

Flying On Her Own
by Charlie Rhindress
Featuring the songs of Rita MacNeil

Flying On Her Own premiered at Live Bait Theatre in Sackville, New Brunswick on July 20, 2000 with the following cast and crew:

Director	Charlie Rhindress
Musical Director	Andrea LeBlanc
Stage Manager	Krista Blackwood
Set and Costume Designer	Sheila Toye
Lighting Designer	Paul Del Motte
Dramaturge	Brian Richmond

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Rita	Kiersten Tough
Singer	Nancy Farnell Mooney
Rene	Gay Hauser
Robert (and various)	Nate Crawford
Neil (and various)	Wally MacKinnon
Betty/Sarah	Susan Leblanc-Crawford
Tony (and various)	Andrew Bigelow
Customer (and various)	Stephanie LeBlanc
Mrs. Smith (and various)	Robin Lightfoot

A revised version of the play was produced by Neptune Theatre in 2002. This version of the play opened at Live Bait Theatre in Sackville, New Brunswick on July 6, 2004 with the following cast and crew:

Director	Charlie Rhindress
Musical Director	Jennie Wood
Stage Manager	Barry Cook
Set, Costume and Proj. Designer	Denyse Karn
Lighting Designer	Paul Del Motte

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Rita	Krista Laveck
David (and various)	Nate Crawford
Sarah (and various)	Meredith Zwicker
Tony (and various)	John Allen MacLean
Singer	Nancy Farnell Mooney
Betty (and various)	Jody Stevens
Rene	Gay Hauser
Neil (and various)	Marshall Button

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ACT ONE

Two actors represent Rita MacNeil in the play, one is the person, the other, her music. The person is referred to as RITA, while the other is called the SINGER.

As the lights go down we hear an instrumental bit from I'M NOT WHAT I SEEM.

As lights rise, we see RITA walking home from school alone. She is nine. FREDDIE, SARAH and JIMMY enter.

FREDDIE: Hey, it's Rita MacNeil.

SARAH: Hi, Rita.

JIMMY: What happened to your face?

FREDDIE: Yeah, looks like you're missing a couple of teeth.

SARAH: Horse kick you in the face?

FREDDIE: I think she's got a hair-y lip!

They all laugh.

FREDDIE: (*Chanting.*) Rita's got a hairy lip!

ALL THREE: Rita's got a hairy lip! Rita's got a hairy lip.

They laugh. RITA suddenly charges at the boys. They get into a brawl.

SARAH: (*Stopping them.*) Guys, Mrs. Farrow's coming.

They untangle themselves.

FREDDIE: (*To RITA:*) You're some lucky. (*Rubbing his scratched face and running off.*) She's strong for a girl.

They run off.

RITA picks up her books and wanders off, towards the woods. She hums to herself as she walks among the trees. She starts singing.

RITA: BEAUTIFUL DREAMER

Beautiful dreamer, wake unto me
Starlight and dewdrops are waiting for thee
Sounds of the rude world heard in the day
Lull'd by the moonlight have all pass'd away
Beautiful dreamer, queen of my song...

She takes a Stephen Foster Songbook from her pile of school books. She is looking for the rest of the words to the song. As she opens the book, lights up on the SINGER.

SINGER: I'M NOT WHAT I SEEM*

(A capella.) I'm not what I seem
I'm not what you're seeing
I'm a recreation of somebody's dream.
Somebody's reflection
Somebody's pain
But it all depends on who's doing the looking.

BETTY enters. Lights out on the SINGER.

BETTY: There you are.

RITA: *(Startled.)* Betty! You scared me.

RITA quickly sits on the book to hide it.

BETTY: Mom's been looking for you.

RITA: I didn't know.

BETTY: You're awful late gettin' home from school.

RITA: I was just here.

BETTY: Well, come on, Father Murray wants to see you. He wants to bless your lip.

RITA: He always acts like he never noticed it before.

BETTY: He's just trying to be funny. Come on.

RITA tries to get up without exposing the book.

BETTY: What have you got there?

RITA: Nothin'.

BETTY: *(Trying to get at it.)* What is it?

They struggle and BETTY gets the book.

BETTY: My Stephen Foster book!

RITA: I didn't think you were using it.

BETTY: I've been looking for it all week.

RITA: I only took it yesterday.

BETTY: Every time I go to practice it's gone.

RITA: I'm sorry. I just love the pictures so much. Everyone looks so happy. I make up stories for them. Look. In this one, with the couple getting married, they've been sweethearts since they were fourteen. That's what I decided. Fourteen seems like a good age to have a boyfriend. And they're going to have six kids and live in a big castle in England. With a drawbridge and seventy-five cats and dogs. Happily ever after. Like in the fairy tales.

And look at this one. *(Turning a page and pointing between the book and her surroundings.)* Doesn't it look just like the brook? That's why I come here. I feel like I'm in that picture. I close my eyes and... *(She sings.)* "Beautiful Dreamer, wake unto me..."

BETTY: You've got quite the imagination.

RITA: Will you play the piano and sing this one for me?

BETTY: Maybe after supper.

RITA: I love it when you sing.

BETTY: Come on. Father Murray's waiting.

Lights up on FATHER MURRAY and RENE, Rita's mother. RITA and BETTY enter.

BETTY: Found her.

RENE: Where were you, Rita?

RITA: In the woods.

RENE: All this time?

RITA: I was singing.

RENE: Well, say hello.

RITA: *(Very shy.)* Hello, Father Murray.

FATHER: Hello, Rita. *(Acting surprised.)* What happened to your lip?

RITA: *(Beat.)* Joe Louis punched me.

They all laugh.

FATHER: Well, considering you got punched by one of the best boxers in the world I'd say you're looking pretty good.

RITA says nothing.

RENE: What's it matter what one little lip looks like when you've got a voice like hers coming from behind it? That's what I always tell her.

FATHER: We'll have to get you up singing in church someday soon.

RITA nods.

FATHER: Now, come here while I bless that lip.

RITA: Hope it works this time.

FATHER: Well, we'll just keep doing it 'til it does.

As FATHER MURRAY blesses RITA's lip, music comes in for I'M NOT WHAT I SEEM. Lights up on the SINGER.

SINGER: I'M NOT WHAT I SEEM*

I've listened to people who've gone on before me.
And I've tried to learn from the things that they've told me
But it all depends on who's doing the talking.

I'm not what I seem

And I'm not what you're seein'
I'm a recreation of somebody's dream
Somebody's reflection, somebody's pain
But it all depends on who's doing the looking
Yes, it all depends on who's doing the looking.

Lights up on RITA walking home from school.

SARAH: *(Entering.)* Rita!

RITA keeps walking.

SARAH: Wait up.

RITA: No.

SARAH: I just wanted to say you're a good singer.

RITA: Oh.

SARAH: Sorry about the other day. Freddie and Jimmy are goofs and I kinda just went along with them. They pick on me sometimes too. 'Cause a my glasses.

RITA says nothing.

SARAH: I liked that song you sang at school today. I didn't know you could sing.

RITA: I do sometimes.

SARAH: I like to dance. I wanna be a ballerina when I grow up. What do you wanna be?

RITA: A singer.

SARAH: No wonder.

RITA: I was scared when Mrs. Farrow asked me though.

SARAH: But you were good.

RITA: My Aunt Mary told me I had a million dollars in my mouth.

SARAH: Where?!

RITA: Mom said she meant I could make a million dollars with my voice.

SARAH: I wanna be rich when I grow up. And move to a big city.

RITA: You don't wanna live in Big Pond?

SARAH: No. New York I think. *(Beat.)* Do you wanna be friends?

RITA: When we grow up?

SARAH: No, now.

RITA: Okay. Do you wanna come over to my house?

SARAH: I'll hafta check with my mother first.

RITA: Okay, then come over. We live in the back of the new general store.

SARAH: I know. Your father helped build it, right?

RITA: Yeah, he's a carpenter.

SARAH: I'd love to live in a store. Do you get treats?

RITA: Sometimes.

SARAH: *(Running off.)* I'll be right there.

RITA: Okay.