

Excerpt Terms & Conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

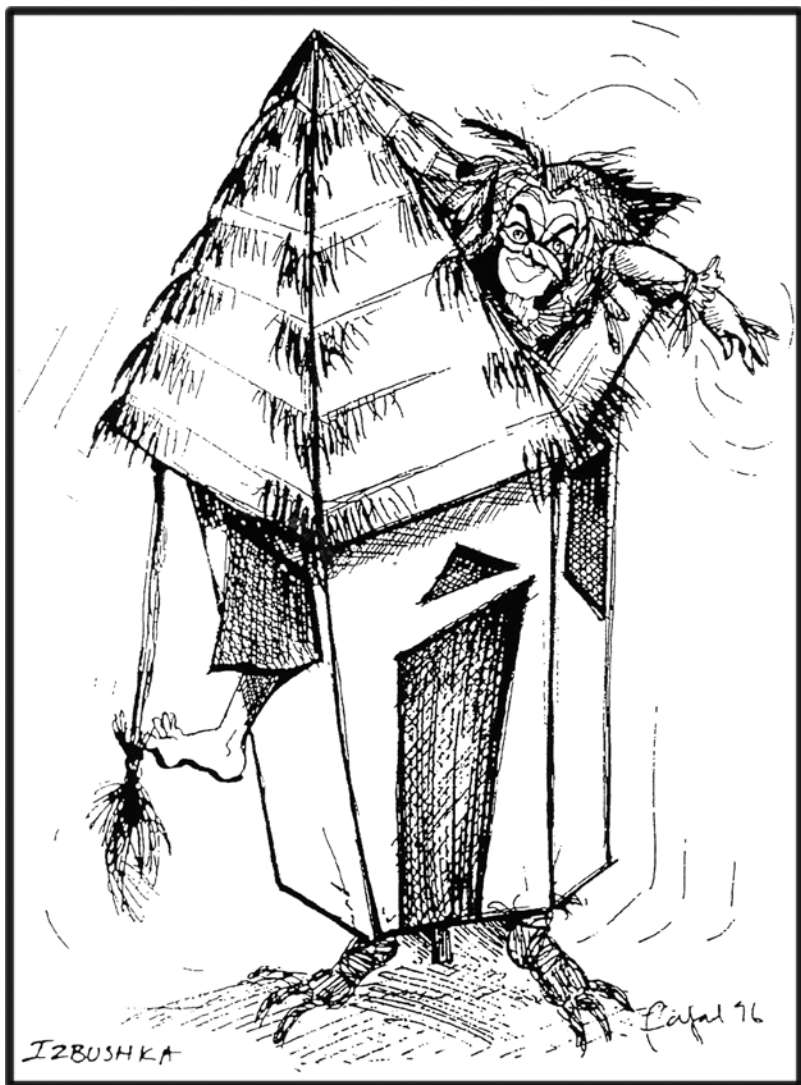
You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity of scripts.

Family Plays

BABA YAGA AND THE BLACK SUNFLOWER



Book and Lyrics
by
CAROL KORTY

Music
by
SCOTT WHEELER

BABA YAGA AND THE BLACK SUNFLOWER

AATE Unpublished Play Reading Project Award Winner

Kennedy Center New Visions/New Voices Award

This original tale uses motifs from traditional Russian stories and songs to explore a young girl's struggle to find her place in the world. Humans, animals, nightmares enrich the telling.

Musical. Book and lyrics by Carol Korty. Music by Scott Wheeler. Cast: 6-8 minimum (2m., 3-5w., 1 either gender) with doubling, or up to 20+ (3 boys, 6w., 1 girl, 10+ either gender). Maryushka spends three days enduring challenges that carry her from her village to the forest and Baba Yaga, the ancient sorceress, and a great test of wits and will. Selected for the Kennedy Center's New Visions/New Voices and hailed by *The Boston Globe* as theatre that "has everything a child could want ... scary (but not too scary), funny (but not too cute). Here are awesome songs and real ideas for kids to wrap their minds around. We hope it will be produced often and everywhere." Flexible staging. Puppets, masks and movement. Fun roles for the actors and lively action. Music score available. Accompaniment CD available. Code: BE5.

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

www.FamilyPlays.com

ISBN-13 978-0-88680-374-7



9 780876 102374 7 >

Baby Yaga and the
Black Sunflower

BABA YAGA AND THE BLACK SUNFLOWER

text and lyrics

by

CAROL KORTY

music by

SCOTT WHEELER

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

© Family Plays

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by FAMILY PLAYS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website www.FamilyPlays.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: FAMILY PLAYS, 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

© 1995, 2000 by
ANCHORAGE PRESS, INC.

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(BABY YAGA AND THE BLACK SUNFLOWER)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-374-7

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”

CHARACTERS

The many characters can be played by 10 to 16 actors. Perhaps more. Perhaps less. (See Appendix for suggestions for adapting script for a cast of 8 and a cast of 5.) Characters played by ENSEMBLE can be doubled or expanded and some might be portrayed as puppets.

The puppets could be a combination of Bunraku style puppets, rod puppets, hand puppets, and/or marionettes. The animators should be seen by the audience. Masks might be used for animals and/or for characters in Baba Yaga's world.

The actors need to be able to sing and move well. They, of course, need not be the age of the characters they portray.

- MARYUSHKA** [ma' ree oosh ka] our protagonist, a 10 year old spunky Russian village girl.
- BABA YAGA** [ba ba ya ga'] the Ancient Crone whom Maryushka fears, emulates, and confronts.
- ENSEMBLE** 8-14 actor/singers (6-9 female; 2-5 male) who play:
- GRANNY** Maryushka's baboushka [bah'boosh ka], a widow.
- STARUKHE** [sta roo' khe] three bossy women, watchdogs of the village, a chorus of doom.
- GRISHA** [gree' sha] a 10 year old village boy.
- VANYA** [vahn' ya] an 11 year old village boy.
- VILLAGERS** optional additional women, girls and men.
- PETYA** [pet' yah] a 12 year old boy from a distant village.
- IZBUSHKA** [iz bush' ka] Baba Yaga's pentagonal hut on chicken legs, who sings and talks.
- CAT** Baba Yaga's cat (optional as puppet), sings and talks.
- DOG** Baba Yaga's dog (optional as puppet), sings and talks.

BABY BROTHER a toddler, Maryushka's little brother (a puppet) who cries, coos, laughs.

HEDGEHOG a little beastie (a puppet) who squeals.

FENCE OF SKULLS 4-8 skulls on posts (rod puppets); four speak.

SERVING HANDS a silent pair of enormous hands who serve Baba Yaga (puppets or Ensemble actor(s) wearing huge hands).

WHITE HORSE & RIDER a silent galloping figure (rod puppet or mimed by Ensemble actor).

RED HORSE & RIDER a silent galloping figure (rod puppet or mimed by Ensemble actor).

BLACK HORSE & RIDER a silent galloping figure (rod puppet or mimed by Ensemble actor).

WILD GEESE honking birds (puppets or mimed by actors).

TREES, SHRUBS, BIRDS, & ANIMALS things in environment (puppets or mimed by Ensemble actors).

Technical Challenges:

There are two items that demand imagination: the Izbushka and Baba Yaga's mortar and pestle. Treat them with lighthearted humor, please.

The IZBUSHKA is probably best conceived as a costume worn by the actress playing her. It needs to have five sides, show her chicken legs, and be so constructed as to allow the actress to stand, walk, and squat down. The actress inside also must be heard when talking and singing. And BABA YAGA needs to be able to crawl inside this whole contraption! Tall order. But don't be too literal. Just devise a way to have it register as "house" and allow the actors to work. Be imaginative and inventive. You might even try two-dimensional solutions or use of Ensemble.

The mortar and pestle is Baba Yaga's mode of transportation. She flies in it. Of course, we need not be literal here either. The actress does not have to be airborne. Use illusion instead and go wild!

THE SETTINGS

A FIELD AT EDGE OF FOREST, open area near the deep woods; the village might be seen in the distance.

A SMALL RUSSIAN VILLAGE, area outside Maryushka's house, giving the sense of vegetable gardens, dirt paths, common open area, and simple single-room houses near by.

THE FOREST, dense woods beyond the Village, created by Ensemble miming and/or carrying pieces indicating trees, shrubs, and animals who inhabit it.

BABA YAGA'S CLEARING, place in the Forest containing her Izbushka, the Fence of Skulls, and her animals.

- Scene One: Field, dawn
- Scene Two: Village, mid-day
- Scene Three: Forest, dusk
- Scene Four: Baba Yaga's Clearing, evening into night
- Scene Five: Baba Yaga's Clearing, the next day into night
- Scene Six: Baba Yaga's Clearing, the third day
- Scene Seven: Forest
- Scene Eight: Village
- Scene Nine: Field, dusk of the third day

Note on Settings:

Movement between these settings is continuous. The Ensemble move pieces of scenery and props on and off to create the changes. In most cases, the Ensemble are the scenery. Their movement is to create the illusion that Maryushka is traveling.

OPENING

(ENSEMBLE enter in basic costumes, to which they later add character costume pieces. They prepare the space for the ritual of performance. Music accompanies their movement. They are intensely focused but not solemn. They sing the opening song directly to the audience, inviting their witness, and formally present to them the settings, characters and the flower mentioned in song.)

ENSEMBLE: *(sing)*
**Earth, water, fire, and air
are part of the world
and this story we share.**

**Our play is from stories
Told a long time ago.
Come with us now.
We are ready to show.**

**The place is old Russia.
Imagine a field,
Then a village,
A forest, too.
A terrible chase
From a scary place.
Someone different and strange.
And someone like you.**

**At the heart of it all
Is a Little Black Flower,
Eclipse of the sun,
With mysterious power.**

**The forces of earth, water,
Fire and air
Meet together here
In a form that is rare,
In this story we share.**

(ENSEMBLE place distinctive costume pieces on the actors playing BABA YAGA and MARYUSHKA and set

up Scene One. ENSEMBLE MEMBER takes the Little Black Sunflower from its preset spot and presents it to BABA YAGA who signals her/him where to "plant" it in the field. ENSEMBLE MEMBER holds it there, as though it were growing. Rest of ENSEMBLE exit or assume positions as part of setting. BABA YAGA and MARYUSHKA prepare to enter in character.)

SCENE ONE

SETTING: FIELD AT THE EDGE OF A RUSSIAN FOREST

Predawn

(The shadowy figure of BABA YAGA moves quietly, rooting around the ground, picking plants, herbs, mushrooms which she tucks into her garments. She moves deliberately to the Little Black Sunflower, checking its condition. In the darkness it is hard to see her clearly.)

BABA YAGA: Grow little flower,
Make ready your seeds,
Safe near these woods,
Hidden by weeds.
(BABA YAGA ritualistically draws a circle about three feet in diameter around the flower.)
Magic circle, like earth,
With all points connected,
I draw round you here,
To keep you protected.

(At sound of MARYUSHKA approaching, BABA YAGA becomes alert and guarded.)

The Wild One who gathers wild flowers at dawn. She bears watching.

(BABA YAGA ominously adds:)
Who dares enter this circle
To pick this flower
Will risk her life
And feel my power.

(BABA YAGA quickly slips out of sight behind a tree to observe. MARYUSHKA carries a basket and trowel and wears an apron with large pockets.)

MARYUSHKA: I've never been this far. No one from the village comes here. Now it's time.

(SHE moves to one side behind tree or crouches to ground and pauses in silence. WHITE HORSE AND RIDER gallop silently across the edge of the woods.)

(In wonder.) The White Horse and Rider! Who could it be? I never see them in the village - - only here at the edge of the woods. No sound. Only light. And they're gone. Wonderful. No one is here!
That's wonderful too.

(breaking spell as light level lifts.)

Now it's light enough to gather herbs. Some for market. Some for me. I have to find something really powerful. For me. Something with magic to protect me. From the Starukhe. Those old women hate me. They're turning everyone against me. Even Granny. I'm afraid. They want to get rid of me, but where could I go? I can't live in the woods. Only Baba Yaga lives there. No other village would let me in. Nobody wants an orphan.
(searches for herbs in silence.) Well, here's red clover. Lots of it. Good for healing tea. *(picks a blossom and pulls petals from it to nibble on succulent end. Speaks to blossoms.)* And you're sweet like honey. These for market and you two for my pocket. *(puts a couple blossoms in her apron pocket and a handful into her basket.)* And white yarrow. You're not magic, but you're the best for healing sores. I'll dry some of you for poultice. *(picks yarrow with long stem, leaving some growing.)* Field Geranium, you're so pretty. I don't know what you cure, but come grow in my garden where I can see you. *(digs up a plant.)* Red cap mushrooms! You look magical. Are you poisonous? Granny doesn't know. She says not to eat you just in case. Baba Yaga would know. But who would dare ask her? She's more

scary than you mushrooms.

GRANNY: *(voice calling from a distance.)* Marya! Maryushka!

MARYUSHKA: *(hearing the call but deliberately not responding, knowing GRANNY won't come near.)* I still need to find something to protect me.

VANYA: *(voice calling from distance.)* Maryushka!

GRISHA: *(calling, voice getting closer.)* Come on, Maryushka!

MARYUSHKA: Not them! They'll trample everything. I don't want them here.

(turns to go. BLACK SUNFLOWER lifts up from ground and glows or opens its petals enticingly. MARYUSHKA stops suddenly.)

Look! A little sunflower! And it's black! I've never seen one like this. So dark and strange. There's only one of you.

(BABA YAGA moves out from hiding as though to ward off MARYUSHKA but decides to hold back and observe what MARYUSHKA will do.)

This is it! I can almost feel you pulling me. You must have magic!

(SHE steps into the circle, digs up flower and holds it in front of her. BABA YAGA signals; a WILD GOOSE circles in, honking, swoops over MARYUSHKA to take the flower. MARYUSHKA ducks to keep it from GOOSE, who flies off.)

Ha, ha! You want the Black Sunflower, too. Oh, no. *(to Black Sunflower.)* I'm keeping you for myself. I can feel your power! I need you to protect me.

(PETYA wanders in. MARYUSHKA is startled and quickly puts Black Sunflower into her basket under the

yarrow.)

MARYUSHKA: Who are you? Did you come with the White Horse and Rider?

PETYA: No. I saw no horse and rider. I came on foot.

MARYUSHKA: Who are you? Where are you from?

PETYA: I'm Petya. My village is across the river on the other side of the mountain.

MARYUSHKA: Why are you here?

PETYA: I'm looking for Baba Yaga. Do you know where she lives?

MARYUSHKA: Baba Yaga! Aren't you afraid of her?

PETYA: I need her help.

MARYUSHKA: Baba Yaga will eat you.

PETYA: I've heard that her Izbushka is in these woods.

MARYUSHKA: Her Izbushka? Her five-sided house on chicken legs?

PETYA: Yes.

MARYUSHKA: That's what the bossy Starukhe in my village say. They think they know everything.

PETYA: Then I'll go into the forest.

MARYUSHKA: Into the forest! You could get lost and die there.

PETYA: Why are you here at the edge of it, if it scares you?

MARYUSHKA: *(with false bravado.)* Oh, I'm not afraid, and it's the best place to find herbs and wild flowers.

PETYA: I see. May I have one of those you've gathered to give

Baba Yaga as a gift?

MARYUSHKA: All right. Take some white yarrow. *(hands it to him.)*

PETYA: What about that little black sunflower? It's so unusual.

MARYUSHKA: *(hesitates)* There was only one. It's my favorite.

PETYA: Then keep it. You may have more need of it than I.

MARYUSHKA: Thank you. Good luck to you.

VANYA: *(calling from out of sight.)* Maryushka!

PETYA: Thank you. Farewell. *(exits)*

VANYA: *(appearing at edge, calling back to GRISHA.)* Here she is! Who was that fellow?

MARYUSHKA: Just someone from the village beyond the mountain.

VANYA: Another orphan like you? I'll beat him up!

MARYUSHKA: Let him be.

GRISHA: *(entering)* Orphan Girl!

MARYUSHKA: Don't call me that!

GRISHA: What are you doing out here by yourself?

VANYA: Talking to flowers again. And seeing things that aren't here. Isn't that right, Orphan Girl?

MARYUSHKA: *(sings)*

I'm thinking up tricks to play on you.

Ha, ha, ha, I'm smarter than you.

Would you like a taste of what I can do?

(While singing, MARYUSHKA whirls the Black Sunflower to make BOYS dizzy; snatches off their caps, switches hats on the wearers; then waves the Sunflower again)

and releases BOYS.)

**MARYUSHKA: You may call me Maryushka!
I am Maryushka.
My name is Maryushka!**

GRANNY: *(calling voice nearer and louder.)* Maryushka! It's time to pick the beans! Get ready for market!

MARYUSHKA: *(sings)*
**There's work to be done!
That's nothing new.
I'd rather play a joke or two.
And I hate being told what I have to do!**

(As BOYS reach out to grab her, she maneuvers them to turn abruptly into each other's arms.)

**You may call me Maryushka
I am Maryushka.
My name is Maryushka.**

(WILD GEESE fly by honking, swoop in to snatch the Black Sunflower from MARYUSHKA's basket. MARYUSHKA runs to chase them off and is drawn by their energy. BOYS prepare to snare her.)

**I want to fly off
Like geese in the sky,
Cast magic spells like Baba Yaga.
Make people do what I want them to.
(MARYUSHKA notices BOYS and snaps her focus back to them.)
You may call me Maryushka.
I am Maryushka!
My name is Maryushka.
You'll never, never catch me.**

I'll race you back to the village! And I'll win.

VANYA: *(throwing his arms around her.)* Not if I hold you back.

MARYUSHKA: No, you don't!

(She breaks free and takes off in a wild pattern around the space with GRISHA and VANYA chasing after. WILD GEESE swoop in.)

GRISHA: Wild geese, again! Look out! They look angry.

VANYA: *(calling after MARYUSHKA.)* If we don't catch you, those geese will!

(They run off as the scene transforms to the VILLAGE.)

SCENE TWO

SETTING: THE VILLAGE

(Three STARUKHE lumber on, bent over with a large wooden mortar and pestle, baskets, hoes, and/or sickles. GEESE fly through. STARUKHE brandish their tools to chase them off. MARYUSHKA races in, chased by GRISHA and VANYA. MARYUSHKA puts down her basket to one side and plays a boisterous game with VANYA and GRISHA in and around the Village WOMEN.)

[Note: The Starukhe speak in a precise rhythm, underscored by musical and percussion accompaniment.]

STARUKHE 1, 2 & 3: Stop, oh, stop!

STARUKHA 1: You behave like wild goats.

STARUKHA 2: You are too rowdy.

STARUKHA 3: You scare the chickens.

(VANYA and GRISHA create a flurry of chickens through the space.)

STARUKHA 2: You're kicking up the cabbages.

(MARYUSHKA picks up a cabbage and throws it to

GRISHA. *THEY play catch with it and race off.*)

STARUKHA 1: That girl!

STARUKHA 3: She's worse than ever.

STARUKHA 2: She will come to no good.

STARUKHA 1: That orphan is a terror.

STARUKHA 3: Why can't she behave?

(Other VILLAGERS cross through: a WOMAN and a GIRL who looks longingly at the chase, possibly a MAN leaving for the fields.)

GRANNY: *(entering, leaning on stout stick.)* Marya! Maryushka!

MARYUSHKA: *(running, chased by GRISHA and VANYA, who mime chickens.)*

Yes, Baboushka.

(Laughing, she spins around GRANNY, using GRANNY's body and waist as a pole to pull against. She runs off again in the chase.)

GRANNY: Maryushka! The beans! *(SHE holds out a basket.)*

MARYUSHKA: *(reentering, tossing the cabbage into the basket, takes the basket from GRANNY and tosses it to VANYA.)*

What beans?

(VANYA tips the cabbage out, tosses it to GRISHA who tosses it to MARYUSHKA and quickly goes for her basket of flowers.)

GRISHA: *(chanting)* Little orphan, the girl who talks to flowers!

MARYUSHKA: Give that back. Don't touch it. *(SHE retrieves basket,*

quickly puts Black Sunflower into her apron pocket, tosses cabbage to VANYA, and puts her basket off to side.)

GRANNY: *(holding a basket of her own.)* Watch the cabbage.

STARUKHA 1: Stop.

STARUKHE 1, 2 & 3: Oh, stop.

STARUKHA 1: You behave . . .

STARUKHA 2: . . . like wild goats.

STARUKHA 3: Watch the chickens!

GRANNY: Watch the basket.

MARYUSHKA: *(Takes GRANNY's basket, and the THREE CHILDREN play toss with cabbage and two baskets.)*

Watch the basket.

Watch the cabbage.

Watch the chickens.

Watch the beans.

What beans, Granny?

GRANNY: *(During the following lines SHE dispenses baskets and buckets to MARYUSHKA, GRISHA and VANYA, directing their work.)*

Stop it, this instant, Maryushka. Pick the beans. It looks like rain. We've got to get them in. Dig potatoes. They are ready. Save them from the beetles. Gather eggs the hens have laid. No need to feed the foxes. Fill this basket with ripe berries. Hurry and be quick about it. Hurry and be quick.

STARUKHE 2 & 3: Hurry and be quick about it.

STARUKHE 1, 2 & 3: Hurry and be quick.