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Family Plays



Amy's Attic

By
Raymond King Shurtz



Amy's Attic

First produced at Playwright's Workshop Theatre in Phoenix, Arizona, this play became a primary summer children's workshop for three years afterward.

Amy's Attic - Fantasy. By Raymond King Shurtz. Cast: 6m., 4w. (suggested) with doubling, or up to 45+ (15m., 16w., 14 either gender) with option for extras. Amy Anderson discovers her grandfather's magic trunk in the attic. When she falls asleep her dreams take her on an unforgettable adventure with Coco, a mute clown, into the circus world. She finds and rescues an array of circus performers suspended in time. They were banished by the curse of Ivan the Madman, the evil nemesis of her grandfather. Amy takes the performers back into the safe haven of her attic so they may again perform the "Greatest Show on Earth." With lots of physicality including mime, clowning and simple acrobatics, Amy's Attic offers good comedic roles for all the characters. It is an excellent choice for elementary and middle schools, theatre camps and community theatres. Simple set. Circus or contemporary costumes. Approximate running time: 80 minutes. Code: AD9.

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RAYMOND KING SHURTZ

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CHARACTERS

Amy's Grandmother:	A kindly old woman.
Amy:	A young girl.
Coco:	A silent clown.
Tosko:	The leader of the clowns.
The Clowns:	Various clowns of size and color.
Salvatore:	The courageous lion tamer.
Vito:	Salvatore's assistant.
The Lions:	Beasts of majesty.
Maurio:	The leader of the acrobats.
The Acrobats:	Various acrobats of grace and courage.
Johnny Drum:	The leader of the vendors.
The Vendors:	The popcorn elite.
Shana:	The wild woman.
Ann and Fran:	Siamese twins.
Octavia:	The octopus woman.
Frieda:	The frozen woman.
Ivan the Madman:	The villain.
Ringmaster:	A circus showman (preferably adult).

NOTE: Smaller roles within each group can be combined if there are not enough actors.

TIME

The Present, Past, and In Between.

PLACE

In Amy's Attic, and in a Black Hole.

SETTING

The stage setting is simple, suggesting place and time with lighting, stage dressing, and props. Upstage center, built into the backstage wall is a large trunk through which the characters enter and exit to travel back and forth in time. Settings for 'Grandmother's attic' are represented by paraphernalia one might find stored in the attic of an old house. Settings for 'In Between' (where the characters are lost in a Black Hole), and for 'Amy's Dream' (the circus extravaganza), are alternately represented with the trunk, modular set pieces (cubes), props, and various lighting effects to facilitate the action of the scenes.

ACT ONE

Scene One

SETTING: Amy's Grandmother's house.

TIME: The Present.

(LIGHTS RISE on AMY'S GRANDMOTHER, rocking in her chair and reading a book. AMY ENTERS excitedly with a ceramic clown in her hand.)

AMY: Grandmother! Grandmother! Look what I found!

GRANDMOTHER: Where did you find that?

AMY: I . . . I

GRANDMOTHER: Have you been playing in the attic?

AMY: I heard a noise.

GRANDMOTHER: You heard a noise?

AMY: Yes . . . it was like music . . .

GRANDMOTHER: You shouldn't play in the attic, Dear, we've talked about that . . . it isn't safe, there are . . . there are spiders everywhere.

AMY: I'm not afraid of spiders.

GRANDMOTHER: *(Looking at the clown.)* I don't remember this . . .

AMY: It was right on top of Grandfather's trunk.

GRANDMOTHER: It was?

AMY: Tell me the story again, Grandmother.

GRANDMOTHER: Heavens, child, don't you get tired of the same story?

AMY: Not when you tell it, Grandmother . . .

GRANDMOTHER: Promise me not to play in the attic . . .

AMY: Oh, alright . . .

GRANDMOTHER: Promise?

AMY: Yes.

GRANDMOTHER: Very well . . . come closer . . . When I was a little girl, I lived way out in the country. I didn't have any brothers and sisters, and it was too far to walk to the next house, so I had to play all by myself. Now, my father was a magician in the circus, and when he was home, he had a huge trunk that was full of the most wonderful things. One day, he took my mother to the village to pick up some supplies that my mother had ordered. The magic trunk - that's what I called it - was kept in a shed next to the house. When they had left, I crept out to the shed, at first just to look at the great black magician's trunk . . .

(Amy begins to fall asleep as Grandmother continues to tell the story.)

I climbed upon the trunk's back, and began to play with the latches that kept it closed . . .

AMY: *(Awakes from a dream, in the attic of her Grandmother's house. The trunk is open. She has a top hat on, a wand in her hand.)* What? Grandmother? Where did you go?

(Finds a music box and winds it up. The music box doesn't play. She sees the ceramic clown, standing DS of her.)

(To the clown.) Why Hello, I'm Amy Anderson, and you must be?

(THE CLOWN does not respond.)

AMY: You came for the show you say? Okay, then, a show you shall have! Ladies and Gentlemen - and to our most distinguished guest, the clown - Welcome to Amy's Attic, and I might add, to the most incredible show you've ever seen!

(SHE takes off her hat and begins removing several scarves from the hat, humming circus music.)

Thank you, thank you Ladies and Gentlemen. And now for my next trick. *(SHE closes her eyes.)* Close your eyes Ladies and Gentlemen and dream! Any dream you wish! Any dream at all! *(She chants.)* All good things, come in dreams, and magic comes on golden wings . . . I am here, but not for long, listen to the secret song . . .

(The music box begins to play. AMY opens her eyes brightly, shudders and holds her shoulders tightly.)

Who's there?

(COCO the SILENT CLOWN sticks his head up from the trunk. AMY turns her head towards the trunk, and as she does, COCO'S head disappears.)

Hello? Is someone there? Grandmother, is that you? Please don't scare me . . . I . . .

(COCO'S head reappears from the trunk. AMY sees him and shirks back with fear. COCO is just as afraid.)

Who are you? You stay away! I'm gonna scream real loud!

(COCO steps out of the trunk. He tries to quiet her with his actions.)

AMY: How did you get in here?

(COCO points his finger at her.)

Me? What do you mean, me? I've never seen you before in my life. I must be asleep, Yea! That's it, I must be having a nightmare.

(COCO shakes his head.)

I'll just lay down and keep sleeping.

(AMY lays down. COCO taps his foot.)

Hey, could you knock that off, I'm trying to get some sleep here!

(COCO closes the music box.)

Hey, you leave that alone . . .

(COCO tweaks her nose.)

What did you do that for?

(COCO opens the music box again, grabs her hands gently and begins to dance with her.)

This isn't a dream, is it?

(COCO lets go of her hands and turns away in sadness.)

Hey, What's wrong? Did I say something? Hey, I'm sorry, okay? I didn't mean to yell at you.

(COCO motions that it's okay.)

Are you lost or something? How did you get in the house?

(COCO points at her.)

AMY: What do you mean?

(COCO reminds her she asked the audience to dream.)

You mean . . . All good things come in dreams, and magic comes on golden wings . . .

(COCO nods his head. Circus music begins to play from inside the trunk.)

Hey! Where's that coming from?

(COCO points inside the trunk. AMY goes to the trunk.)

Wow, it's coming from inside the trunk!

(COCO climbs inside the trunk and disappears. The music stops.)

Hey Clown! Clown? Where did you go? Come back Clown. I want someone to play with. Please, Clown.

(AMY climbs in the trunk and then crawls back out. She sits in the middle of the floor, very sad, and winds up the music box. COCO reappears. AMY turns to look at HIM. COCO motions her to come with him inside the trunk.)

In there?

(Circus music is heard from the trunk. AMY climbs in and they both disappear as the LIGHTS FADE.)

Scene Two

SETTING: An empty space, except for the trunk.

TIME: In Between.

(LIGHTS RISE. Several CLOWNS are arranged in various positions on the stage, unmoving. AMY and COCO lift the lid of the trunk and look at THE CLOWNS. COCO climbs out of the trunk and assumes a position among the CLOWNS. TOSKO enters. As he enters, AMY closes the lid on the trunk to hide.)

TOSKO: *(To the Clowns.)* I can't find him anywhere . . . that dagblasted Ivan must have blasted him somewhere . . . *(He sees Coco.)* Where in the universe have you been! We've been looking all over the place . . . *(Pointing his finger.)* Don't you ever do that again, do you understand?

(Coco nods his head.)

We've been worried sick over you!

(COCO points at the trunk.)

What!

(COCO points again at the trunk.)

I've got a good mind to . . .

(AMY lifts the trunk up.)

AMY: You leave him alone you . . . you . . . you, Clown!

(TOSKO jumps back. THE CLOWNS begin to giggle.)

TOSKO: *(To Clowns.)* Quiet! I haven't had the pleasure.

AMY: That's because I haven't given you the pleasure!

TOSKO: Well, I can see that you would not make a very good clown . . .

AMY: You wouldn't either.

TOSKO: I happen to be one of the greatest clowns in history for your information young lady . . . and I have a good mind to take you over my knee for taking Coco . . .

(AMY kicks TOSKO in the shins. THE CLOWNS begin to laugh, without sound.)

TOSKO: Silence you numskills!

(THE CLOWNS are instantly quiet. TOSKO begins to sob.)

AMY: Hey . . . I'm sorry . . . It's just that he's my friend.

TOSKO: Well, that hurt . . .

AMY: I am sorry.

TOSKO: You are?

AMY: Yes . . .

TOSKO: Coco is everybody's friend.

AMY: *(To Coco.)* That's you name? Coco?

(COCO nods his head. They begin to dance around in circles. THE CLOWNS begin to dance around in

circles as well.)

TOSKO: Resume positions!

*(THE CLOWNS instantly fall into military position.
They silently march.)*

AMY: You sure don't believe in having much fun, do you?

TOSKO: Being a clown is not fun and games, it is very hard work. Real clowns do not partake in trivial silliness and merriment.

AMY: That must be why they all look so sad.

TOSKO: They are sad because with all their hard work they have no audience to perform for, and they are sad because the circus is lost along with all their friends.

AMY: Lost?

TOSKO: Well look around you, my Dear, do you see anything around you that resembles home?

AMY: Well, that trunk looks just like my great grandfather's trunk.

TOSKO: That trunk happens to be ours.

AMY: My great grandfather was the greatest magician ever!

TOSKO: Which circus?

AMY: I'm not really sure . . .

TOSKO: There are many circuses my dear, but there is only one circus as far as I'm concerned . . .

AMY: Then why aren't you with it?