

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Circus Caravan

by Donna Abela

EXTRACT

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CHARACTERS

The characters in CIRCUS CARAVAN span three generations. Adele, Marichka and Geordie are the central tellers of this story, moving between narration and action; the other characters variously play large or small parts.

Adele	A sullen teenager
Maricka	A circus performer in her 70s; Adele's mum's aunt
Geordie	A circus performer in his 40s who is learning to read
Dad	Adele's dad; a widower
Sister Nicholas	A kind Catholic nun
Copper	A small town policeman
Suspicious Neighbour	A woman who watches strangers from her window
Juggling Kid	A child who Geordie teaches to juggle
Juggling Kid's Mum	The Juggling Kid's disapproving mum
Shopkeeper	A grocery shop owner who doesn't like loiterers
Bad Bob	A teenage boy and petty crook
Bad Ben	A teenage boy and petty crook
Impressed Lady	A lady impressed with Marichka's handmade clothes
Bloke at the Garage	A mechanic who helps Geordie
Bloke at the Pub	A man who wants to start a fight
Woman	A woman who won't give Marichka water
Offsider	The Copper's Offsider who helps to arrest Geordie
Tow Truck Driver	An old softie who feels sorry for Adele
Shire President	A childhood fan of Marichka

SYNOPSIS

CIRCUS CARAVAN is an exuberant play about a "family" of circus performers who encounter suspicion and strife in various towns as they travel north to re-join their circus. Geordie's son has gone off on his own, and "The Blustering Benetino Family" is down one member. Marichka, a once famous wire-walker, decides to co-opt her niece's directionless daughter Adele, despite Adele's sullen protests. As they travel north, Marichka and Geordie teach Adele the fundamentals of their trade, scraping together a modest living and dodging undeserved trouble. Adele eventually throws her lot in with this peculiar family, using her new-found skills to save the day.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY

Many circus families throughout the ages have been united by work, love, and mutual support, rather than by blood. Living in caravans, rather than houses, they were "citizens of the world", loyal to all places and all nations. As itinerant and unconventional people, they have been treated at times with suspicion and scorn. This play delivers a message about tolerance. It is aimed at primary school or junior high school audiences.

Adele, Geordie and Marichka begin telling their story.

ADELE Ladies and gentlemen, children of all ages, presenting for your delectation and delight... Frieda the Fearless Funambulist!

GEORDIE Her real name's Adele.

ADELE You want to know what a funambulist is? Great word, isn't it? It's a person who-

MARICHKA Slow down! Goodness gracious. Isn't she a bag a beans?

GEORDIE Not a bit like when we met her.

MARICHKA She didn't wanna do a thing back then -

GEORDIE except sit inside, stuck to the telly -

MARICHKA eating out of plastic packets.

ADELE I wasn't that bad.

GEORDIE She was a bit of a chubber too.

MARICHKA A blubber belly.

ADELE I was not!

MARICHKA With lanky hair and blotchy cheeks.

ADELE Marichka!

GEORDIE She was duller than a bucket.

ADELE Geordie! Stop it!

MARICHKA She's not like that now. She's fulla freedom and fresh air. Bright and chipper, like a little wren, aren't ya?

ADELE I suppose.

GEORDIE We met up with Adele at this market in Canberra -

ADELE I want to tell the story.

GEORDIE Get a move on then.

MARICHKA But don't rush. You might miss the good bits.

ADELE Okay. They were at this market in Canberra, right? Geordie was off with a stall selling his paper flowers -

GEORDIE I make them meself. Kids love 'em.

ADELE And Marichka was telling people's fortunes. I was just wandering around -

MARICHKA doing nothing -

ADELE when she calls me over and says she'll tell me my fortune. For free. Before I knew it she took my hand and -

MARICHKA Yes... yes... No question. You're going to be a funambulist.

ADELE A what?

MARICHKA Funambulist. Good one too. Your palm says so. See?

ADELE But what's a -

MARICHKA It's someone in a circus who walks on a high wire, up in the air, above everyone's heads.

ADELE I just looked at her and laughed.

Adele laughs.

ADELE No way. See ya.

MARICHKA Wait! Look. Your palm says you're gonna be great. I can see you up there, in your beautiful dress, with a parasol open like a lovely flower. I can see people holding their breath as you take the most graceful steps they've ever seen. Then you stop. Somersault! People scream! But you land on the wire as well as any bird. Hooray! The audience love you. Can you hear them clapping? Hooray! Hooray! They'll remember this moment forever... It's a wonderful life Adele.

ADELE You know my name...

MARICHKA I know your dad too. He's got a stall here, hasn't he?

ADELE Yeah...

MARICHKA But you've got no mum, eh?

ADELE Talking to Marichka was like being swung too fast on a roundabout! Next thing, my dad comes over.

Dad enters.

DAD *Marichka! Marichka!
As pretty as a picture!
She's high as a star
She's free as a cloud
Up there on the wire
she'll bewitch ya!*

ADELE He was acting really weird

DAD Marichka!

ADELE Dad. Stop it. People are watching.

DAD I can't believe it! I'd remember you any place! Been years though, hasn't it?

MARICHKA Sure has. Since before Jenna died.

ADELE Jenna was my mum. She died when I was seven... Dad? How come you know her? And how come she knew mum?

DAD Everyone knew Marichka.

MARICHKA *Once upon a time
Once upon a star
Once upon a wire
Was Marichka*

ADELE She told my fortune.

DAD Telling fortunes, eh? You always was resourceful.

ADELE She said I was going to be a funambulance.

DAD Funambulist!

MARICHKA I reckon she'd be a good one. Don't you?

DAD Marichka? Do you really mean it? Is this an offer?