

# Discovering Amelia

*By Trey Clarkson*

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## **DEDICATION**

*To Holly Smith*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Amelia Jones's life is falling apart. Her father has left, her mother is usually drunk, and her brother, a high school senior before being expelled, must now try to support the family, such as it is. Then there's Courtney and her posse who are dedicated to bullying Amelia, who finds herself with few friends. Now, another challenge. In a long-standing school tradition, each freshman must present on an American hero. Failing to choose a hero for herself, Amelia is assigned the historic female pilot, Amelia Earhart. Soon Earhart begins showing up in Amelia's daily life offering advice. She encourages young Amelia to take chances, push boundaries, and overcome fear. No one else can see or hear Earhart, and Amelia questions her own sanity. Is the presence of an imaginary friend a sign of deeper issues, or can Amelia rise above her problems and soar to new heights? With focused lighting allowing for simple staging and props, this deeply moving and inspiring play offers challenging roles for Earhart, Amelia, and her mother. Earhart's lines are all taken from her actual letters to her family and friends written throughout her life. Full evening.

## **ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School Theatre Company, Barry Robinson Theatre and Fine Arts Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Directed by Trey Clarkson and Katherine Parker. Original cast: Sarah Hurley, Carlisle Hughes, Catherine Hutchens, Luke Sicard, Rachel Ciampoli, Zach Gandara, Sara Hutchens, Hannah Brown, Olivia Pellegrino, Jessica Truelove, Ryan Layton, Maryanne Peck, Holly Foster, Christiana Conte, Claire Hudson, Rebecca White, Jon Gandara, Madison Powell, and Grayson Petrovich.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 m, 12 w, 2 flex, and an ensemble of 5 or more.  
Doubling possible.)*

- AMELIA JONES:** An at-risk high school girl  
**SUSAN JONES:** Amelia Jones' mother and an alcoholic  
**TOM JONES:** Amelia Jones' brother  
**COURTNEY KNICKS:** A mean and a popular girl  
**GOSSIP GIRLS (2):** Friends of Courtney  
**MRS. CARROLL:** The band director  
**PRINCIPAL BAILEY (flex):** Principal of Andover High  
**MRS. HOLLY SMITH:** Amelia Jones's history teacher  
**COACH JAY:** The PE teacher at Andover High School  
**AGATHA:** One of Amelia Jones's friends  
**EMILY:** Amelia Jones's other friend  
**SIMON CHAPMAN:** A popular boy and love interest of Amelia Jones  
**AMELIA EARHART:** Imaginary character only Amelia Jones can see.  
**MS. MALLARD:** A teacher at Andover High School  
**A SECRETARY:** Secretary to Principal Bailey  
**THE MINISTER (flex):** Presides over funeral  
**ENSEMBLE:** Students and funeral goers

Flexible casing: The Band Teacher, Principal, PE Teacher, and minister can all be female actors if necessary.

Doubling: PE Teacher could also play the Minister, one of the Gossip Girls could play Ms. Mallard; the other Gossip Girl could play the Secretary.

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### **Set Notes**

The design for the piece is minimalistic. Simple desks, chairs, benches, and a couch are all that are really needed. The piece relies heavily on isolation lighting. Pantomime is an option to further the minimalistic design. In the original production a large slate house shape was erected upstage to artistically signify a broken home and allow for a piece of interesting scenery for the audience; however, it is not necessary.

### **Sound and Light Design**

The use of blue lights during transitions helps the audience see the scene changes. Modern music can be used as transition music between scenes. The music masks the noise and should accentuate the emotions and character of Amelia Jones. Act 1 music should be more somber than Act 2. All lighting is isolation lighting and detailed in the stage directions.

### **Script Cuts**

You also have permission to trim Earhart's lines if necessary. The actor playing Earhart should listen to Earhart's actual voice as well as Katherine Hepburn to develop an accent and help with characterization.

### **Acknowledgments**

Special thanks to Katherine Parker for help writing the Mom's big scene, Brant Powell for his creative and editing help, as well as Lauren Ciampoli and Alice Kirby for their artistic support.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: AMELIA JONES in an isolated center SPOTLIGHT. The beginning of the play is a timed opening montage scored to SOUND EFFECTS and sad piano MUSIC. The happenings of Amelia's day take place stage left and right in isolation. Amelia is carrying her book bag, a lunch box, and an instrument case. She remains focused towards the audience. The characters in isolation talk out to the audience when they speak to Amelia.)*

*(SFX: An alarm clock blaring. LIGHTS up SL on SUSAN JONES passed out on a couch. The alarm clock is visible on a small end table or stool beside her. The time reads 7:35. TOM JONES is standing beside her. He turns off the alarm and tries to wake his mother. There is callousness in his demeanor. She does not wake.)*

**TOM:** Mom. Mom, wake up. Susan? The alarm has been going off for 20 minutes. Wake up.

*(HE looks at audience "seeing Amelia" who is in her center stage spot.)*

**TOM:** *(Cont'd.)* I'm sorry, Amelia. She had a late night. I'll drive you to school.

*(LIGHTS on SL fade out. SFX: A school bell rings. AMELIA sighs. Lights fade up on isolation spot SR with three GIRLS gossiping at their locker.)*

**COURTNEY:** Why does she even go here anymore? She should be kicked out.

**GOSSIP GIRL 1:** She has, like, a million tardies.

**GOSSIP GIRL 2:** And I think she has worn that same pathetic outfit, like, a hundred days in a row.

**COURTNEY:** Gross. She's gross. Oh look. She has decided to grace us with her presence today.

**COURTNEY:** *(Cont'd.)* What was it this time, Amelia? Car trouble or could you not find your favorite outfit? *(Sarcastically.)* Love that sweater, is it new?

*(Gossip GIRLS laugh as LIGHTS fade out on them. AMELIA sighs. SFX: A band playing a warm-up scale. Isolation LIGHTS come up SL and the scene has changed to MRS. CARROLL directing with a baton at a music stand. Three or four MUSICIANS with instruments sitting in chairs can represent the band.)*

**MRS. CARROLL:** Miss Jones. Congratulations. You are five for five this week for being late. *(Vigorously writes a referral to the office.)* Your blatant disregard for the rules of my classroom have won you a referral. *(The BAND MEMBERS laugh.)* Report to the office immediately, young lady, and tell the secretary you are to see Principal Bailey.

*(SHE holds out the referral slip and AMELIA takes one out of her pocket, looks at it, and puts it back in her pocket as the LIGHTS fade out on band. SFX: A busy signal. The isolation LIGHTS fade up on SR. It is now the principal's office. PRINCIPAL BAILEY is leaning on a desk holding the telephone.)*

**PRINCIPAL BAILEY:** *(Hanging up the phone.)* Are you sure your mother is at home, Amelia? I have tried to contact her every day this week. The mockery you made of the class elections has still not been addressed. Your inability to be arrive at school on time has become an issue. You are averaging fifteen tardies a month. Mrs. Carroll is threatening to kick you out of the band. I need you to take this letter home today. I am setting up a parent conference so we can get to the bottom of all this. Now report to your second period class.

*(PRINCIPAL BAILEY holds out the letter, and again AMELIA reveals that she has a letter to the audience. LIGHTS fade down on SR. SFX: A bell. Isolation LIGHTS fade up SL on a*

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*representative classroom setting. Three or four STUDENTS sit at desks listening to the announcement. MRS. HOLLY SMITH is standing and holds up her hand to halt Amelia to hear the announcement.)*

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** (O.S.) The results of the class elections are in. Class president is Reece Clark. Class vice president is Courtney Knicks. And class secretary is Lillian Vander-Leigh. Thank you for your attention and congratulations.

**MRS. SMITH:** (*Turning to audience as if talking to Amelia.*) I am sorry you didn't win, Amelia. I actually enjoyed your speech very much. History has a great number of "fight the man" and "power to the people" style speeches. Unfortunately, they usually don't mix well with administration. Now take your seat. You can try again next year.

*(The LIGHTS fade out on SL. SFX: A sports whistle. The LIGHTS fade up on SR to reveal a simple wooden bench with COACH JAY looking out in the audience as if watching soccer practice. Two sullen ACTORS sit on the bench.)*

**COACH:** Jones. I still don't have a signed permission slip or your physical form, so cozy up next to Williams and Johnson and ride the bench for another day. It's real simple. Sports, like life, are about taking care of the details. You will never succeed, Jones, if you refuse to take care of the details. (*Blows whistle. Shouting towards audience.*) No! No! No! Get back in formation.

*(LIGHTS fade on SR. AMELIA is left in her center spot. The scored MUSIC ends. Amelia drops her items onto the ground and sits and waits to be picked up. SFX: The sound of a car approaching, a door slam. TOM walks into the light.)*

**TOM:** How long have you been waiting here?

**AMELIA:** A couple of hours, I think.

### **End of Freeview**

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