

# **A GIRL AND HER CROCODILE**

A Chamber Opera in One Act

Duration: ca. 30 minutes  
Workshop Preview: March 30, 2024

Libretto by Molly Wong  
Edited by Howard Frazin  
(2023)



# A GIRL AND HER CROCODILE

## A Chamber Opera in One Act

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### CHARACTERS

Girl, SOPRANO

Woman dressed as a young girl, about 8 years old, disheveled. She is wearing a muddy pastel frilly dress. Hair is a short bob.

Crocodile, MEZZO-SOPRANO

Girl's imaginary friend and alter ego of sorts.

(In Scene 2, the mezzo-soprano is dressed in all black like a shadow acting as the voice of the puppet that the Girl has on her hand. In Scene 4, the mezzo-soprano is dressed in a crocodile costume.)

Mother, MEZZO-SOPRANO (same singer)

Girl's mother, single, divorced, late-30s. Very religious, isolated, angry.

### SETTING

Lonely isolation hovers over a stale oppressiveness in the bedroom of an 8 year old girl. A plain door and door frame are on stage left with a messy bed upstage. Upstage and to the right is a window with two floor-to-ceiling heavy drapes on either side. There is a jump rope and a book of nursery rhymes haphazardly strewn about in front of the window. Stage right and opposite downstage from the door is a full length mirror. At the foot of the mirror is a basket of dress-up clothes. In the middle of the room there's a table with two chairs. On top of the table there's a tray with a tea set.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Unaccompanied Recitative (30 seconds)

MOTHER [*Offstage*]

You get in your room and get dressed right now young lady!

[*Girl runs into the room from offstage holding a large crocodile puppet in one hand. She looks back at the door.*]

Take off that dirty dress and put on clean clothes.

I told you not to play in the mud!

Don't you talk back to me!

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."

Clean your room and don't forget to Grandma's cross.

And put on your church shoes and fancy dress too!

[*Girl slams door.*]

We're leaving in 15 minutes!

And put that filthy crocodile puppet back in the closet!

#### MUSICAL INTERLUDE 1 (45 seconds)

Slow music

[*Girl tosses the crocodile puppet onto the bed. She begins to take off her dress. Underneath it, she is wearing overalls. She walks to the window and sits down cross-legged with her back to the window. She looks up and notices a book near her foot.*]

## SCENE 1

### 1. Solo Aria Girl (3 minutes)

Slow music, poem by Mother Goose

GIRL

*[Soft spotlight envelops Girl. She picks up the book and begins to read.]*

One for sorrow,  
Two for joy,  
Three for a girl,  
Four for a boy,  
Five for silver,  
Six for gold,  
Seven for a secret  
Never to be told.

*[Girl puts the book down. Now she is reciting the book from memory. Then she repeats the poem slowly one last time with a deeper understanding.]*

### 2. Solo Play Song (4 minutes)

Fast Music

*[Light starts to come through the window. Girl turns around and looks out the window.]*

#### Introductory Recitative

Oh look, it's Jessie, Evie, and Miriam!  
Jumping jumping jumping,  
they're jumping—  
they're jumping the fence!

#### Play Song

Oh look!  
*[Girl gets the jump rope from next to the window.]*

Jump jump jump so high,  
don't trip or slip  
or do a flip,  
while reaching for the sky!

Look at the bird soaring away—  
is it a robin or is it a jay?

Oh look what they're doing now!

*[Hides behind the bed.]*

Counting one two three!

Don't make a sound  
or you'll get found,  
just hide behind the tree!

Look at the bird soaring away—  
is it a robin or is it a jay?

Now you're it, so run!

Don't get tagged

Just zig or zag.

Now we're having fun!

Look at the bird soaring away—  
is it a robin or is it a jay?

*[Girl runs to the table to get the tea set on the tray.]*

You girls need a break

and so do I.

Come rest with me

for some tea and cake!  
[*Girl brings tea to the window and looking out, she sees the girls leaving.*]  
Hey where are you going?  
What about me?  
It's not time for church yet.

## **MUSICAL INTERLUDE 2** (30 seconds)

Slower music

[*Girl slowly walks to the table to put the tea set back.*]

## **SCENE 2**

### **3. Duet recitative** (4 minutes)

Slow music that gradually builds to a climax

[*Girl picks up the crocodile puppet from the bed. As she does this, the mezzo-soprano dressed like a shadow stands behind her.*]

GIRL

[*Girl brings the puppet with her over to the table. The shadow follows.*]

I think I'll have some tea.

[*While organizing tea, she puts the crocodile puppet on her hand and speaks to Crocodile.*]

I suppose *you'll* want some too?

CROCODILE [*Voiced by the shadow.*]

You look sweaty.

GIRL

I was playing.

CROCODILE

With who?

GIRL

Evie, Jessie...

CROCODILE

And Miriam?

I like Miriam.

GIRL

Here's your saucer with the silver flower.

Here's your cup with the missing handle.

CROCODILE

What were they wearing today?

GIRL

Here's my saucer with gold leaf on the edge.

Here's my cup with a tiny chip on the side.

CROCODILE

Is there anything to eat?

GIRL

Evie has skin that flakes—so dry!  
It crinkles while she walks and runs  
like a desert snake slithering by.

CROCODILE

I love hunting snakes!

GIRL

Jessie has a belly like a pig—so fat!  
It jiggles as she jumps and slips  
like an incompetent acrobat.

CROCODILE

I love pigs; they're so delicious!

GIRL

Miriam has a bulbous behind—so grand!  
It wobbles as she runs and chases  
like only a hippo can.

CROCODILE

Hooray for hippos!

GIRL

I would be good at jumping rope.

CROCODILE

I would be good at chasing Evie.

GIRL

I would hide where Miriam could never find me.

CROCODILE

I'd be good at hunting Jessie too.

GIRL

I can jump up and touch the sky. Can Jessie do that?

CROCODILE

You think I could eat Evie all in one bite?

GIRL

Why don't I get to play?

CROCODILE

I'm getting hungry!

GIRL

I never get to play.

I'm stuck inside, why don't I get to play?

I could be faster than Miriam.

I'd win. I'd win everything.

You're not listening.

*[Girl throws the crocodile puppet offstage. ]*

*[Lights out]*

CROCODILE

I'd love to season Evie with sugar and spice.

And Jessie roasted would be ever so nice.

I could marinate Miriam in garlic—  
that would be delicious to me!

I'd eat the girls. I'd eat all three.

### SCENE 3

#### 4. Solo Aria Girl (7 minutes)

Slow music

*[Girl stands in front of the mirror. She begins to play dress up with clothes in the basket that are next to the mirror. Single spotlight, gets tighter and tighter throughout scene.]*

Can't you see my thoughts  
flowing into the sparkling sky?

Yes I know, all of life is by God's grace—  
I'm going dancing with shoes that gleam,  
my fingernails painted like a doll,  
my face is powdered white, powdered...  
...powdered white like a rat  
Wouldn't you like that?

Can't you see my thoughts  
flowing into the sparkling sky?

You always tell me, "Find solace in our Savior"—  
I'm going to a party with this cross glittering 'round my neck,  
my brows darkened like a shadow,  
my hair is smooth, so smooth...  
...smooth like a snake  
Was I a mistake?

Can't you see my thoughts  
flowing into the sparkling sky?

Jesus comforts us in our trials, you say—  
I'm going to a wedding in these stockings that cling,  
my eyelids stained like glass,  
my hair wild, so wild...  
...wild like a lion's mane.  
Am I your biggest shame?  
*[As she sings, Girl takes off each item and throws it back in the basket.]*

These shoes are too tight.

This cross is too heavy.

These stockings don't look right!

*[Spotlight gets smaller and smaller until tight around her head and hands.  
Girl picks up the mirror and is about to smash it.]*

## SCENE 4

### 5. Recitative

Fast music

*[Lights up.]*

*[Crocodile standing casually upstage center with a leg in his mouth, holding it like a chicken drumstick. On the foot of the leg is a glittery shoe and a frilly sock on the foot. There is a bone sticking out where the knee would be.]*

CROCODILE

Oh I think the mirror would look fabulous near the bed!

*[Girl puts the mirror down.]*

Or perhaps by the door?

GIRL

Where have you been?

**Duet Recitative** (6 minutes)

CROCODILE

I went outside like you asked.

I played like I wanted.

It was a lovely day.

I decided to play...

...until everyone ran away.

GIRL

Who?

CROCODILE

Jessie, Evie, and Miriam.

GIRL

Oh Croc, did you show them your teeth?

CROCODILE

It's only polite to smile  
when you haven't seen friends in a while.

Jessie pulled out a jump rope  
and I jumped right in!

But Jessie shouted and Evie screamed...

GIRL

Well Croc, did you growl?

CROCODILE

I had to roar!

It's what I do,  
especially when I see someone I adore!  
Everyone ran.

So I hid behind the giant oak tree.

When Evie ran past me she stepped on my tail...

GIRL

Oh no... Did you... chase her?

CROCODILE

Of course I had to pursue,  
but then I saw Miriam,  
waving a big stick in the air,  
starting to chase ME out of the blue!

So I ran. And ran and ran  
and ran 'round the big oak tree,  
all the while Miriam running after me.  
She hunted me down  
and we fell to the ground.

Then I felt a thud on my snout,  
I jumped up and was about to shout  
when something flew off my nose.  
It was Miriam!  
She had landed in a most  
unfortunate pose.

I ran to the rescue  
to stand her upright.  
I got hold of the leg and...

GIRL

Croc...is that... Miriam's shoe?

CROCODILE

Oh no what have I done?!

**Croc Solo Aria:**

Slow interruption

CROCODILE

One for sorrow,  
Two for joy,  
Three...Three... Three...  
for a...for a...  
a girl.  
[Crocodile bursts into tears.]

**6. Duet Recitative—Aria (5 minutes)**

Fast music

GIRL

*[Girl brings Crocodile over to the mirror to play dress up. Girl sifts through the basket of clothes next to the mirror to look for something to put on Croc. The Crocodile is too big for Mother's clothes, so the Girl improvises. She uses the dress as a scarf, the stockings as gloves, and the cross necklace as a nose ring. Croc fiddles with the leg while Girl starts sifting through the basket.]*

Here's a white scarf,  
shimmering and soft.

*[Girl wraps dress/scarf around Croc's neck.]*

CROCODILE

*[Crocodile looks at himself in the mirror.]*

Does it make my teeth look pointy?

*[Girl wraps stockings/gloves around Crocodile's claws.]*

GIRL

Here are some gloves,  
elegant and charming.

CROCODILE

Won't they make my arms look too short?

GIRL

Here's a sparkly cross.  
We'll hang it on your ear.

CROCODILE

I don't have ears!

GIRL

Then I'll put it on your snout!

CROCODILE

Will it make my snout look big?

GIRL

Oh Croc you look so graceful.

We seek solace in each other.

When I'm sad, you comfort me.

*[Sound of bells]*

CROCODILE

All my grace comes from you.

I seek solace in you.

When I'm sad, you comfort me.

**ENDING** (30-45 seconds)

**Unaccompanied Recitative**

*[There's a heavy knocking at the door.]*

GIRL

Hide hide hide!

*[Girl motions for Crocodile to hide. Crocodile hides behind the curtain.]*

MOTHER *[Offstage.]*

Are you ready? It's time to go!

Are you wearing that pretty dress I got you for Jessie's birthday party last year?

Are your church shoes clean?

Have you put on Grandma's favorite cross?

Maybe you can play with Evie and Miriam after service.

*[Girl puts crocodile puppet on the table next to the tea set.]*

*[Lights out]*