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Dramatic Publishing

My Fair Share of the Sun



Drama
by
Gordon LePage

My Fair Share of the Sun

Drama. *By Gordon LePage.* *Cast: 8m., 14w., 1 to 8 either gender:* Uncle Fy and his niece Zoe plant 14 white birches along the lonely dirt road to his cabin in the woods. Shortly thereafter, a violent storm destroys the house and uproots the elder trees, who were the beloved caretakers of these 14, leaving them to fend for themselves. Despite the best efforts of a few of the trees, the group splits into two rival groups, each living on opposite sides of the road, as they race to grow to the sky and crowd each other out in an insatiable hunger for sunlight. They descend into chaos and treachery but, in a momentous climax, achieve an ironic peace—chained to the tiny society that defines their entire world, trying to decide who owns the sun. This is a symbolist play about us—all of us—and our struggle to be the social creatures we all know we have to be in order to live together on both sides of the road. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 60 minutes. Code: MPI.*

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My Fair Share of the Sun

CHARACTERS

(8m., 14w., 1 to 8 either gender)

THE PEOPLE

UNCLE FY: A man in his early 50s.

ZOE: His niece, age 12.

ZOE'S FATHER: An offstage voice.

KATY TILSON: A television reporter in her 30s.

CAMERA OPERATOR: In his/her 20s.

GRANDMOTHER: 64 years old.

GRANDDAUGHTER: 12 years old.

THE TREES

MRS. FELSEMEYER: An elderly maple.

MRS. GLENN: An elderly American beech.

VICTOR: An older birch.

THE FOURTEEN (EESAS and OLAS)

GIRLS:

BEESA, BOLA, SEESA, SOLA, VEESA, VOLA, ZEESA and ZOLA.

BOYS:

FEESA, FOLA, GEESA, GOLLA, KEESA and KOLA.

THE CASSANDRAS: A troupe of four to seven squirrels.

CHARACTER NOTES

For reasons that become evident as the story progresses, Zoe and the grandmother can be played by the same actress. The parts of Katy Tilson, the camera operator and the granddaughter can also be doubled by members of the Cassandras troupe.

SETTING

A dirt country road.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Staging:

The trees are portrayed in human form and emotion in all respects. Aside from the production restraint of being on stools or stepladders, they are persons portrayed by human actors as human.

Although this may be read as a “symbolist” play, it can be as literal or as free form as the director wants it to be. If the prospect of tilting stepladders is too daunting (or cannot be done in a way that absolutely assures the safety of the young actors), then it can be substituted with tilting actors who are standing firmly on the stage—the point being that the drama of the play should not be bound to anything out of the reach of a devoted theatre company.

SCENES

Scene 1: An early spring day in the year 1961.

Scene 2: Immediately following.

Scene 3: Ten years later.

Scene 4: Later that night.

Scene 5: The following day.

Scene 6: Sixteen years later.

Scene 7: Four years later.

Scene 8: About two years later.

Scene 9: Later that same night.

Scene 10: Three days later.

Scene 11: Twenty years later.

My Fair Share of the Sun

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *An early spring day in the year 1961. Lights come up to reveal a nearly bare stage, later to portray a dirt woods road. There are two tall stepladders at R and a third at L. The road is C, running upstage to downstage, defined (at present) by the 12 newly planted trees (six opposite pairs) planted on either side, carefully placed an equal distance apart. At this point, the trees are merely sticks propped on the stage. UNCLE FY and his niece ZOE are DC, preparing to plant the last (seventh) pair. ZOE is 12, curious and quick. UNCLE FY is in his early 50s, gray and thin, with an infectious enthusiasm and eyes as bright as the sun.*

UNCLE FY. Aren't they beautiful, Zoe?

ZOE. They're trees.

UNCLE FY. They're birch trees.

ZOE. Birch trees ... sure.

UNCLE FY. They're not beautiful?

ZOE. They look like sticks in the mud.

UNCLE FY. Well ... that's what they are.

ZOE. How is that beautiful?

UNCLE FY. Well ... you have to look a littler further ...
(*Pointing.*) like over there, by that rock.

ZOE. What's over there by that rock?

UNCLE FY. The future.

ZOE. Are you making fun of me?

UNCLE FY. I'd never do that, sweetie.

ZOE. Sure sounds like you are.

UNCLE FY. I'm sorry ... I thought you liked trees.

ZOE. I do like trees. It's just that ... they're kind of boring.

They're just sort of ... there.

UNCLE FY. Aren't we all just ... there?

ZOE. You know what I mean. Trees are never the important people ... A tree is the part in the school play you give the kid who can't act. Just because you think it'll make her feel better being out there ... A play with trees in it is the most boring play ever.

UNCLE FY. Are you referring to something?

ZOE. Do you remember my first grade play?

UNCLE FY. I do.

ZOE. What was I?

UNCLE FY. You were a tree. You were spectacular.

ZOE. Now I know you're making fun of me ... It was boring.

I was boring.

UNCLE FY. That's because you didn't move the whole time.

ZOE. Mrs. Kantos said we weren't allowed to move.

UNCLE FY. Why not?

ZOE. Because we were trees!

UNCLE FY. Trees move. They're alive.

ZOE. Yeah ... they're alive, but ... they're not alive, alive.

It's not like they can talk or anything.

UNCLE FY. I wouldn't be so sure about that.

ZOE. You think trees can talk?

UNCLE FY (*with a shrug*). Maybe.

ZOE. That's silly ... (*A beat.*) What do they say?

UNCLE FY. That I don't know.

ZOE. Then how do you know they can talk?

UNCLE FY. Well ... maybe they talk, but they just don't talk to me. Or maybe they talk to me all the time and I just don't understand a word they're saying.

ZOE. Like my French teacher?

UNCLE FY. Yes, Zoe ... like your French teacher. (*Crossing back to the road.*) Here ... we're almost done. I want you to plant the last two.

ZOE. Why are we using those spacers?

UNCLE FY. Because I want them all exactly the same distance apart. It's a democracy.

(ZOE helps UNCLE FY space the last two birches. Then they plant them, one on each side of the road.)

ZOE. How many are there?

UNCLE FY. Fourteen.

ZOE. Can we give them names?

UNCLE FY. If you like ... do you think if they had names they would talk to you?

ZOE. No ... but if they had names, I could at least talk to them.

UNCLE FY. Then let's do it. (*Moves to the middle of the road, gesturing to his right.*) Everybody on this side of the road is an eesa.

ZOE. An eesa?

UNCLE FY. Yup. And everybody on that side is an ola.

ZOE. But how do we tell them apart?

UNCLE FY. A, B or C?

ZOE. What?

UNCLE FY. Pick a letter. A, B or C.

ZOE. Oh ... B!

UNCLE FY (*pointing to the pair most UR, then UL*). Beesa and Bola ... D, E or F?

ZOE. F.

UNCLE FY. Feesa and Fola ... G, H, I, J?

ZOE. G... Geesa and Gola.

UNCLE FY (*rapidly*). K, L, M, N, O, P!

ZOE. K! Keesa and Kola ...

UNCLE FY. Q, R, S?

ZOE. S ... (*Hesitates.*) Seesa and Sola?

UNCLE FY. Works for me. T, U, V ...

ZOE. Veesa and Vola.

UNCLE FY (*with a little flourish*). W, X, Y, or Z?

ZOE. Z ... of course.

UNCLE FY. Of course. Say good morning to Zeesa and Zola.

ZOE. Good morning, Zeesa. Good morning, Zola.

(UNCLE FY crosses to ZOE and kneels beside her.)

UNCLE FY. Now, Zoe, I'm going to give you an important task ... I want you to remember where you are and when you are—and then promise me one thing ... I want you to remember ... for as long as you live, that you planted these trees.

(ZOE hesitates, taking a long moment to look up and down at the 14 sticks in the mud.)

ZOE. I'll remember.

(Lights fade to black.)

SCENE 2

(Immediately following. Lights come up on the same daylight location. Actors playing MRS. FELSENMEYER, VICTOR and MRS. GLENN have taken their places at the top of the three tall stepladders. MRS. FELSENMEYER and

VICTOR are on the eesa side of the road. MRS. GLENN is on the ola side. Actors portraying THE FOURTEEN are lining the road, equally spaced where the 14 sticks in the mud were in Scene 1. They should be curled up as small as possible, faces not visible. When they start to appear, they are pale and unaccustomed to the light.)

VICTOR. Birches! Good God ... birches! There's barely enough sun along this road for us to survive and he plants birches! ... The fool!

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Hush, Victor ...

VICTOR. Do you know how much sun birches need?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. There's plenty of sun for everyone, Victor.

VICTOR (*mocking*). There's plenty of sun for everyone ... since when? Have you seen my lower branches?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Yes, they're lovely.

VICTOR. They're not lovely, they're dead! They're shriveled up stubs of what they used to be. And you know why? Because they don't get the sun anymore!

MRS. GLENN. Well ... you don't need them anymore. You have a nice giant crown of new branches now.

VICTOR. And how did I get that nice giant crown?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. We all share the sun, Victor.

VICTOR (*staring for a moment, shaking his head*). We all share the sun ... How old are you?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. You know well that I stopped counting a long time ago.

VICTOR. Past a hundred?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Oh yes.

VICTOR. A hundred fifty.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Maybe ...

VICTOR. Past a hundred fifty and you're still preaching about sharing.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Am I preaching?

VICTOR. You'd be whistling a different tune if you were down where they are right now.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. I was down there where they are now, Victor.

VICTOR. Not in my lifetime, you weren't.

MRS. GLENN. And what is that supposed to mean?

VICTOR. It means—if it's any of your business—that there's not a tree left living on this side of the hill who remembers what our senior girl was like when she was that young, way down there ... not even you. How do we know how she clawed her way up from below?

MRS. GLENN. That is a sinister thought.

VICTOR. Have you forgotten, Mrs. Felsenmeyer? Have you forgotten that to get to the top of the canopy, you had to break someone else's branches along the way? Or are you just too old to remember?

MRS. GLENN. Victor, please!

VICTOR. Let her answer the question.

MRS. GLENN. It's not a question. It's an accusation.

VICTOR. We're all here because somebody else isn't. Don't spin me a fairy tale about sharing. I fought for my share of the sun. I deserve to keep it.

MRS. GLENN. No one's taking anything away from you, Victor.

VICTOR. Oh really? Then why did the doctor plant them here?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. You'll have to ask him. Perhaps he's planning for the future.

VICTOR. Lining the road to his falling down shack of a house with trees that have no chance of living. What kind of future is that?

MRS. GLENN. Stop it, Victor. They'll hear you.

VICTOR. Good! Better they hear me now and start fighting for the sun. If they do, a few of them might have a chance. Otherwise, they should just die now and not bother.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Enough! This is no way to talk in front of young ones. They're barely in the ground.

VICTOR. They'll be rotting in the ground soon enough.

MRS. FELSENMEYER (*tired of this, speaking down*). Good morning! It's all right. You can come out ... come out and talk to us! Good morning, good morning, good morning!

(Slowly, THE FOURTEEN begin to move, most cautiously turning upward, squinting in the light. GEESA and GOLA pop out more quickly, looking immediately at each other, then all around, behind their backs especially. VEESA brings a hand up to eye level and smiles. BEESA stretches out to her tallest, and then shouts up. In this, their first days, the speech of THE FOURTEEN comes out in short sentences, like that of kindergartners.)

BEESA. Who are you?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. I'm Mrs. Felsenmeyer.

BEESA. You're huge!!

(A few giggles from the others.)

MRS. FELSENMEYER. That's because I'm fully grown.

FEESA. You don't look furry grown ...

SOLA. Fully! She said fully grown. Weren't you listening?

MRS. GLENN. I'm sure he was, Sola. He just didn't hear her correctly.

SOLA. Well, I heard her correctly. And I'm on the other side of the road. That's much further away.

SEESA. You mean farther away. Farther is the preferred word for expressions of physical distance.

SOLA. I knew that ... my point was that I heard her say fully grown. That means totally grown up.

SEESA. Completely matured would be a more elegant definition.

FOLA (*completely lost*). What are you two talking about?

MRS. GLENN. Thank you, Seesa. Thank you, Sola.

BEESA (*shouting again*). Who are you, gray lady?

BOLA. Not so loud, Beesa.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. That's Mrs. Glenn.

BEESA. You're old!

BOLA. Beesa!

MRS. FELSENMEYER. She's actually younger than I am, Beesa. Gray is just her color.

GEESA. Gray bag ...

(*GOLA, KEESA and KOLA giggle in shock and delight.*)

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Geesa!

(*The whole group falls silent.*)

MRS. FELSENMEYER (*cont'd*). Is that an appropriate way to speak to a grown up?

GEESA. I don't know ...

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Excuse me?

GEESA. No.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. May we have an apology, please?

GEESA (*after a long sulky moment*). Sorry ...

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Thank you, Geesa.

MRS. GLENN. Apology accepted.

ZEESA (*looking at herself, then the others*). We're not gray.

KOLA. Duh!

MRS. FELSENMEYER. No, dear.

ZEESA. So we're not beech trees, like Mrs. Glenn?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. No, you're all white birches.

ZEESA. But we're not white either.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. You will be.

VEESA (*admiring*). Are we going to look like you, Mrs. Felsenmyer?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. No, dear. When you're fully grown, you're going to look like Victor.

FEESA. Whoa!

FOLA. Look how tall he is!

BEESA (*shouting up*). Are you our daddy?

VICTOR. Certainly not! I'm nobody's daddy!

VEESA. He's a little grumpy ...

VOLA. He's a little scary.

GEESA. I'm not scared of him.

GOLA. Neither am I.

VICTOR. Boo!

(*THE FOURTEEN all cower.*)

GOLA. That didn't scare me!

GEESA. Then why did you shake?

GOLA. I didn't shake!

GEESA. You did too shake. I saw it! You say you didn't, but I saw you. I know it. I saw it.

VEESA. Why are you using the word "I" in every single sentence you say?

GEESA. You shut up!

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Geesa! What did we just say about appropriate behavior?

SOLA. “I” is the first person pronoun. His use of it in talking about himself is actually quite appropriate.

SEESA. First person singular pronoun, I believe you mean.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. It’s a shame you’re spending so much time arguing ... I guess there won’t be any time for the acorn rally.

GEESA. What’s that?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Oh, just maybe a fun game we play in the forest.

ZEESA. Awesome ... Do you want to play, Zola?

(ZOLA smiles shyly but does not answer.)

BEESA. Why doesn’t Zola say anything?

KOLA. Because Zeesa talks enough for both of them.

VEESA. How do we play, Mrs. Felsenmeyer?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. First, we need the Cassandras.

ZEESA. Who are they?

MRS. FELSENMEYER. They’re the squirrels running around here. They like to predict the future.

VEESA. The squirrels can predict the future? Are they magic?

VICTOR. Foolishness! They’re just annoying.

MRS. FELSENMEYER. Cassandras! Come!

(Three or four [perhaps more] actors appear and move up the road toward MRS. FELSENMEYER. Their movements need not be animal like, but should be stylized. They move now in a free, random style in contrast to how they move later in the play. When they speak, they speak in Greek chorus unity. They run down the road, stop at SEESA and start pawing at her.)

THE CASSANDRAS. Pretty girl, pretty girl ... Mess her hair, mess her hair, mess her hair.