoping you'd come.

MARIA. Andrei, that's exactly what I was thinking and I decided to bring you a picnic lunch.

ANDREI. How did you know?

MARIA. Know what?—that you wished I'd come and bring lunch?

ANDREI. Yes.

MARIA. I just knew.

ANDREI. *[Laughing]* Maria, sometimes I think you have magical powers the way you can read my mind. *[She picks up the basket and the rug. They cross to sit down where they can be seen from the Tsar's window in the next scene]*

MARIA. Me? Magical powers? I wish I did. Then maybe I could conjure up the money we owe the Tsar in taxes.

ANDREI. Oh, it it tax time again?

MARIA. Yes, Andrei, and as you well know there's very little money left, certainly not enough for taxes.

ANDREI. Then I'll ask the Tsar for a raise.

MARIA. *[With a futile tone]* What, from that stingy old man? Oh, Andrei, even if you got a raise, it wouldn't be enough.

ANDREI. *[Sighs]* You're right. *[Sees the rug]* Say, what's this?

MARIA. My rug.

ANDREI. Your heirloom rug, the one that you and your mother made when you were little? *[Unfolds the rug to look at it]* You know, Maria, I've always loved this rug. What a work of art, an embroidered version of the whole tsardom.

MARIA. Yes, it is lovely, isn't it? Oh, Andrei, see this figure here, the one of the man who's in all the scenes. That figure has always reminded me of you.

ANDREI. You mean the man with no face. Thanks.

MARIA. No, really, he looks like you. Do your face like this. *[She makes her face go blank, closes her eyes, and sticks out her chin. He mimics her]* Yes, it's definitely you. *[They both laugh]*

ANDREI. But, Maria, why did you bring the rug here today?

MARIA. Money, Andrei. After lunch I'm taking it to the castle to sell.

ANDREI. What? You can't be serious. This rug is from your hope chest.

MARIA. Actually it is my hope chest. Other than this pouch with the shining stone and the sparkling yarn, the rug is the only thing I have left from my mother before the Gypsies stole me away.

ANDREI. Then why on earth would you want to sell it?

MARIA. What choice do we have? It's the only thing of value we own.

ANDREI. I know, but surely I can do something. I could take a second job.

MARIA. Andrei, the taxes are due now. No, darling, my mind's made up. Today I'll sell the rug and that's final . . . Now I want you to eat. I brought your favorite dish.

ANDREI. Did you? [*Reaches in the basket, takes out a small covered pot, removing the lid*] You did! Bear Stroganoff. It's a good thing the Tsar's on that diet or this bear would have ended up on his banquet table.

MARIA. Please, Andrei, let's not speak of that stingy old Tsar—especially on an empty stomach. Here . . . have some wine. [*She takes out two cups and a small bottle, then pours two cups of wine*]

ANDREI. Wine too? Then I'd like to propose a toast.

MARIA. To what?

ANDREI. To the most wonderful woman in the world . . . [*MARIA blushes*] And to our good fortune.

MARIA. [*Surprised*] To what good fortune? We're as poor as church mice.

ANDREI. We have each other, don't we?

MARIA. Why, what a lovely thought. Yes, then to our good fortune—of having each other. [*They toast*]

Scene 2

[Inside the castle, looking out of an imaginary window, stands the COUNSELOR with the TSAR nearby, examining his medals. The COUNSELOR polishes the Tsar's crown. From the window, ANDREI and MARIA can be seen enjoying their picnic lunch]

COUNSELOR. Oh, it is a glorious day, Tsar Ivan. Absolutely glorious. My favorite time of year.

TSAR. Spring time?

COUNSELOR. No, tax time. *[As he polishes the crown, he fumbles it]*

TSAR. Hey, be careful, you clumsy oaf. Give me that. *[He snatches his crown]* Now look what you've done to the royal crown . . . look at these scratches.

COUNSELOR. Surely you don't think that I . . . that I . . . not I, Tsar Ivan. It was the Wizard . . . the Wizard taking a sample for his silver-into-gold experiments.

TSAR. The Wizard? I should have known. Where is that fraud? I'll have his head.

COUNSELOR. Ah, but your greatness, you can't kill the Wizard.

TSAR. Can't kill the Wizard, did you say? Of course, I can. I can do whatever I want. I am the tsar, after all.

COUNSELOR. Quite so, your highness, and what a wonderful tsar you are, too, but don't you remember, your majesty? The diet . . . the Methuselah diet? Without the Wizard there would be no Methuselah diet, and without that diet you won't live two hundred more years.

TSAR. Oh, true, true, how silly of me—but tell me, Counselor, how much longer must I endure this Methuselah treatment? I mean eating a chicken a day to keep the wrinkles away. How many more chicken days, Counselor?

COUNSELOR. Just another month . . . *[Pause]* Perhaps two.

TSAR. What? By the holy icons, I shall go mad if I have to endure another month . . . *[The COUNSELOR holds up two fingers]* Or two of eating nothing but chicken, not to mention having to wear a plaster of rancid chicken oil over my heart every night . . . Uh oh, that reminds me . . . *[The COUNSELOR, realizing that the TSAR is about to remove the smelly plaster, waves his hands as if to say "no, no! don't do it!"]* I almost forgot to take the plaster off. *[The TSAR removes the*

plaster and hands it to the COUNSELOR, who holds his nose as he takes it) There, that's better.

COUNSELOR. *[To himself]* Better for whom? . . . *[To Tsar]* I think a little fresh air would be nice . . . *[Crosses to open the imaginary window and throws out the plaster]* The people are beginning to call him Tsar Ivan the Stinker. *[Returns to Tsar]* There now. Well, are you ready for the royal rubdown?

TSAR. Rubdown with more chicken oil? No, no, after lunch. By the way, what is for lunch?

COUNSELOR. Oh, something . . . *[He kisses his fingers like a Frenchman]* . . . a la tsar . . . I believe it's chicken.

TSAR. Oh, why did I ask? Please, let us speak of something else. Why last night I even dreamed I had turned into a giant . . . *[He shudders and turns away]*

COUNSELOR. A giant what, your royal foulness, er, ah, I mean highness?

TSAR. Oh, never mind. *[Deep in thought, the TSAR moves to the window]* Counselor, you know being a tsar is not an easy job. *[The COUNSELOR, who has heard this all before, rolls his eyes and moves his fingers together in a talk-talk-talk sign, then plays an imaginary violin]* It's often quite tedious, quite . . . what can I say, boring. *[Turns abruptly and almost catches the COUNSELOR making fun of him]* You know, Counselor, I may live two hundred more years but I have no one to share those years with. How utterly boring! Do you know what I want, Counselor? What would make me really and truly happy?

COUNSELOR. I haven't a clue. What would make you really and truly happy, sire?

TSAR. A beautiful wife. *[Looks out the window and sees Maria. He is astounded by her beauty]* Hallo. What's this? Who is that vision of loveliness? Look, Counselor. *[The COUNSELOR isn't paying attention]* Counselor, come here.

COUNSELOR. *[To himself as he crosses]* Now what?

TSAR. Look there at that woman, the woman with the archer. Do you know her?

COUNSELOR. Why, yes. That's the archer's wife.

TSAR. You mean to tell me that my archer, that lowly peasant, has a wife that beautiful? Ridiculous!

COUNSELOR. Ridiculous but true, sire.

TSAR. Why, this is an outrage . . . *[Begins to shake the Coun-*

selor's shoulders until the COUNSELOR lands on the floor] An outrage, I tell you. She is truly gorgeous, indeed the most beautiful woman in the world—and married to an archer. I won't have it. Do you hear me, Counselor? I won't have it.

COUNSELOR. *[His feet sticking up in the air]* Yes, I hear you, sire, but what can you do about it?

TSAR. I'll tell you what I'll do about it. I want you to think of a way to get rid of Andrei, the archer. I want to marry his wife.

COUNSELOR. *[Getting up]* Me? . . . get rid of the archer? You mean . . . *[draws his finger across his throat]* . . . dispose of him?

TSAR. That's about the size of it.

COUNSELOR. But how?

TSAR. Well, how should I know? Isn't that your job . . . to give counsel? So, Counselor, counsel me. If you help me, I shall reward you with towns and villages and gold . . . *[The COUNSELOR is suddenly interested]* But if you fail . . . *[He begins to shake the Counselor again]* I shall have your head.

COUNSELOR. My head? Then, I will get on it right away, your highness. I'd better consult with the Wizard. *[Almost to exit, then turns to audience]* I thought this job was too good to be true.