

# **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.**

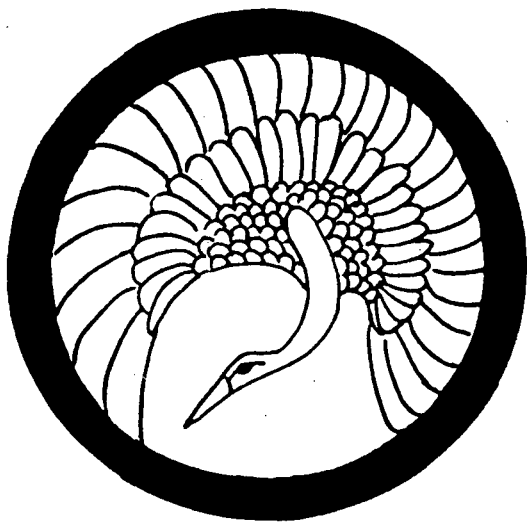
Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

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**

# Ama and the White Crane

By  
Maureen A. O'Toole



# Ama and the White Crane

Highly acclaimed productions of this dramatization by  
Honolulu Theatre for Youth, Fulton Opera House  
and Barter Theatre have proven appeal for a wide audience.

*Kabuki-style adventure. By Maureen A. O'Toole. Cast: with doubling, or up to 9+ (2m., 3w., 4 either gender to play Demon) and option to add extras. Set in 17th-century Japan, this easy-to-tour, Kabuki-style adventure celebrates strong family values and the development of relationships. In an imaginative and expert blend of mime, movement, music and comedy, the adventures of Ama and her hand puppet companion, White Crane, unfold as they journey to the Legendary Center of the Universe. A pair of bombastic but good-hearted samurai befriend Ama as she seeks to save her village from a powerful demon, whose disguises create suspense and humor. The demon is inevitably overcome by the ingenuity of young Ama. In a highly stylized, visually stunning moment, White Crane's "wings" appear (two huge white paper fans carried onstage by prop persons in black) and the trip is "flown" to the top of the mountain, safe from danger and closer to enlightenment. A brilliant range of highly playable characters and detailed suggestions for easy construction of costumes and special effects ensure successful production. Open theatre space. Suitable for all-female or all-male cast. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: AD7.*

## 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](http://www.FamilyPlays.com)

ISBN-13 978-0-87602-295-5



Ama and the White Crane

# **Ama and the White Crane**

By

MAUREEN A. O'TOOLE

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

\*\*\* 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](http://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.

© 1991 by  
ANCHORAGE PRESS, INC.

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(AMA AND THE WHITE CRANE)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-295-5

## 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”

DEDICATION

To My Parents

John and Mildred O'Toole

CAST

In Order of Appearance

- AMA . . . . . A Fisher-Girl
- PROPMAN #1. . . . . plays OLD MAN (Ama's Grandfather); takes the part of the GEZA, or Sound-Maker; furnishes props to the actors.
- PROPMAN #2 . . . . . plays the DEMON-WITH-THE-CHANGEABLE-FACE:
- 1. The Demon of Thunder and Lightening
  - 2. Evil Water Sprite
  - 3. Demon Ferryman
  - 4. Yama-Uba, Guardian Hag of the Mountain
  - 5. Yuki-Onna, Snow Woman whose embrace is death
- Also acts as Propman when, in first scene, Propman #1 is playing the Old Man.
- SUKEROKU . . . . . The Samurai
- JIRO . . . . . his Manservant

Cover Design by  
Joe Dodd  
University of Hawaii  
Designer Honolulu Theatre  
for Youth



## AMA AND THE WHITE CRANE

- THE TIME: Mid-17th Century.
- THE PLACE: Japan - - The Island of Sado.
- THE SETTING: Open theatre space with three abstract settings: the island, the road, the mountain peak.
- OVERTURE: All music is optional; however, simple flute accompaniment would be effective.
- LIVE SOUND: "Live sound" is made by the Sound Maker (*Geza*), using small drum, wood sticks, cymbal, triangle, large drum.
- AT RISE: Rapid "CLICK, CLICK" of woodblock accompanies the ENTRANCE of TWO PROPMEN, followed by AMA.

Main curtain opens on stage, as the actors ENTER from the back of the auditorium, down the center aisle and onto the stage.

PROPMAN pick up the blue material which forms the "SEA" in the opening scene.

As AMA, carrying a basket and fishing spear, reaches the stage, the TWO PROPMEN each take an end of a narrow length of blue cloth (*held parallel to the audience*); they create small "WAVES" by repeatedly fluffing forward and curling (*or rolling*) back of the material... to suggest an advancing/receding tide.

AMA, dressed in simple peasant clothing of dark, loose trousers, hapi coat, straw hat (which hangs over her back with a string), stops and looks at the sea, which comes back and forth to the tip of her foot once or twice; turning to look directly at the audience, she says:

AMA: Today, as usual, the people of my village are very sad. For all of the fish have disappeared from our waters. I, too, have just spent another day fishing ... but - - *(holding up her empty basket)* - - still no water-creatures to be found. *(she stops for a moment; still to audience)*

I am called... Ama. *(she bows deeply)*

*(LIVE SOUND: A sound to punctuate AMA's bow, perhaps a louder or deeper "TING.")*

AMA: ... Ama, the "Fisher Girl" *(she bows again: now, gesturing to encompass the entire stage)* ... this is the island of Sado in the ancient empire of Japan ...

*(LIVE SOUND: A FANFARE sort of musical chord.)*

AMA: *(continuing)* This place is not so very far from where you are... for the moon which smiles upon us is the same moon which lights your way.

*(MUSIC [optional]): Traveling theme begins.)*

*(A "SQUACK" SOUND is suddenly heard. AMA makes the WHITE CRANE'S "SQUACKING" responses herself throughout the play. As a ventriloquist gives life to his doll, AMA gives life to WHITE CRANE.)*

WHITE CRANE: SQUAAK!!!!!!

*(AMA looks surprised; she reaches into her basket to bring out WHITE CRANE, her hand-arm puppet, putting it on, like a glove, on one arm and hand.)*

WHITE CRANE: SQUAAAAKKKKKK!!!!

AMA: *(to audience)* And this is my White Crane ...

WHITE CRANE: *(turning his neck to give a quick, alert look toward AMA)* SQUALLLLKKKKKK!!! *(WHITE CRANE bows his head in greeting to the audience.)*

*(He looks accusingly at the sound maker responsible for the feeble "TING", then bows again.)*

*(LIVE SOUND: "TING.")*

*(in a quick double-take, WHITE CRANE looks again at the sound maker, then back to AMA as she continues talking.)*

AMA: I don't know when he stopped being just a puppet ... and became real to me.

*(WHITE CRANE tilts his head on her chest affectionately. AMA pats him on the head.)*

*(PROP MEN EXIT with the "sea." AMA picks up her basket and fish spear, places the handle of the basket in WHITE CRANE'S mouth and begins to tell her story.)*

*(LIGHTS [optional] : Spotlight may follow AMA, wherever she goes. General lighting may be soft white or blue.)*

AMA: *(explaining to the audience as she does a mime-walk in place)* We are a poor village, and now, without fish to eat, we will all surely die of starvation! Some people say that it is the work of the evil Demon-With-the - Changeable-Face! And I believe that is true for I think I have seen him. I - -

*(She is interrupted by a sinister SCREAM. PROPMAN #1 RE-ENTERS with a huge, colorful Japanese paper kite "fish" attached to a green bamboo garden stake. He is being chased by the DEMON [Propman #2 in his "Demon of Thunder and lightening disguise]. The chase should circle the area which has been established as the "sea" area. AMA runs to a corner of the stage and hides from the DEMON'S view.)*

*(LIVE SOUND: Heavy DRUM BEATS should accompany the DEMON'S steps; light TINGING sounds punctuate the fluttering movement of the "FISH".)*

*(The DEMON seems to "corner" the "FISH" for a moment, but the FISH escapes and EXITS into the wings with the DEMON in pursuit.)*

WHITE CRANE: *(loudly, as AMA gingerly comes out of hiding and returns to speak again to audience)*  
SQUAK!

AMA: *(excitedly)* It's true! It is the Demon who is chasing all of the fish away! I must tell Grandfather! Come, White Crane.

*(AMA takes a few steps, stops, goes into a momentary freeze position, looking a WHITE CRANE.)*

*(PROPMAN #1 has RE-ENTERED and now wears OLD MAN costume of straw hat and ragged shawl or blanket; he sits DOWNSTAGE to one side. He has placed a cutout of a bamboo lean-to directly behind him.)*

AMA: *(coming out of the "freeze", speaking directly to the audience)* But when I reached my Grandfather's house... I was surprised to find the venerable old gentleman preparing for a journey!

*(OLD MAN [Grandfather] huffs and puffs as he tries to put on a sandal. The other one is already on one foot, but at obvious cost to the OLD MAN'S energies. He is nearly all worn out. AMA rushes to his side.)*

OLD MAN: *(as he struggles and continually loses balance)*  
UPPPFFF! OOOOP! GRRRRNNNT!  
UGGGHHH!!! *(he plops down in defeat)*

AMA: Grandfather!

OLD MAN: *(trying to lift himself)* Ah ... yes, child! Ama! Come, let me tell you something, Kakitsubata ... my dear little iris flower ...

*(AMA finally helps him to sit up. He is very weak; his leg-rags have come undone. She removes the WHITE CRANE puppet and puts down her basket and pole. She begins to wrap his legs. [It was traditional for Japanese peasants to wear leg wrappers around the calf area of their trousers when on a journey - - to protect clothing from the dust of the road]).*

AMA: I am listening, Grandfather ... *(AMA continues to gently and slowly wrap his legs, one at a time)*

OLD MAN: I am eager to make a journey ...

*(AMA does not answer, but continues to wrap.)*

OLD MAN: *(continuing)* But ...

*(NOTE: The OLD MAN uses the delivery of a wise philosopher. Whatever he says must sound poetic, gentle, and wise.)*

OLD MAN: *(continuing)* ... the body, like everything that is lent to us, wears out with time ... and use. *(pause)* My time is near its end ...

*(AMA has stopped wrapping and looks at him earnestly.)*

AMA: *(interrupting him)* Grandfather ...

OLD MAN: *(slowly holding up one hand to silence her)* As my days have come to be countable on the fingers of two hands ... *(he feebly holds up the other hand)* ... I have begun to yearn for my native place. I was going to make a final trip to the land of my birth ... the land of the Northern Lights!

*(MUSIC [Optional]: If desired, a HARPLIKE SOUND could be established for the "Northern Lights" and be PLAYED whenever they are mentioned or seen.)*

AMA: *(looking at him with wonder)* The land of the Northern Lights!

OLD MAN: Yes ... it is the land on the northern-most slope of Mount Sumeru, the legendary center of the universe! *(a pause; he tries to gather strength )* When I was a child, I planted a single iris flower there. I long to see it once again! *( a pause)* Will you make the journey for me? And will you bring the iris flower back to me, so that I may see it one more time? *(he feebly hands her a small pail from his side)* It will be protected in here, on the journey back!

AMA: *(accepting the empty pail)* I, I - - Grandfather, I must speak to you about the fish! I think I know who - -

OLD MAN: *(cutting her off, not listening )* Promise me, Ama ... that you will bring back the flower and a bit of earth from Mount Sumeru's northern slope!

*(AMA has finished wrapping his legs and is trying to make the OLD MAN comfortable - - urging him to rest his head on a limp rag pillow.)*

AMA: *(reassuringly)* Of course, Grandfather. Don't worry.

*(She crosses to the basket, reaches in. Puts on the WHITE CRANE puppet; smiling, she turns to the OLD MAN.)*

AMA: *(laughing, now holding up WHITE CRANE)* ... White Crane and I will journey to Mount Sumeru for you ... won't we?

WHITE CRANE: EEEKKK!! SQUAAAKKK!!

*(AMA fluffs up the hand puppet so fiercely that it appears he is fluffing his feathers. OLD MAN and AMA laugh together.)*

AMA: *(to audience)* But, to tell the truth ... even the thought of the strange journey filled me with fear! *(she prepares to leave)*

OLD MAN: *(more confidential in tone; a sense of urgency in his voice)* There is one other reason for this journey, Ama. The most important reason. You must ask the mountain what can be done about this evil Demon of many and changing faces ... for I have seen him scare our fish away --

AMA: *(opening her eyes wide, interrupting him excitedly)* You are right, Grandfather! It is the work of the Demon With the Changeable Face ... for I saw him, just now, chase a fish from the waters of our island! I shall tell our fishermen and we shall capture him.

OLD MAN: *(warning her)* No! You must avoid him at all costs ... for his evil is the most powerful in all the land... he cannot be overcome by simple fishermen armed only with spears! You must ask the mountain what to do.

AMA: But, Grandfather, how can I ask the mountain what to do? Will the mountain speak to me?

OLD MAN: Mount Sumeru will speak to those who have proved worthy. Tell him who you are. The mountain will surely answer you.

OLD MAN: *(weakly)* May you be protected, my child.

*(SOUND: Heavy DRUM BEATS or CYMBAL CLASHES to indicate THUNDER.)*

*(LIGHTS: Flicker to suggest LIGHTNING.)*

AMA: Thunder! Lightning!... Soon rain will come!



*(PROPMAN #2 ENTERS and sprinkles silver sparkles from his half-opened fan onto the heads of AMA and OLD MAN. EXITS.)*

*(AMA speaks directly to the audience as the "rain" begins to fall. She reaches behind the lean-to and extracts a Japanese paper parasol. Long and narrow strips of cellophane are attached to the circumference of the opened parasol so that she and WHITE CRANE will appear to be surrounded by "rain.")*

AMA: *(continuing; to audience)* And just then, the rains began to fall.

*(LIGHTS [OPTIONAL]: Gradually, the blue light goes out so that the following DEMON sequence can take place in pure black-light.)*

*(LIVE SOUND: Of "RAIN" if desired; also of CRACKLING THUNDER. A light DRUMMING of fingernails on metal produces a fine RAIN SOUND; THUNDER may be made by shaking flexible aluminum sheeting.)*

*(AMA and WHITE CRANE huddle in a "freeze" under a parasol as the following Demon sequence takes place. It must be obvious that they do not see the scene. They are very frightened of the rainstorm and remain huddled together.)*

*(OLD MAN moves quickly and quietly OFFSTAGE, taking the hut with him. PROPMAN #2, dressed as the DEMON OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING, ENTERS, wearing a "sunburst" crown or headpiece of lightning shards which point out in every direction.)*

*(He also wears a grotesque mask with a long nose -- shaped like a smaller lightning bolt. A large bolt of lightning should be painted vertically on his chest and back and down his arms and legs, perhaps. He is wearing black leotards and tights.)*

*(All lightning bolts on the costume, mask and props may be painted with luminescent paint [light blue or yellow] so that black light will pick it up. He carries a lightning bolt in his hand.)*

*(The DEMON leaps and dances skillfully but madly to the BEAT of the CYMBALS and DRUM. He dances over the entire stage, ending DOWNSTAGE CENTER.)*

DEMON: *(as THUNDER SOUNDS CRASH, he sneers sinisterly at the audience) A little storm will spoil Ama's trip! Ha! She will not find a way to overpower me! She will never reach Mount Sumeru!!!*

*(He dances again to the DRUM, brandishing his lightning shard as a sword.)*

DEMON: *(shouting over the THUNDER SOUNDS; an incantation) Higher and higher the waves shall be! Whip the sea into a Demon's fren-zy! (he draws out the final "ee" sounds as he chants)*

*(PROPMAN #1 ENTERS quickly, holding a five-foot length of chiffon attached ["flag" fashion] to the end of a long pole. He whirls it into fierce waves, getting closer and closer to the huddled AMA and WHITE CRANE and their parasol.)*

AMA: *(looking through the cellophane "rain"; to the audience) The sea waves became fearsome! It seemed the storm would keep us from leaving the island!*