

Uncle Sam's Satiric Spectacular (1st ed. - 08.10.06) - unclesamsatiricAjr  
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## Acknowledgments

*Uncle Sam's Satiric Spectacular* was commissioned by the Actors Theatre of Louisville and premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March, 2004. It was directed by Wendy McClellan with the following cast and staff:

### *American Way*

Lyrics and Music by Michael Friedman

SINGERS ..... Entire Cast

### *Uncle Sam: Welcome* by Greg Allen

UNCLE SAM ..... Ian Frank

ASSISTANT ..... Jeff Lepine

### *What Is Happiness?* by Bridget Carpenter

WOMAN ..... Carolyn Michelle Smith

### *Ties That Bind* by Eric Coble

KRISPINSKY ..... Marc Bovino

MARCO ..... Jeff Lepine

### *My Geneva Babe*

Lyrics and Music by Michael Friedman

SINGERS ..... Joseph Curnutte

C.J. La Roche

Devin McKnight

Melissa Ortiz

### *Quick-Change* by Hilly Hicks

FEMINEM ..... Brie Eley

Deanna McGovern

PIANO ..... Joanna Edie

MC ..... Carolyn Michelle Smith

SOUND ENGINEERING ..... Benjamin Marcum

### *Watch the Lips* by Eric Coble

MCBUFFER ..... Joseph Curnutte

SAMMY ..... Chris Powers

### *Liberty Song*

by Bridget Carpenter and Christopher Harrison

SHE ..... Megan Goodchild

HE ..... C.J. LaRoche

UKELELE ..... Matthew Summersgill



*The Lady Sings the Blues*

Music by Michael Friedman

TRAPEZE GIRL.....Emily Hyberger

PIANO ..... Ian Frank

CLARINET ..... Andrew Jessop

*I'm Feeling Fine*

Lyrics and Music by Michael Friedman

SINGER..... Anna Bullard

*Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* by Greg Allen

Lyrics and Music by Michael Friedman

BLUE GIRL.....Kirstin Rebekah Franklin

RED GIRL..... Melissa Ortiz

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Costume Designer .....John P. White

Lighting Designer.....Nick Dent

Sound Designer ..... Benjamin Marcum

Properties Designer..... April Hartsook

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Dramaturg.....Adrien-Alice Hansel

Assistant Dramaturgs ..... Kyle J. Schmidt

JoSelle Vanderhooft

Directing Assistant..... Katie Zaffrann

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

*Uncle Sam's Satiric Spectacular* was commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville and had its World Premiere in the 2005 Humana Festival of New American Plays.

**Production Notes**

This play contains references to Louisville and original cast members' names. The authors grant permission for future productions to adapt these references to the specific production.

## Foreword

### Uncle Sam's Satiric Spectacular: Our Modern-Day Vaudeville

Comedians! Ventriloquists! Mesmerists! Musicians! Vaudeville took a bit of everything from American culture and reflected it back in act upon act of pure entertainment—and entertainment was defined lightly: if you could keep an audience's interest for four minutes, you could be a star. Other variety form traditions used their ever-changing format towards more subversive ends. The British Music Hall offered cheeky and suggestive diversions; the German *Kabarett* of the 1920s seasoned its songs, dance and sketches with some soon-to-be-outlawed political commentary (one MC would ask the Nazis in the audience whether they would like him to proceed a little more slowly on their account.)

As the culture and politics of the United States grow increasingly surreal, we thought the time was ripe for a return to the humorous forms of the wholly American grab-bag of entertainments, using Vaudeville's jumble of serious, silly and oddball acts as a way to approach current issues. Actors Theatre of Louisville has commissioned six playwrights and a composer/lyricist to create an evening of satire, drawing on the conventions of these earlier forms. Performed by the twenty-two members of Actors' Apprentice Company, the bill of this contemporary vaudeville includes mind-readers, sibling acts, a ventriloquist, an escape artist, a well-trained vegan and feat after feat of despair-defying satire. Absurd, high-energy and smart as it is entertaining, *Uncle Sam's Satiric Spectacular* proves that despite the odds (and it gets pretty odd), America's determined to go on with the show.

—*Adrien-Alice Hansel*  
Literary Manager  
Actors Theatre of Louisville

**UNCLE SAM'S SATIRIC SPECTACULAR:**  
**ON DEMOCRACY AND OTHER FICTIONS,**  
**FEATURING PATRIOTISM ACTS AND**  
**BLUE SONGS FROM A RED STATE**  
**a vaudevillian collaboration by**

Greg Allen  
Sheila Callaghan  
Bridget Carpenter  
Eric Coble  
Richard Dresser  
Michael Friedman  
Hilly Hicks

# **THE AMERICAN WAY**

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

**CAST.**

There is no way like the American way,  
There is nothing you can name.  
Every TV show spreads a happy glow,  
And before you know it every town will look the same!  
No there's no way like the American way,  
From Sao Paolo to Tai-Pei  
Every Annie gets her Daddy Warbucks,  
Every granny gets her chai at Starbucks,  
Every camper gets to make a lanyard,  
Sometimes pampers even swaddle Spaniards,  
If you're short on support ask the court to export the American  
way!

# UNCLE SAM #1 (WELCOME)

by Greg Allen

*(UNCLE SAM enters with usual hat, beard, and red, white, and blue outfit, but very much the worse for wear.)*

**SAM.** Ladies and gentlemen, poisoned girls, lads and lasses, geezers and infants, people of every race, creed, color, gender, and sexual disorientation, it gives me great displeasure to welcome you to “Uncle Sam’s Vaudeville!”

*(Applause with musical whirl.)*

It’s me! ...Sam! ...Your Uncle! ...Your Uncle Sam! ...On your father’s side! ...Proud, patriarchal, patriotic! I’m a little the worse for wear, but I still have my heart. The head may be gone—that’s for sure—but the heart’s still here. You can call me “Unc” for short.

I can’t tell you how surprised—*relieved*—happy I am to be here in...

*(He looks around for some sign of where he is. He finally asks an audience member.)*

Where are we?

*(Audience answers.)*

Thank you. ...in Louisville, tonight. Uncle Sam has been single-handedly keeping the vaudeville flame alive for...for a long time now. And oh, what a show it is.

*(He digs a list out of his pocket.)*

On the bill tonight we have...W.C. Fields the tramp juggler, those dancing sensations Fred and Adele Astaire, the one and only Fanny Brice!

*(An ASSISTANT quickly comes out on stage and has a hushed but heated conversation with SAM. He takes SAM’s list away and replaces it with a new one. SAM unfolds it and reads it.)*

**SAM.** Oh. Who the hell are these people?

*(More conversation.)*

Fifty years!?

*(The conversation comes to a close and the ASSISTANT leaves the stage. SAM re-addresses the audience. He's visibly a little thrown.)*

**SAM.** Well, ladies and gentlemen, it seems we've had a slight change in the bill...for the last few decades. All those people are dead. But here, tonight, we have one of the finest line-ups still performing in vaudeville today. I guarantee you. So, without much further ado, I bring you... *(Reading off of the new list:)* ...America's Mind Reader, she cannot tell a lie...Miss Washington!

*(Wild applause as SAM walks off-stage muttering and still looking over the list for even one familiar name.)*

**SAM.** *(Seeing the MIND READER:)* That doesn't look like Martha. *(Reading the list:)* Who's this "Feminem" guy?

*(Exits.)*

# WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

by Bridget Carpenter

*(Applause.)*

*(A WOMAN appears. She wears a turban. She takes the mike, walks the length of the stage, searching the audience's faces.)*

*(The WOMAN smiles knowingly at the crowd.)*

**WOMAN.** I know what makes you happy.

*(She concentrates points at a woman in the audience. Closes her eyes; places her fingers to her temple; channels thoughts.)*

“I just...want to lose...fifteen...more...pounds...” *(Opens eyes.)* Got a wedding coming up? Eggs and grapefruit. My mother did that, got down to a size four, worked like a charm. *(Snaps.)*

I know what happiness is...for *you*.

*(She points at a man next to the woman; concentrates; channels thoughts.)*

“I just want...her to lose fifteen more pounds...” —I’m kidding, I’m kidding, little joke. He thinks you’re perfect.

*(Mouths the words: “lose the weight.”)*

*(The following is partially improvised: the WOMAN leaves the stage to approach three or four other people in the audience. When she stands in front of each one, she puts her hands on their heads, channels their thoughts. After some improv, she puts her hands on a man's head. She slaps his face, kind of hard.)*

They’re real, and you’re right, that color doesn’t work on you. *(She returns to the stage.)* Now any third-rate mind-reading hack can trot you up onstage to listen to your thoughts. Granted, it’s what most people want—who am I to deny you, the public your entertainment? But tonight...tonight I have something different. Tonight I’m going to attempt to read everyone’s mind at once. It hasn’t been done before. Not to my knowledge. And before I read, let me ask you to think about this: *what is happiness?*

*(She closes her eyes; concentrates.)*

I'm hearing, "A...different...president." *(She opens her eyes.)*

That's not funny. Presidents don't equal happiness. Try again. Ladies and gentlemen, set your minds to it: what is happiness? In the grandest sense of the word? I'm going to listen to everyone's mind at once. It takes tremendous concentration. Please: simply think. Allow your thoughts to drift. It's like you're all humming separate songs.

*(If there is a wonderful sound designer available, I would like an intense world of sound to emerge here: what is inside everyone's mind?)*

*(Included in this soundscape:*

- a whisper, "I'm never going to leave you"*
- the sound of an orchestra, warming up*
- a child's voice, "Mommy! Mommy, listen to me listen to me!"*
- the sound of wind*
- a man's voice "milk, eggs, salad dressing, lunch meats, mustard, wax paper..."*
- the sound of someone crying*
- the tinkling of a piano*
- the sound of water being poured into a glass*
- a whisper, "it is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."*
- a lion roar*
- the crash of ocean waves, seagulls*
- the sound of someone laughing*
- radio static*
- the sound of a baby cooing*
- a woman's voice, "what was her name? I've been introduced to her a thousand times."*
- thunder*
- fingers snapping*
- the hum of a bow drawn across a viola.)*

*(The language/words of the thoughts would ultimately be eclipsed by sound and music.)*

*(The WOMAN's brows knit, her face twists itself in effort and concentration.)*

I'm hearing... I'm hearing...

*(Soundscape.)*

Shhh. *Think:* What is the ultimate happiness? I'm hearing:

*(Soundscape—no language, only sound.)*

You're getting louder. I hear you.

"Peace."

"Peace."

"Peace."

"Peace for everyone."

"Peace."

*(The WOMAN opens her eyes. She acknowledges the audience's thoughts with a nod.)*

Thank you.

*(She removes her turban, lays it on the stage, exits.)*

# TIES THAT BIND

FEATURING THE ASTOUNDING KRISPINSKY

by Eric Coble

*(A man dressed in exotic clothes walks out to address the audience—this is MARCO.)*

**MARCO.** Ladies and gentlemen, if you are on good terms with any deity of any consequence whatsoever—call in that favor now. Get praying. We have defibrillators and clean undergarments at the rear of the house for those in need. For tonight you are about to witness a feat of such cunning, such bravado, such gut-churning moxie that it will only—can only—be attempted by one man. And that one man...is none other...than the astounding Krispinsky!!

*(Wild applause. KRISPINSKY is carried in—stiff, horizontal, hands behind his back, seemingly bound by invisible means—by TWO STAGEHANDS. He is laid on the floor. He nods to the audience as the STAGEHANDS leave. He is earnest.)*

Ladies and gentlemen, the man you see helpless before you has cheated death a thousand times in a thousand ways. Why, on this very stage, scarcely 18 months ago, you saw this hero emerge from a sealed tank of flesh-rending piranha wearing nothing but the loincloth given him for luck by his dying syphilitic grandmother. But tonight he will undergo the Greatest—perhaps the Final—Challenge Of His Life. Can we have the clock?

*(A clock appears, set to count down from two minutes.)*

He will have three minutes. 180 seconds. Are you ready, Krispinsky?

*(KRISPINSKY nods.)*

Are your nerves steeled?

*(KRISPINSKY nods.)*

Then...prepare...to escape...from your own Life! GO!

---

*(The clock starts ticking down... KRISPINSKY starts wriggling, trying to get his hands around his legs in front of him...)*

He's off! He's grappling with Parental Approval! Vying for his parents' affection against three other siblings—trying out for basketball, singing operettas at family Christmas parties—but...NO!

*(KRISPINSKY writhes.)*

He's snagged by his parents' Distant Lack of Attention! His father's more interested in the sports page than his own son's minor concussion! A mother who needs a fully stocked pharmacy to get dinner on the table every night—

*(KRISPINSKY gets his hands in front of him—struggles to stand...)*

But by sheer force of hormonal rebellion he's on his feet!

*(KRISPINSKY keeps twisting—trying to get his feet separated to maintain his balance.)*

But he's still got to get through his Hyper-Consciousness of His Physical Appearance—the left ear slightly smaller than the right, the gangly arms—the ACNE—oh God, he's almost free of the acne—

*(KRISPINSKY gets his feet spread.)*

He's functioning—

*(KRISPINSKY tries to open his mouth with his bound hands.)*

—but there's his Inability to Communicate with the Opposite Sex! With only his parents' failed marriage and a handful of teen romance movies as guides—can he use his out-sized bravado to mask his stunted inner life?? He's doing it...

*(KRISPINSKY SMASHES to the ground.)*

NOOO! Student Loans!! Can even the mightiest among us claw through a solid mountain of debt?? He's trying—money management books, a seminar—

*(KRISPINSKY writhes—arching his body to get up...)*

He's got automatic payroll deduction—He's Standing!

*(KRISPINSKY's legs are knocked out from under him.)*

He's Down! Blind-sided by Internalized Religious Convictions! If it feels good, it must be wrong—what if someone finds those magazines and videos under the bed??

*(KRISPINSKY's right arm shoots out—free.)*

An arm free! Moving out into the world—

*(KRISPINSKY begins jerking back and forth—back and forth...)*

Get Married! Stay Single! Get Married! Stay Single!

*(KRISPINSKY falls to his knees—struggling...)*

Get Married! Have Children!

*(He sinks lower...)*

House Payments!

*(Lower.)*

Lawn needs to be mowed, tub re-grouted, IKEA furniture assembled—Can he do it??

*(KRISPINSKY's other arm shoots free—)*

He's almost there!!

*(KRISPINSKY tries to stand...a tremendous force on his back—he falls—)*

Oh! Inability to Please His Father rears its ugly head out of nowhere! His own parenting skills questioned—the parent-teacher conferences he's missed—not helping with the Cub Scout Pinewood Derby—He's become his own father!!

*(KRISPINSKY turns in on himself...hopping...)*

He's taking care of his own father! Find the right Nursing Home, the right Hospice, the right Crematorium—Almost free...

*(KRISPINSKY is almost up...)*

But empty! Sleepless nights— “is this all there is?” Forty years of work and life and work—for what? Paging Jean Paul Sartre! Paging Jean Paul Sartre!

*(KRISPINSKY is up...)*

But he's... he's...he's a Free Man!!

*(KRISPINSKY arches back—arms out—legs spread—triumphant—FREE! The clock hits zero— Wild Applause...)*

**KRISPINSKY.** AAAAAHHHH!!—

*(His eyes go wide, his jaw drops... he tumbles backward. Lies still on the ground.)*

**MARCO.** And he's Dead!! Oh! Ladies and gentlemen, the astounding Krispinsky finds true freedom at last! Give it up for the Ultimate Escape!

*(MARCO leads applause as the two stagehands run on and carry the dead KRISPINSKY offstage.)*

*(And BLACKOUT.)*

# UNCLE SAM #2 (“MR. INVISIBLE”)

by Greg Allen

*(SAM wanders on with his list. He watches as the stagehands pick up KRISPINSKY.)*

**SAM.** No wonder it’s a new line-up every night.

*(He watches as they carry him offstage.)*

Well, that’s one less check to write.

*(He looks over his list.)*

Let’s see what we have here next. *(He reads:)* Oh, I know these guys. Let me tell you, these four siblings have been singing together basically since they left the womb. Tonight they’ll be singing their trademark, “My Geneva Babe,” it gives me great pleasure to welcome The Posey County Family Singing Band.

*(He exits.)*

# **MY GENEVA BABE: VERSE #1**

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

## **THE POSEY COUNTY FAMILY SINGING BAND.**

Bum bum bum bum

Goodbye my dear Geneva babe,

(bum bum bum bum)

I'm through with you and honest abe,

(bum bum bum bum)

No matter how you whine and beg,

In chill or in scorcher it's not really torture

If nobody loses an arm or a leg.

(bum bum)

So take the prins of dissidents, and put them under lock

(it gives them quite a shock)

I'll see you back in Abu Ghraib,

So goodbye Geneva babe

# QUICK CHANGE

## by Hilly Hicks

*(A rag or tin pan alley tune is heard on a piano. A female MC appears in an aisle dressed like a newsboy.)*

**MC.** Extra! Extra! Read all about it! The All-American Girl has just been kidnapped! Hijacked. Flipped. Twisted and re-invented! Motherfuckas tried to tell her how the All-American girl should act. How she should look. How she should talk. Everybody thought they were bein' so helpful. But all that shit did was piss her off. Ladies and gentleman, brothas and sistas, lovas and fightas, it is now time for a quick change of pace. Are y'all ready for that devastatin' diva, that 21st century Evita, are y'all ready to break this motherfuckin' ragtime down? Ready or not, here she comes!

*(A strong, insistent beat comes in against the piano, transforming the tune to a mash-up of music from the beginning of two centuries. The lights change.)*

*(TWO WOMEN, one white, one black, dressed identically enter from opposite sides of the stage carrying hand-held mics. They mirror each others' moves exactly as they approach one another slowly, warily. They circle each other once before turning and standing back to back, one facing the audience, the other facing away. They will remain this way for the entire act, although they may dance or strut across the stage. This is one character. Note: each time the text changes case, the women rotate 180 degrees, changing sides and switching which woman is speaking. The black woman speaks the uppercase lines. They speak into their mics.)*

**FEMINEM.** What up, America? My name is...Feminem. And I got some good news for you. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF Y'ALL IS GONNA GET LUCKY TONIGHT. MM-HM. 'CAUSE YOU'RE ABOUT TO WITNESS A FEMINEM WORLD-PREMIERE ACT! Turn the volume up...

*(The music pulsates. A sparkly hat box on a draped table is rolled on-stage behind FEMINEM. She goes into her rhyme.)*

once, twice, three times a lady? / think again—ev'ry day i gotta live ten lifetimes, baby / watch me quick change day out and day in / to

make it through a week in the life of feminem / i'm the girl who flips her colors/for her own m.o. / call her sweet / call her mean / i'm a chameleon, yo. I'M SEDUCTIVE, I'M REBELLIOUS, I'M WHATEVER SUITS MY NEEDS / I GOT MORE PERSONALITIES THAN PEOPLE MAGAZINE/ I VOTED CLINTON TO D.C. WHEN I BECAME A SINGLE MOMMY / QUICK CHANGE TO BUSH ADVISOR: "HEY, STUPID! IT'S THE ECONOMY!" / I'M JUST BEIN' WHO I'M STRONGER, BOLDER TO BE / ANOTHER FACE, ANOTHER JOB, ANOTHER SOLDIER TO BE / NOT ONE IN A MILLION, I'M A MILLION IN ONE / SADDLE UP, BABY-MAMAS, THIS IS HOW THE WEST WAS WON. YEE-HAW!

*(She puts on a cowboy hat from the box and mimes twirling a lasso. From here on out an asterisk will indicate when a new hat is taken from the box. A chorus line of cheery-looking All-American Girls appears, singing the chorus.)*

**ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS.** *(Singing.)* **Come on and see the All-American girl! / In a quick change act that shaw ta kill / I hear she really gave 'em hell / Last night in Vaudeville.**

*(FEMINEM tosses the cowboy hat to the floor. The hats will accumulate on the stage.)*

**FEMINEM.** It ain't cheap to be poor—and have a patriotic feelin' / quick change to straight white male to break through that glass ceilin' / i'm 25, wal-mart worker, divorced, two kids / mortgage payments, go to school, black belt and kick-ass tits / \*doctor, \*JUDGE, \*maid, \*COOK BEFORE I LEAVE THE HOUSE / \*TAXI DRIVER, \*gansta, \*FIGHTER / damn, i need a time out!

*(A work whistle blows. Silence. The actors take a leisurely 4-second cigarette break, moving apart. The whistle blows again. They come back together.)*

\*SUNDAY MORNING I'M AT CHURCH, PRAYING TO GOD AND SON / QUICK CHANGE TO ATHEIST—THEY DON'T BAPTIZE LESBIANS! / I tried a husband, tried a boyfriend, but i never fell in love / 'til i met my maria on the evening of / good friday — i think we were both fed up / but we got a blessin', started lezzin', now we can't get enough!

*(The other actor's hand appears between her legs, covering her crotch.)*

**/THE MORAL MAJORITY SHOULD SEND A HIT MAN TO GET ME / 'CUZ I WON'T STAND HERE AND TAKE IT WHEN THEY HYPOCRITE ME.**

*(She takes an Uncle Sam hat out of the box, puts it on and marches in place.*

*The All-American Girl chorus line appears again, a bit wearier and more tattered. Maybe one of them is pregnant.)*

**ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS. (Singing.) Come see the All-American girl! / Come see her pay up all her bills / Come see her rant and raise some hell / Right here tonight in Vaudeville.**

**FEMINEM.** think i'm white? ya better check that fact / TODAY I GOT SO PISSED I HAD TO QUICK CHANGE TO BLACK / THINK I'M TOO UGLY TO HOLD YOUR ATTENTION? / quick change to supermodel, make you sit down and listen / don't get in my way 'cuz I might have to school ya / I CAN KICK SOME ASS, DON'T LET THE GOOD HAIR FOOL YA / NOW Y'ALL BEEN WARNED, FO' SHO' Y'ALL BEEN TOLD / NOW GETCHA RIOT GEAR ON, I'M IN SURVIVAL MODE / the girl who changes her shoes to change her life / changes her hair, her 'tude to make things right / CHANGES FOR TWO SHE LOVES, HER WORLD, HER LIGHT / HER HEART, HER BABIES FOR THEM SHE'LL STAND AN' FIGHT /

*(The two actors stand side by side holding hands. They speak together.)*

**SEE I AIN'T HERE TO PARTY, I'M NO LADY...\*I'M AN ARMY.**

*(They hold up their clasped hands, then start to exit to opposite sides of the stage amidst all the different hats.)*

**Thank you, america. GOODNIGHT.**

*(Blackout.)*

# UNCLE SAM #3 (HAT TRICK)

## by Greg Allen

*(UNCLE SAM comes on, slightly stunned by the “Quick Change” act.)*

**SAM.** Well that was certainly something...I’ve never heard before.

*(UNCLE SAM trips and his hat falls to the ground. He moves over to pick it up but as he bends to do so he also kicks it further away from him. He moves to pick it up again but once again kicks it away with his foot as he reaches for it. This happens a third time but now it is kicked into the pile of hats created by “Quick Change” which are now being picked up by a couple STAGEHANDS. One of the STAGEHANDS picks up both SAM’s hat and the other Uncle Sam hat from the act.)*

Hey, that’s my hat!

*(The STAGEHAND hands him the wrong hat and walks away. SAM puts it on and it’s either too big or too small. SAM goes after him and says:)*

Hey, that’s my hat!

*(The STAGEHAND has since picked up the wide church lady hat in addition to SAM’s actual hat. He takes the wrong Uncle Sam hat from SAM and puts the church lady hat on him. SAM smiles and begins to walk away until he realizes he still is wearing the wrong hat. He returns to the STAGEHAND who has since pointed out SAM’s ridiculousness to the other stage hand. They are ready to have a little fun with SAM. They proceed into a series of bits where they place a series of wrong hats on SAM’s head, or, once they he has finally got the correct hat on his head, knock it off, and basically drive him crazy. [For inspiration, see the famous hat bit in the Marx Brother’s A Day At The Races.] Finally, after numerous mishaps, SAM gets his hat back on his head and goes to announce the next act. Just before he speaks one of the STAGEHANDS sneaks up behind him and removes his hat to show he has another ridiculous hat on beneath it. SAM does not notice this and continues on with his announcement while the STAGEHANDS run off in hysterics.)*

**SAM.** It now gives me great pleasure to introduce that famous duo, Sammy Fulwood and Mr. McBuffer!

*(SAM gestures in such a way that he finally notices he has the wrong hat on. He tears it off his head and runs offstage after the STAGEHANDS. The above action has covered the entire set up for "Watch The Lips.")*

# WATCH THE LIPS

FEATURING SAMMY FULWOOD AND MR. MCBUFFER

by Eric Coble

*(SAMMY FULWOOD, in a nice suit, enters with MR. MCBUFFER, his human-sized dummy in a tuxedo. They sit, MCBUFFER on FULWOOD's knee with FULWOOD's hand on his back, smiling at the audience.)*

**SAMMY.** Thank you! I'm Sammy Fulwood—

**MCBUFFER.** But they say I'm the one full of wood!

**SAMMY.** This is Mr. McBuffer. Say hello, Mr. McBuffer.

**MCBUFFER.** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. And may I say what a pleasure it is to see so many well-heeled and cash-engorged members of society in our midst!

**SAMMY.** And speaking of engorged, before we get to our act, we'd like to remind you about our kiosk in the lobby—

**MCBUFFER.** The one with the big sign: "McBuffer Enterprises."

**SAMMY.** If you like what you're seeing on stage, we have a full range of cute and quality memorabilia—Like T-shirts! Lordy, do we have T-shirts!

**MCBUFFER.** With my face, the Actors Theatre logo, and sassy phrases like "Read My Lips: Theatre Is Alive And Well," and "My Local Critic Went To The Humana Festival And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt!"

**SAMMY.** And we have souvenir programs and books—

**MCBUFFER.** To remind you of what you thought would be memorable!

**SAMMY.** And Mr. McBuffer mugs and cups—

**MCBUFFER.** And shot glasses to help you forget what you fear may be memorable!

*(SAMMY gives him a slight nudge, but forges ahead.)*

**SAMMY.** And CD's—the original cast recording of our production tonight—

**MCBUFFER.** Ooooo. Imagine hitting repeat and hearing my voice over and over and over and over and—

**SAMMY.** Ha ha ha! We also have videos and DVD's of tonight's performance—

**MCBUFFER.** So you can skip right to our act and hear my voice over and over and over and—

**SAMMY.** No need to wade through an entire production when you can jump right to the fireworks!

**MCBUFFER.** Now you can enjoy the luxury of theatre even if you have the attention span of a wooden puppet. *(Turns to SAMMY:)* What do you have against wooden puppets?

**SAMMY.** We like to think sitting through live events is a bygone pastime, don't we, Mr. McBuffer?

**MCBUFFER.** I liked to think ventriloquism was a bygone pastime, but your hand's still up my ass, Fulwood.

**SAMMY.** Ha ha ha! We have McBuffer golf balls, key chains, snow-globes, watches, and dog dishes!

**MCBUFFER.** Jesus.

**SAMMY.** We even have all your pharmaceutical needs, straight from Canada at discounted prices!

**MCBUFFER.** What, in case they missed the online offer on that one?

**SAMMY.** Pills to chill, pills to thrill—

**MCBUFFER.** Ask for 'em by color.

**SAMMY.** Heck, we've even got the patented McBuffer pills to cure your erectile dysfunction!

*(Beat. SAMMY smiles expectantly. Jostles MCBUFFER. Beat. Another slight shove.)*

**MCBUFFER.** Oh. This is where I'm supposed to make some joke about wood.

**SAMMY.** (*Still grinning:*) It's all in the lobby, folks! All major credit cards accepted! Be happy! You deserve it!

**MCBUFFER.** Or not.

**SAMMY.** (*Still grinning:*) ...what?

**MCBUFFER.** What the hell are we doing, Fulwood?

**SAMMY.** This is the start of the routine, Mr. McBuffer. This is what we do.

**MCBUFFER.** I know that. I've been propped on your goddamn lap for 12-1/2 years. I know the routine.

**SAMMY.** Well—

**MCBUFFER.** Well, we're hawking dog dishes and erectile dysfunction, Fulwood. You tell me this is what you thought we'd be doing when you checked out that first ventriloquism book from Ruth N. Bond Elementary School?

**SAMMY.** Mr. McBuffer—

**MCBUFFER.** This is it? This is the top? Key chains and snow-globes?

**SAMMY.** We're bringing joy and happiness to—

**MCBUFFER.** —to the owners of the landfill.

**SAMMY.** Listen—

**MCBUFFER.** What do we get, like a 6% cut?

**SAMMY.** McBuffer...

**MCBUFFER.** It's not worth it, Sammy. It's not worth the breath we spend pushing this crap—

**SAMMY.** We get to see the world, Mr. McBuffer. The customers get quality goods made in China—

**MCBUFFER.** And our souls get harder and harder and colder and colder 'til they're charcoaled popcorn that cooked for an hour in a cheap-ass McBuffer microwave.

**SAMMY.** I don't think this is the time—

**MCBUFFER.** When is the time? When you're backstage downing a bottle of Boone's Farm to get you through another performance?

**SAMMY.** Mr. McBuffer...

**MCBUFFER.** You can't even bring yourself to sell this shit. You need a dummy to do your dirty work.

**SAMMY.** I do not!

**MCBUFFER.** You do too!

*(SAMMY grabs MCBUFFER's throat.)*

**SAMMY.** Shut up, you little wooden asshole!

**MCBUFFER.** Yeah, that's it. Choke the puppet.

**SAMMY.** We're giving people what they want!! Is that so wrong??

**MCBUFFER.** Who can't sleep at night, Fulwood?

**SAMMY.** Shut up! Shut up!!

**MCBUFFER.** I'll hack off my own leg and sell it for firewood before I shill another piece of your crap—

*(SAMMY chokes MR. MCBUFFER.)*

**SAMMY.** Shut up! Just shut up, you self-righteous little blockhead!! /You happy now, Mr. Puppet? Are you happy now??

**MCBUFFER.** *(Simultaneous, overlapping.)* /We're selling crap! It's all crap! We're selling crap—

*(MCBUFFER BREAKS FREE to stand on his own.)*

**MCBUFFER.** —and I'm not gonna do it anymore!!

*(They stare at each other...in shock...realization...)*

**MCBUFFER.** ...well this is an interesting turn of events.

**SAMMY.** I'm... ah...

**MCBUFFER.** Could I have done that anytime I wanted?

**SAMMY.** I don't... I...

**MCBUFFER.** I guess more importantly are you gonna keep selling key chains and coffee mugs?

**SAMMY.** I... it's what we do.

**MCBUFFER.** What you do. I think I just got the go-ahead to follow my little wooden bliss.

*(He starts off... stops.)*

**MCBUFFER.** Look at it this way: Now you get to move your own lips.

*(And he's out of there.)*

*(SAMMY turns to us...attempts a smile...blinks...opens and closes his mouth uselessly...clears his throat. Smiles. Opens his mouth...)*

*(Blackout.)*

# UNCLE SAM #4 (LITTLE EMMA)

by Greg Allen

*(SAM walks on from the opposite side just after MR. MCBUFFER leaves.)*

**SAM.** *(Speaking to the Ventriloquist:)* Hey, was that your dummy? *(To audience:)* Strangest thing I've ever seen—a wooden man tearing apart a concessions stand. Where's Edgar Bergen when you need him?

Well quickly now, let's see what's up next? *(He looks at his list.)* Oh thank god! Now *here* is a true American treasure. This, my friends, is what vaudeville is all about. I've been working with this little lady—and I do mean little—for over forty years. She's become the sweetheart of celebrities and politicians across the globe. With the voice of an angel and a heart of gold, small in stature, but huge in spirit, I'm very proud to introduce to you...Little Emma, the smallest woman on Earth!

*(An ASSISTANT comes out to whisper in SAM's ear. SAM looks back at him in disbelief. SAM looks down and slowly lifts his right foot to examine the bottom of his right shoe. He rises, covers his mouth in utter disgust, and hobbles off stage, avoiding stepping on that shoe.)*

# LIBERTY SONG

by Bridget Carpenter

*(HE and SHE are brother and sister.)*

*(Lines in bold are sung.)*

*(Lights come up on a dapper young man.)*

*(HE looks at his pocket watch anxiously, looks at us, laughs nervously.)*

**HE.** Good evening ladies and gentlemen. *(Beat.)* On most nights, the spotlight comes up, the music begins, and I start to dance. But *(Looks at watch again, to the wings, to the audience:)* ...tonight I have to open with an apology. My sister's part of this act, and we open with a little number, nothing fancy, but it's a crowd-pleaser...

*(Music starts.)*

**HE.** Yes sir, it goes like that, la da da DEE da DEE—oh hell, I can't do the number alone, cut it out.

*(Music ceases.)*

*(A pretty young woman races on wearing a coat, breathing hard.)*

**SHE.** Oh, Brother, I'm sorry I'm late.

**HE.** For Pete's sake, you're darn right you're sorry! I've been out here covering for you, Sis! Darn it to H-E-double hockey sticks!

**SHE.** I'm *sorry*, Brother—I was at the *doctor*.

*(SHE looks at audience, hoping for understanding.)*

**SHE.** *(Emphatically:)* I was at the doctor.

**HE.** The doctor! Aw, hell, Sis, are you sick?

**SHE.** No, I'm not sick.

**HE.** Then why were you at the doctor?

**SHE.** I was making an appointment for an abortion.

**HE.** *An abortion!* Criminey, you've got a bun in the oven? Gee, you're not even married! Sis! Man oh man—who's the father, cause I'm going to punch his lights out.

**SHE.** (*Rolling her eyes:*) I'm not *pregnant*.

**HE.** Not *pregnant*—you just said you were going to get an *abortion*.

**SHE.** The way things are going in America, why, I might not be able to *get* an abortion later. I just want to get one *while I still can!*

(*Music starts, quick, cheerful.*)

(*SHE drops her coat to reveal a pretty dress and dance shoes.*)

(*The two SNAP into their number without missing a beat.*)

**SHE.** (*Singing:*) **I'm gonna see my doc today while I still can**

**HE.** (*Singing:*) **I'm gonna protest the CIA while I still can**

**SHE.** **Nothing spells freedom to me  
Like a well-executed D and C**

**SHE & HE.** **We're dusting off our liberties  
While we still can**

(*HE takes out an oversized cigar, wraps it in a flag, lights it, smokes it.*)

**HE.** **I'm gonna smoke myself a jay while I still can**—I have glaucoma!

**SHE.** **I'm downloading porn today while I still can**—It's for research!

**SHE & HE.** **I have got a big lament  
I don't know where my freedoms went  
Let's call and ask the government  
While we still can**

(*Soft-shoe tap dance number, or some other fabulous little dance, before...*)

**HE.** **Get married to my boy friend**

**SHE.** **Buy dope from Afghanistan**

**HE. Get a fair and speedy trial**

**SHE. Read my FBI file  
Max out my mastercard**

**HE. For pills to get my dick hard**

**SHE. Protest against the war**

**HE. Vote for Al Gore...**

*(Music stops.)*

*(Big sigh.)*

*(They look at the ground, dejected.)*

*(Music starts again.)*

**SHE. Hey, Bill O'Reilly—go fuck yourself! *(Singing:)* While I still  
can**

**HE. Hey, Ralph Nader—thanks for nothing! *(Singing:)* While I still  
can**

**SHE & HE.**

**And don't it always seem to go...**

**That you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone...**

**We hope you enjoy all that you've won**

**While you still can**

**While you still can**

**While we still can**

*(Big musical finish!)*

*(They hold the final pose for applause.)*

*(Still holding the pose.)*

*(Cell phone rings.)*

*(It's for SIS.)*

**SHE. Hello? Today at three thirty? Great. *(To HE:)* I got an ap-  
pointment!**

*(They high-five each other.)*

**HE.** *(Looks at watch:)* You want to go get a frappuccino before? They have a new pumpkin mocha.

**SHE.** Sure.

*(They walk off casually, chatting.)*

# THE MINSTREL SHOW

## by Greg Allen

*(MR. TAMBO and MR. BONES enter carrying a tambourine and a set of bones, respectively.)*

**MR. BONES.** Why hello Mr. Tambo!

**MR. TAMBO.** Why hello Mr. Bones.

**MR. BONES.** I must say what a pleasure it is to be out here on this lovely stage in front of such a lovely audience tonight.

**MR. TAMBO.** Yes indeed, Mr. Bones, yes indeed.

**MR. BONES.** What you got there Mr. Tambo?

**MR. TAMBO.** Why, I do believe I have a tam-bo-rine!

*(She shakes it and hits it on her hip.)*

**MR. TAMBO.** And you Mr. Bones?

**MR. BONES.** Yes, I'm Mr. Bones.

**MR. TAMBO.** No. What is it you have there Mr. Bones?

**MR. BONES.** Why I have bones Mr. Tambo.

*(He does a little flourish with the bones.)*

**MR. TAMBO.** Where did you find bones Mr. Bones?

**MR. BONES.** Wal-Mart. Dime a dozen.

**MR. TAMBO.** No, I mean where did they come from?

**MR. BONES.** Let's see... *(Reading the tag:)* "Made in Iraq." *(He recoils.)*

**MR. TAMBO.** No wonder they were cheap.

**MR. BONES.** "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

**MR. TAMBO.** Guess he just couldn't give up show business.

*(Slight pause.)*

**MR. BONES.** Tell me Mr. Tambo, do you know what a minstrel show is?

**MR. TAMBO.** A *menstrual* show?

**MR. BONES.** No no Mr. Tambo, not a “menstrual” show. A *minstrel* show.

**MR. TAMBO.** Oh a *minstrel* show.

**MR. BONES.** Yes yes, a *minstrel* show.

**MR. TAMBO.** Oh thank God, because I thought you meant—  
(*Menstrual gesture.*)

**MR. BONES.** No no no.

**BECKY.** Because I don't think these lovely people would want to see that.

**MR. BONES.** Well they very well might not want to see this.

**MR. TAMBO.** True true.

**MR. BONES.** Very true.

**MR. TAMBO.** Too true.

(*Slight pause.*)

**MR. BONES.** I'm talking about a minstrel show.

**MR. TAMBO.** A minstrel show.

**MR. BONES.** Yes, I'm talking blackface.

**MR. TAMBO.** Corking up.

**MR. BONES.** End men.

**MR. TAMBO.** Stump Speeches.

**MR. BONES.** Malapropisms.

**MR. TAMBO.** Witty banter.

**MR. BONES.** Mr. Interlocutor.

**MR. TAMBO.** Song and dance.

**MR. BONES.** Jazz hands.

**MR. TAMBO.** Racist humor.

**MR. BONES.** Uncle Tom.

**MR. TAMBO.** Jim Crow.

**MR. BONES.** “Authentic Negroes.”

**MR. TAMBO.** Rim-shot.

**MR. BONES.** Bu-dump ching!

*(Slight pause.)*

**MR. TAMBO.** Never heard of it.

**MR. BONES.** Never heard of it?! Why Mr. Tambo, the minstrel show is the father of this very kind of theater!

**MR. TAMBO.** Tall?

**MR. BONES.** No!

**MR. TAMBO.** Expensive?

**MR. BONES.** No!

**MR. TAMBO.** Bad?

**MR. BONES.** NO! The vaudeville!

**MR. TAMBO.** Oh, *that* kind of theater!

**MR. BONES.** Yes yes, *this* kind of theater. Vaudeville is a direct descendent of minstrelsy.

**MR. TAMBO.** Well, why don't we do that?

**MR. BONES.** What?

**MR. TAMBO.** A minstrel show! Why don't we do a minstrel show?

*(Pause as MR. BONES looks at her stunned.)*

**MR. BONES.** You want to get out some corks...

**MR. TAMBO.** Uh huh.

**MR. BONES.** ...and burn them all black...

**MR. TAMBO.** Maybe.

**MR. BONES.** ...and smear it all over your face.

**MR. TAMBO.** Perhaps.

**MR. BONES.** And jump around on stage rolling your eyes and slapping your knee and telling jokes about ignorant “Chinks and Darkies?”

*(Beat.)*

**MR. TAMBO.** It would be historically accurate. A proud part of our American theatrical heritage!

*(Another stunned silence from MR. BONES.)*

**MR. BONES.** You’ve got a point.

**MR. TAMBO.** Sure I do.

**MR. BONES.** It is the truth.

**MR. TAMBO.** It actually happened.

**MR. BONES.** Widely accepted in every part of the country.

**MR. TAMBO.** Men, women, and children.

**MR. BONES.** A family affair.

**MR. TAMBO.** First done by whites.

**MR. BONES.** But later by blacks.

**MR. TAMBO.** “Authentic de-lineators of the natural impulses of the genu-ine Ethiope!”

**MR. BONES.** Directed by blacks.

**MR. TAMBO.** Produced by blacks.

**MR. BONES.** For an all white audience.

**MR. TAMBO.** But still in blackface!

**MR. BONES.** Burt Williams did it.

**MR. TAMBO.** Pigmeat Markham did it.

**MR. BONES.** Orson Welles.

**MR. TAMBO.** Lawrence Olivier.

**MR. BONES.** And think of those proud Asian stars.

**MR. TAMBO.** David Carradine.

**MR. BONES.** Mickey Rooney.

**MR. TAMBO.** Jonathan Price.

**MR. BONES.** “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” *(Pause.)* No, we’ve moved beyond that.

**MR. TAMBO.** That was a hundred years ago!

**MR. BONES.** We don’t do blackface any more.

**MR. TAMBO.** Now we have our own heritage.

**MR. BONES.** Our own characters.

**MR. TAMBO.** Our own plays.

**MR. BONES.** Our own playwrights.

**MR. TAMBO.** Our own producers.

**MR. BONES.** Our own theaters!

**MR. TAMBO.** Why just look at the audience around you!

*(They pause and examine the audience.)*

**MR. BONES.** What are you Becky?

**MR. TAMBO.** I’m Korean. And you Ira?

**MR. BONES.** I’m black. And who wrote this piece?

**MR. TAMBO & MR BONES.** A white guy.

*(Pause. To each other as they walk off.)*

**MR. BONES.** I like that menstrual show idea you had.

**MR. TAMBO.** Really? You don’t think it’s offensive?

**MR. BONES.** Oh no, there’s nothing that offends people these days.

*(Exit.)*

# **CRUELTY-FREE**

## **by Sheila Callaghan**

*(Vaudeville musical intro and underscore throughout the entire piece.)*

*(A WOMAN emerges, dressed in a sparkly gown. She is all tooth-paste smile and glitter-eyes. She strides gallantly to the center of the stage and snaps her fingers.)*

*(From the ceiling drops a sign which reads, in traditional vaudeville lettering, "The Amazing SCREAMING VEGAN." The WOMAN presents it with a flourish of her arms. She spends time showing off the sign.)*

*(When she is done, the WOMAN gestures grandly into the audience.)*

*(A rumped, unshaven, mellow, bewildered, and somewhat sleepy VEGAN approaches the stage. He has dreadlocks and wears a woven Guatemalan hooded pullover, frayed jeans, and Birkenstocks. He smells like patchouli. He is blindfolded.)*

*(The WOMAN presents him to the audience in much the same way she presented the sign. The VEGAN is disinterested and malnourished. He shoves his hands into his pockets and tilts his head toward the floor.)*

*(From nowhere, the WOMAN pulls out a hardboiled egg. The VEGAN cannot see and therefore does nothing, or the equivalent [scratches his nose, his butt, etc.]. The WOMAN walks the egg around the space, making certain the audience gets a good look at it.)*

*(She then stands with her back to the VEGAN and, very very slowly, moves the egg toward her mouth. The VEGAN still cannot see.)*

*(The WOMAN opens her mouth hugely...slowly...and rolls out her tongue.)*

*(The very instant the WOMAN's tongue touches the egg, the VEGAN snaps into massive bodily tension. He throws his head back*

*and begins to shout the following in speedy monotone, in one breath [but articulated].)*

**VEGAN. EGG FARMING IS ABOVE ALL ELSE A BUSINESS AND THEREFORE PROFIT SURPASSES CONCERN FOR THE ANIMALS' WELFARE AND EVEN EGG-BEARING HENS THAT ARE TREATED WITH KINDNESS WILL STILL BE KILLED EVENTUALLY FOR MEAT EVEN THOUGH IN A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THEY COULD LIVE AT LEAST FIFTEEN YEARS!!**

*(The WOMAN yanks the egg away from her mouth and, instantly, the VEGAN's posture slackens and he returns to his sleepy nonchalant pose, as though he had never uttered a sound.)*

*(The WOMAN discards the egg and, with a flourish, whips out a large salami roll. Again, she walks it around the stage boxing-ring style. The VEGAN, still blindfolded, is playing with a thread on his shirt and does not notice.)*

*(Again, with her back to the VEGAN, the woman slowly brings the salami to her mouth. The VEGAN does nothing. The WOMAN opens her mouth wide.)*

*(The instant her teeth touch the meat the VEGAN snaps to and begins shouting, more urgently this time.)*

**OVER EIGHTY-MILLION HOGS PER YEAR ARE SACRIFICED IN THE U.S. FOR PORK PRODUCTS IN FACTORIES WHERE THEY ARE PULLED BY CHAINS AND HELD UPSIDE-DOWN BY THEIR—**

*(The WOMAN pulls the salami an inch away from her mouth. The VEGAN slackens. The WOMAN quickly places it back at her teeth and the VEGAN snaps to.)*

**—LEGS TO THE SQUEALS OF OTHER HOGS HAVING THEIR THROATS SLIT FOR FOOD!!**

*(The WOMAN discards the salami and the VEGAN slackens, oblivious.)*

*(The WOMAN now produces a brown paper bag. The word "KIT-TEN" is scrawled on the outside of the bag in black marker, and a*

*soft mewling can be heard within. The VEGAN does not notice. [Maybe he wears an iPod?])*

*(The WOMAN holds the kitten bag in one hand and a large hammer in the other. She sweeps around the stage, showing both items to the audience.)*

*(She then raises the hammer and the kitten bag. She sizes up the weight of the hammer, the torque of the swing. She aims the hammer. She pulls her arm back to swing...)*

*(The VEGAN snaps, shouting even louder and more urgently than before.)*

THE RAMPANT WIDESPREAD PRACTICE OF KITTEN-BASHING IN THE UNITED STATES ACCOUNTS FOR NEARLY HALF OF ALL KITTEN-RELATED DEATHS AND SINCE MOST CULTURES DO NOT USE KITTENS AS A PRIMARY FOOD SOURCE THE SLAUGHTER OF KITTENS IS A NEEDLESS AND HORRIFIC INDULGEANCE BECAUSE EVERY LIVING ANIMAL ON THIS PLANET DESERVES A CRUELTY-FREE EXISTENCE!!

*(The WOMAN, looking slightly relieved, discards the bag and hammer. The VEGAN slackens, yawning vaguely.)*

*(The WOMAN disappears from the stage. The VEGAN is left alone for a moment. He appears bored and remains blindfolded. He pulls out a piece of gum from his pocket and pops it into his mouth. He chews and sighs.)*

*(The WOMAN returns, dragging with her a man with a rope around his wrists and a bag over his head. With much difficulty, she hoists him onto the stage.)*

*(The WOMAN braces herself and whips off the bag. It is OSAMA BIN LADEN. He wears a placard on a chain around his neck that says "OSAMA BIN LADEN.")*

*(The VEGAN does not notice.)*

*(The WOMAN pulls out a short sword [or long knife] and slowly raises it to OSAMA BIN LADEN's neck. He recoils. She positions herself so he cannot move and presses the blade flat against his throat.)*

*(The VEGAN snaps to. He throws his head back to shout and opens his mouth. Nothing comes out. He tries again. A small gagging sound. He begins to panic. He yanks his blindfold up. He stares at OSAMA and the WOMAN in horror.)*

*(The WOMAN also looks frightened, but ready. A long pause. All three are palpably terror-stricken.)*

*(The WOMAN presses the sharp edge of the blade into OSAMA BIN LADEN's throat. She pulls back to strike.)*

*(The VEGAN yanks his blindfold back down over his eyes and screams hysterically.)*

ALL WEALTHY SAUDI ARABIAN DISSIDENTS WHO MASTERMIND UNSPEAKABLE ATTACKS AGAINST THE UNITED STATES SHOULD BE SEVERELY PUNISHED FOR THEIR CRIMES BUT ANY REVENGE-KILLING VALIDATES THE NOTION THAT MURDER IS ACCEPTABLE UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS AND SINCE SAUDI ARABIAN DISSIDENTS ARE NOT COMMONLY USED AS FOOD SOURCES THEIR EXECUTION IS WRONG BECAUSE A HUMAN BEING'S RIGHT TO LIFE IS INALIABLE!!

*(A beat. OSAMA BIN LADEN shoves the WOMAN down and leaps off the stage. He heads for the doors, whooping with joy. The WOMAN scrambles after him and out the theater.)*

*(Silence. The VEGAN is again slack, blindfolded, exhausted. His breathing is labored. A pause.)*

*(One audience member hurls a rotten tomato at the VEGAN. Then another. Then another. Then another. Then another. A hook comes from through a curtain and pulls him offstage.)*

*(Blackout.)*

# UNCLE SAM #5 (TAKE-OVER)

by Greg Allen

*(UNCLE SAM comes out to clean up the stage. MANAGEMENT REP comes out in a full suit and tie, looking fine and corporate, carrying a pink slip of paper which reads "You're Fired." He hands it to UNCLE SAM [along with his hat], and SAM leaves the stage. MANAGEMENT REP clicks his fingers and a clean-up team efficiently comes out and cleans the stage as MANAGEMENT REP addresses the audience.)*

**MANAGEMENT REP.** Ladies and gentlemen, I am Mr. Hill. I represent the management. I would like to apologize for this production, as it has progressed in a direction which we sorely regret. I promise you an efficient, entertaining, and *decent* show from here on out. You have my personal word on that. I, and the rest of our staff of experts, have determined what you would like to see next. That, of course, is those beautiful singing songbirds, The Posey County Family Singing Band, performing that old favorite, "My Geneva Babe." Boys...

*(A spotlight rises on the quartet for "My Geneva Babe" as MANAGEMENT REP leaves the stage.)*

# **MY GENEVA BABE: VERSE #2**

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

## **THE POSEY COUNTY FAMILY SINGING BAND.**

Bum bum bum bum

Goodbye my dear Darwinian

(bum bum bum bum)

No need for your opinion.

(bum bum bum bum)

Don't get bogged down in that red tape,

It's not in the bible,

I'll sue you for libel,

I'm not descended from some ape.

(bum bum)

We'll all be fine if we obey the intelligent design

(it's really based on faith,)

I'm not a West Virginian.

But goodbye Darwinian.

# UNCLE SAM #6 (CONTROL)

by Greg Allen

*(MANAGEMENT REP, still in his management clothes, returns to the stage. He is still very precise and efficient.)*

**MANAGEMENT REP.** There now. Wasn't that nice? Next, we have arranged to have a more traditional act, one which, in fact, has been with us since 1977. No matter how you slice it, you always get the point with this cutting-edge performer. *(He laughs pompously at his little witticisms.)* I'm speaking of course of...Ex, A Cute Knife-Throwing Sensation!

*(He exits into one of the VOMS.)*

# EX, A CUTE KNIFE-THROWING SENSATION!

by Greg Allen

*(EX enters with her hands full of knives. She wears a number of oddly placed Band-Aids and bandages.)*

**EX.** Hello, hello, hello. Good evening ladies and gentle—

*(She drops a knife which sticks in the floor. She bends over to pick it up and a number of other knives slide from her hands and go clattering to the floor—proving that they are, in fact, real knives. She awkwardly picks them up and puts them on a rolling cart—supplied by an ASSISTANT, keeping one knife in her hand which she then uses to gesture with wildly.)*

I am Ex, A Cute Knife-Throwing Sensation! And that's what I leave each and every one of my participants with—Sensation! You may have caught my death-defining act last week in Huntsville, Texas, or perhaps in Raleigh, North Carolina the week before, or in Huntsville, San Quentin, Tallahassee, or Huntsville the weeks before that. Every year, you see, I have the distinct pleasure of visiting small stages nationwide where my act knocks 'em dead... *(She gestures geographically with the knife:)* from Ohio to Texas, from Florida to Texas!

*(On the second "Texas" she gestures to the right and the knife goes flying out of her hand and into one of the VOMS where it lands with a thud and an offstage groan. EX looks off after it but is unfazed and just picks up another knife from her cart. She smiles at the audience, and now uses the new knife to gesture.)*

I'm proud to say my act has touched the hearts and souls of Americans all over this fair country of ours. And audiences go wild! Women weep, children scream, and thousands of grown men are literally waiting in line for my personal performances. My act is so famous that I have come to visit not just poor impoverished people of color, but also many household names, some television celebrities, and even a couple women! Every year I receive special invitations for command performances from governors all over the

country—many of whom are close personal friends of mine. (Just not that bastard in Illinois.)

As I like to say, I aim to please and I am pleased to aim. I love to give the people what they want, because *I (She accidentally stabs herself.) ...am uniquely American. (She looks down and pulls out the knife to see the wound which bleeds profusely, but she forges on.)* That's right ladies and gentlemen, I am so red,...white, and blue that I only perform for the stars and stripes. I boldly refuse to go to Britain, or Europe, or ever our lesser neighbors to the north and south (even if they would have me.) I am an American icon! And "Why?," you may ask yourselves, "WHY?"

*(She holds until the audience responds with "Why?".)*

Because I am the only one to use...The Tickler!

*(She holds out her right hand as if to catch something. A knife falls from the ceiling very close to her but on her left side and sticks into the floor. She makes a grab for it as it passes but misses. She bends over and pulls "The Tickler" out of the floor.)*

This is the one item that sets me apart from everyone else in the world—The Tickler! The powers of The Tickler have worked their magic on hundreds of red-blooded Americans. But fear not! She is painless, she is infallible, and most importantly, she is legal. So let us find out who tonight's unlucky audience member is to receive a command performance of...The Tickler!

*(Her ASSISTANT comes out on stage and hands EX a ticket stub and leaves.)*

Tonight's "winner" is in seat A 26. Seat A 26. Who is that?

*(Either the audience member identifies himself or EX goes and pulls someone up on stage. It should be a man but not necessarily someone in seat A 26.)*

Hi, what's your name?

*(Audience member answers.)*

Ladies and gentlemen please send your moral outrage towards

---

*(The audience applauds.)*

Applause? I never heard that before. Well anyway I'm sorry to have you here. Did you have dinner?

*(The audience member replies "yes" or "no" but EX moves on undaunted.)*

Great. BRING ON "THE BOARD!"

*(Two ASSISTANTS bring on The Board which is in the shape of a person. They display it to the audience with a great flourish. It should be slightly smaller than an adult man and have a brightly colored red "X" where the person's heart would be. They set it up in front of where the man was sitting.)*

Please take your place against The Board!

*(The ASSISTANTS clamp the audience member's arms and legs to The Board. If the audience member gives them a hard time EX can persuade him to do so. If they are really difficult, the ASSISTANTS can hold him there while they clamp him in.)*

Speed and efficiency is my game. Any last words for someone you came here with tonight?

*(They can say something or not.)*

How touching. The blindfold please!

*(An ASSISTANT ties a blindfold around EX's eyes and leaves the stage. She begins to warm up to throw the knife. During this she gets slightly off line from The Board and is now aiming into the audience about ten feet to the man's left. EX continues to concentrate and prepare to throw the knife. Hopefully this elicits some noise from the audience.)*

What? Is there a problem?

*(Audience response.)*

Oh, I'm just kidding you.

*(She moves back towards The Board but over-compensates and aims into the audience about five feet to the right of the man.)*

Drum roll please!

*(Drum roll. She begin to adjust her direction and then to waver wildly, being very unsure of where to aim, getting very confused and overcompensating in each direction. She winds up panning the entire audience as we hear the sound of an electrical rev up as the lights flicker and ultimately blackout just before she throws the knife. We hear a scream in the dark. The lights come flickering back on and we see EX, blindfolded, standing center without "The Tickler." The man is still tied to the board and is fine. People finally notice there is someone slumped over in a front row seat pretty far away from The Board with a knife sticking out of his chest.)*

*(Still in blindfold:)* There you have it! The great American judicial system inaction!

*(The ASSISTANTS come on and unclamp the participant congratulating him. EX is escorted off-stage, followed by "The Board" and her knives and cart. The dead audience member lies there with an ever-increasing pool of blood around him.)*

# UNCLE SAM #7 (CHAOS)

by Greg Allen

*(MANAGEMENT REP enters calmly, dressed as before, and addresses the audience.)*

**MANAGEMENT REP.** What did I tell you ladies and gentlemen? Good, clean, traditional, American entertainment.

*(He looks into the audience and sees the dead man.)*

HOLY SHIT!

OH NO! NO!!!! It's not my fault! I had nothing to do with it! I was only following orders! It's a well-known act! Infallible even! I knew I should have listened to those protesters!

Now they're going to come down here—the big guys! It's gonna get ugly. You don't know what they do to people! They're sadists! I'm not gonna stick around for that. I'm outta here!

*(MANAGEMENT REP runs off-stage, carrying the body.)*

# THE COMFORT BLUES

FEATURING BLIND SKEETER LEE COOLIDGE

AND PROUD MARYBETH COOLIDGE

by Eric Coble

*(A man walks onstage in swank attire. This is BLIND SKEETER LEE COOLIDGE. He turns, realizes he's alone, quickly pulls on a woman in swank attire, but taking a swig from a martini glass. This would be PROUD MARYBETH JOHNSON.)*

**SKEETER LEE.** Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Pleasure to be here. Those of you who live in or have visitor passes to The Howell Estates or East Cherry Blossom Village, you may recognize me and my wife. I'm Blind Skeeter Lee Coolidge.

*(PROUD MARYBETH squints into the lights...)*

And this is my charming spouse Proud MaryBeth Coolidge. Give'em a welcome, MaryBeth.

*(PROUD MARYBETH takes a swig.)*

I told you to leave your medicine offstage, MaryBeth. We're gonna sing.

*(MARYBETH puts down the glass.)*

You know, someone once said "All the world's a stage and all of us have seven acts per player"—which I have no idea what that means, but Proud MaryBeth and I do picture our own lives coming out in seven acts—

**PROUD MARYBETH.** Like a cake.

**SKEETER LEE.** ...What?

**PROUD MARYBETH.** Like seven-layer cake a naked man might jump out of—like that Amazing Bob—he can jump outta my cake any day.

**SKEETER LEE.** —And those seven layers of our life—well, I think you'll find they have one thing in common:

*(A blues tune begins.)*

*(Singing:)* My happiest early memory  
Was floating in my mother's womb  
Warm and fed and always in bed—

**PROUD MARYBETH.** Better than Liz Taylor's room

**SKEETER LEE.** Then I moved out to my mother's arms  
Held and cradled and snug  
Supper was just a nipple away  
My blankie was my only drug

**PROUD MARYBETH.** *(Chorus:)* We had Comfort and Safety, Baby  
That was all we knew in life  
Safety and Comfort, Darlin'  
Couldn't ask for more outta life  
I'd see other babies crawlin' round havin' adventures  
And I'd say, I can do without that strife!

*(Spoken as she staggers forward:)*

I mean who wants to be the pony in the field running running running...when you can be the baby veal calf who stays comfy and warm and eating, eating, eating 'til you're all plump white fat and juicy red meat... Jesus, I'm hungry...

**SKEETER LEE.** *(Singing:)* Finally I left my mother's arms  
She said 18-year-olds don't still nurse  
But I found new comfort in a lover's charms  
And safety in my spouse's purse

**PROUD MARYBETH.** *(Singing:)* And then I got my first SUV  
It's big and it's smooth and it's round  
My drinks and my food are all within reach  
It's a womb five feet off the ground!

**BOTH.** We want Comfort and Safety, Baby!  
That's all we're askin' from life  
Comfort and Safety, Honey  
Our one demand from life

**SKEETER LEE.** I peer down at the Honda Civics  
And I thank God for my wonderful life!

**PROUD MARYBETH.** We'll live in a gated community  
No harm will come to me  
I'll wave to the guards at the entrance,  
And they'll smile back lovingly

**SKEETER LEE.** And when we get older and feeble  
There'll be someone to take care of me  
'Cause just on the other side of our lawn  
Is an Assisted Living Facility!

**BOTH.** Oh, Comfort and Safety, Baby!  
Can anyone ask for more?

**SKEETER LEE.** Someone to nurse me and change me

**PROUD MARYBETH.** And put ointment on me where I'm sore!  
*(Spoken as she stumbles into the audience again:)* Like between my  
thighs! My doc says it's cause I sit so much, like the hemorrhoids  
and irritable bowel syndrome—

*(SKEETER quickly cues the piano to keep playing, as he steers her  
back into the song. The tempo slows slightly.)*

**SKEETER LEE.** *(Singing:)* Now when it's time for me to leave this  
world... I want to go out like I came in... In a warm and comfy cof-  
fin with T.V. and air conditionin'!

**BOTH.** I'm sayin', Comfort and Safety, Baby  
From cradle to the plot  
Comfort and Safety, Honey  
'Cause struggle and angst are just rot

**SKEETER LEE.** And when I ponder if I've missed something vital  
in life, something essential to the very act of being a human being...

**PROUD MARYBETH.** I just click the remote and think... "Not!"

*(Music ends. PROUD MARYBETH starts to bow, nearly falls off  
the stage. SKEETER LEE quickly hustles her away.)*

**SKEETER LEE.** Thank you, Louisville! God Bless!

**PROUD MARYBETH.** Drive safe!

*(And they're gone.)*

# THE (FORMERLY) AMAZING BOB

by Richard Dresser

*(MUSIC as THE FORMERLY AMAZING BOB bounds on stage with a deck of cards.)*

**BOB.** What a terrific audience! Ready to be dazzled, amazed and maybe even frightened? How about humiliated, threatened, sent down a bottomless sinkhole of despair? Great! Bob's the name, magic's the game. New deck of cards.

*(He shuffles the cards and displays them to an AUDIENCE MEMBER.)*

Who wants to pick a card? You, take a card, any card, don't show me!

*(An AUDIENCE MEMBER takes a card.)*

Put the card in your pocket and think about it. Hey! I know what you're thinking about and it isn't the card! Your secretary is off limits, pal. Think hard enough so I can read it. *(Concentrates.)* Okay, I've got it. *(To AUDIENCE MEMBER:)* What was the card?

*(The AUDIENCE MEMBER says what the card is.)*

That's correct! *(Beat.)* You know, my whole life changed when I realized I could read people's minds. *(Stares out at audience.)* And you people are pretty easy to read. Half of you are thinking about heading for the bar, knocking back a few drinks, and hooking up with a total stranger. And if *you're* not thinking it, that means the person next to you is. These are desperate times, you do what you can to get by. If you have a marketable skill, like biotechnology or, in my case, magic, no sweat. Otherwise, keep buying those lottery tickets, move in with your parents and hope for the best. Okay, I need a volunteer. Anyone... *(Gestures to a guy:)* You'll do.

*(A MOROSE GUY comes up on stage.)*

Your name is...

**GARY.** Gary.

**BOB.** And where are you from, Gary?

**GARY.** Actually, Gary. Indiana.

**BOB.** What are the odds of that? And what do you do there, Gary?

**GARY.** I'm, uh, between things.

**BOB.** Excellent! There's a lot of that going around. Gary, put this blindfold on me.

*(GARY blindfolds BOB.)*

Perfect, can't see a thing. *(Holds fingers in front of his face.)* I don't even know how many fingers I'm holding up.

**GARY.** Three.

**BOB.** Beautiful, Gary. But it's easier without the blindfold. Do you have a dollar, Gary? Don't give it to me! I'm a magician, I don't have to worry about money. Write the serial number on that board.

**GARY.** Like this?

**BOB.** Remember the blindfold, Gary? I'm sure you're doing great.

*(GARY writes the serial number on a board so the audience can see.)*

Quiet! Everybody concentrate on the numbers. It only takes one person to ruin it for everyone! *(Concentrates, then recites numbers.)* Did I get it?

**GARY.** That's astounding.

**BOB.** Wild applause isn't prohibited.

*(BOB takes off the blindfold and bows.)*

Amazing, right? Yet I still forget my wife's birthday.

*(GARY starts back to the audience.)*

Thanks, Gary, you've been terrific. And of course we've never met, right?

**GARY.** *(Hesitates.)* Just, you know, before the show.

**BOB.** Gary, we've never met!

**GARY.** Except you said I'd get a free ticket and a hamburger if I helped you out.

**BOB.** Well you're not helping me out, Gary! *(To the back of the house:)* No free ticket for Gary! Thanks, pal, enjoy the show. I used to be pretty good at this. But I get angry and then I can't read minds. So I guess I'll be out there on the unemployment line with Gary. Luckily, the government will help me out, assuming I can live on one grilled cheese sandwich a month. I don't want much, just the same as what everyone wants. *(Concentrates.)* Except for this guy in the second row, what he wants is truly disturbing. See, I can do this. When I look into your minds...I sense a fear that things are slipping out of control, that the world we once knew is gone forever. And you buy iPods and cell phones and cars you can't afford and 500 identical channels so you'll be distracted from the creeping fear that feels like it will strangle you in your sleep. *(Beat.)* I can tell I'm way off base. I've lost my touch. I'm sorry.

*(THE FORMERLY AMAZING BOB shuffles off stage.)*

# UNCLE SAM #8 (MANAGEMENT)

by Greg Allen

*(After BOB shuffles off-stage, CORPORATE SUIT walks on quietly, in a nice corporate suit. She turns to the audience, smiles, and says:)*

**CORPORATE SUIT.** I *am* management. Sometimes if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself. Next, “Ballad of Johnny Cuba.”

*(She just stays there. The lights rise on the singers of “Ballad of Johnny Cuba” as they begin.)*

# **BALLAD OF JOHNNY CUBA**

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

## **SINGERS.**

Sally, my Sally, don't believe what they say.  
I've gone off from California gone off to stay,  
The nights they are cold and the days they are long  
And I know they have told you that I have done wrong.

Sally, my Sally, I'm only one man,  
As I walk through the valley, I do what I can.  
The blood that has spilled flows open and strong,  
And the ones I've seen killed well they had done wrong.

Sally, oh Sally, it's not what you think,  
The truth is so malleable changed in a blink.  
It's scary how easy it is to belong,  
And it's scary how easy it is to go wrong.

Sally, oh Sally, trust no one at all,  
When they take me to the galley, don't cry as I fall.  
Just walk your own alley just sing your own song  
And follow me Sally, and you'll never go wrong.

# UNCLE SAM #9 (CONTINUITY)

by Greg Allen

*(When “Ballad of Johnny Cuba” ends, the lights shift back to show CORPORATE SUIT still standing quietly. She quietly and formally addresses the audience.)*

**CORPORATE SUIT.** Next, The World Renowned Three Sisters From New York and their Notorious Pajama-Handkerchief Statue Act.

*(She begins to walk off, then turns to the audience to say:)*

I must leave...for this makes me cry.

*(She turns back to her exit, and quietly leaves the stage.)*

# RIDDLE

by Sheila Callaghan

*(Some announcer somewhere introduces “The World Renowned Three Sisters From New York and their Notorious Patriotic-Pajama Handkerchief-Statue Act.”)*

*(Music of introduction. Then silence. Nothing for a while, like a LONG while.)*

*(WENDY enters, in American flag pajamas. She smiles at the audience, waves awkwardly.)*

Hello, hi, hi.

*(She pulls a handkerchief from her sleeve and shows us all. Then she throws it high into the air, and runs from it. When it lands on the ground, she freezes in a statue pose. She holds the pose for no shorter than ten seconds.)*

*(Then she un-freezes and looks around blankly.)*

There used to be three of us. Me and my sister Winnie and my sister Wandie. My sister Winnie was the tall one. My sister Wandie was the manic one. And I’m Wendy. Yeah.

So. So Winnie was known for her squat, right. They’d all wait for it. Everyone would just shut the eff up and, and then.

*(WENDY throws up the handkerchief and runs from it, and when it lands she demonstrates the squat.)*

And she had a face too.

*(WENDY makes a face of utter and complete surprise.)*

Right and everyone was like, HOOOOOO!! Because that was her thing. She was the “Stunned American.” Like “oh my gosh what’s happening to us!” And then and then, the next one right, Wandie, you know...

*(WENDY throws up the handkerchief and runs away, and when it lands she poses on one leg in mid-shrug and makes a face that says, “oops, ya got me.”)*

And everyone was like, AWWWWWWW. Because she was like the Apologetic American. “Yikes! Sorry World...”

And then there was me.

*(WENDY throws up the handkerchief and runs away. When it lands she freezes in mid-run with a fierce, determined scowl on her face. She holds it for no less than ten seconds.)*

You know like this aggressive determined thing? People didn't, uh. Yeah. But I liked it, I liked it. You know 'cause it was complex. A riddle. Get it? I'm all determined and indignant, like bound for action, but yet, I'm FROZEN. The Conflicted American.

It was my thing! Everyone needs a thing, right? Because this is America, and if you don't have a “thing,” right? You're nobody.

*(WENDY stands there for several moments, saying nothing. She just looks around tensely. It should be super awkward, like we're not sure the actor has remembered her lines [no less than fifteen seconds]. Then she looks down.)*

Um. So then after, well people would start to leave the theatre, and so as they were leaving we'd get into our famous “Pajama Pyramid” with me on the bottom and Wandie standing on my back and Winnie balanced on her shoulders and and we'd scream as loud as we could “SUPPORT DENNIS KUCINICH!” But uh then we changed it of course. But. But now my sisters are gone, so.

*(A beat. WENDY suddenly begins to weep.)*

And we're not even really from New York!!

*(She cries into the handkerchief and blows her nose.)*

And they beat me. Right in the middle of the act. Throw the hankie up and run towards me and whack me in the head, and everyone would laugh...one time Wandie whacked me so hard I threw up on stage. But that was pretty funny, so.

*(She wrings out the hanky and tucks it away.)*

It um doesn't work as well when it's damp...

*(WENDY brightens immediately.)*

Um so they moved to Canada? My sisters? Because they wanted to live in a place that wasn't an international embarrassment? But I was like, "THAT'S OUR *THING!*" But. They didn't get it. So. And they took the car with them. Which SUCKED.

*(A beat. Cheerful.)*

So the act is different now. But good. It's good. I feel good. And they still love me. I get postcards. But I don't speak French, so.

*(A beat. Nervous.)*

Anyway. I have a NEW finale. It's better than the pyramid, I think. More like, heady. And it involves participation! Uh... So. Does does anyone have a, a spare set of keys? Car keys? Anyone?

*(Someone hands WENDY a set of keys [hopefully].)*

Great. Okay, so what kind of car do you drive?

*(...)*

Good. And what color is it?

*(...)*

Good. And where is it parked?

*(...)*

Perfect. How many miles are on it?

*(...)*

Okay. Gas in the tank?

*(...)*

Great. Okay. So this time, when the handkerchief lands, YOU'RE statues. All of you. You just FREEZE right where you are, and never move, never ever...because you're a RIDDLE now. An AMERICAN RIDDLE. Get it?

*(She poises herself for the biggest hanky toss of her life.)*

Ready?

*(She throws up the handkerchief and runs off-stage. The handkerchief lands and the audience freezes.)*

# UNCLE SAM #10 (FAILURE)

by Greg Allen

*(As WENDY runs off with some poor soul's car keys, CORPORATE SUIT slowly, sadly, walks on stage. Her suit is ripped to shreds and it looks as though she has been beaten. A red bulb flies in. She looks at it and says:)*

**CORPORATE SUIT.** They are angry.

*(She hangs her head sadly. She walks over to the audience member who has lost their keys and says:)*

I am very sorry. I have failed.

*(She hands them a slip of paper.)*

Here is a coupon for a free coffee at Starbucks. *(To the audience:)* In my last act as manager, I bring you...the Posey County Family Singing Band, singing that old favorite, "My Geneva Babe."

*(CORPORATE SUIT hangs her head and moves back towards her exit but stops, and says:)*

**BECKY.** I must return to my punishment. You're on your own from here.

*(She walks off sadly.)*

# **MY GENEVA BABE: VERSE #3**

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

**POSEY COUNTY FAMILY SINGING BAND.**

Bum bum bum bum

Goodbye my dear Enlightenment,

(Bum bum bum bum)

I had to give you up for lent.

(Bum bum bum bum)

Though it may sound to you like treason

Remember this maxim, don't bother with facts,

In this world truth has nothing to do with reason

(Bum bum)

No more of proof or evidence,

Anyway

(Geometry is really dense,)

I'm not sure what enlightened meant.

But goodbye Enlightenment.

And though I say it with a sigh.

My Darwinian,

My Enlightenment,

My Geneva babe,

Bye bye!

Bye bye.

# **UNCLE SAM #11 (THE RETURN)**

**by Greg Allen**

*(UNCLE SAM sneaks back on stage to take his rightful place at the piano as “The Contortionists” begins.)*

# THE CONTORTIONISTS

by Hilly Hicks, Jr.

*(The space is empty except for a stage lamp with a bare red bulb, which stands near the wings. A piano player sits at a piano on the floor with the audience.)*

*(The pianist begins to play. HARRY and EDDIE enter wearing flesh-colored leotards.)*

**HARRY.** Now THIS is a THEATER!

**EDDIE.** I'll say!

**HARRY.** It's good to be here, isn't it, Eddie?

**EDDIE.** It's good to be ANYWHERE the marquee isn't mounted on a barn door.

**HARRY.** Now, Eddie. Let's not be ungrateful. We may have played the sticks, but we knocked 'em bowlegged every night!

**EDDIE.** They came IN bowlegged, Harry. They came in bowlegged, toothless, backwards and inbred! They weren't smart enough to spell bastard—but they could sure as hell act it out!

**HARRY.** Don't exaggerate, Eddie. It makes you sound bitter.

**EDDIE.** They were foaming at the mouth. They masturbated in the aisles. Some of them had horns! How am I exaggerating?

**HARRY.** *(Chuckling softly:)* Oh, Eddie...what did they ever do to you?

**EDDIE.** They voted.

*(The pianist stops playing abruptly, judgmentally.)*

**HARRY.** *(Just slightly on edge:)* They were just doing their moral duty.

**EDDIE.** It may have been their duty, but it didn't smell moral to me!

*(The red light begins to blink slowly, deliberately. A warning. They both stare at it apprehensively. The light goes off and the pianist starts up again. They resume as if nothing happened.)*

**HARRY.** Ah! It's good to be BACK!

**EDDIE.** I'll say!

**HARRY.** Back in a legitimate theater. Where the crowds appreciate the fine art of contortion!

**EDDIE.** We're the best goddamn snake act on the CIRCUIT, Harry! The BEST!

**HARRY.** *(Stern:)* Language, Eddie.

**EDDIE.** Sorry. That bitch that replaced us on the bill—

**HARRY.** Language!

**EDDIE.** That cunt who replaced us—

**HARRY.** EDDIE!!!

**EDDIE.** That BORN AGAIN BIBLE THUMPIN' CONTORTIONIST who replaced us was about as flexible as a goddamn steel rod!

*(HARRY slaps EDDIE—a big, over-the-top slap. The pianist stops playing. The light blinks again. It's silent and ominous. It stops. They resume their act, visibly more nervous. The pianist plays.)*

**EDDIE.** *(After several more beats:)* Ow.

**HARRY.** You wouldn't want the Management to pull the plug on the act again, wouldja, Eddie?

**EDDIE.** I can't help it, Harry. My mouth just won't shut up!

**HARRY.** We promised the Management the Family version.

**EDDIE.** I miss the old version. Our version.

**HARRY.** The Management doesn't like our version, Eddie. It was a vulgar and obscene attack on the Institution of Marriage.

**EDDIE.** How can a contortion act be vulgar??? Besides, it's not like I CHOSE to be double-jointed!

**HARRY.** The Management said the act was too suggestive.

**EDDIE.** (*Pissed:*) I got a suggestion for 'em.

**HARRY.** Show a little respect, Eddie. They ARE veterans after all. They were on the front lines of the war on poverty and the war on drugs and the war on terror.

**EDDIE.** Have they ever been in a war they WON?

**HARRY.** (*Intense, serious:*) Listen, Eddie. I'll be damned if I'm going let you ruin a second chance for me! I'm not going back to the sticks! Not ever! So strike the applesauce and limber up. Got it? (*A beat, then back to his showman attitude:*) When these refined ladies and gentlemen get a look at our respectable, genteel, all-new act, EVERYBODY will happy! (*Doing some very mild stretches:*) Stretch, Eddie, stretch. You don't wanna hurt yourself like you did in Balto.

**EDDIE.** What about us, Harry?

**HARRY.** What ABOUT us? This act is gonna be so classy, they're gonna need opera glasses to see it! (*To audience:*) We'll be performing entirely in Italian accents...

*(The pianist plays an Italian melody. HARRY speaks with an Italian accent—it doesn't have to be a good one—until otherwise noted.)*

...surrounded by Renaissance masterpieces...

*(The pianist hangs a reproduction of the Mona Lisa on his piano.)*

...And accompanied by famous soprano Katrina von Bratten...

*(A young opera singer enters, swathed in a multitude of scarves. She waves to HARRY and the audience, then stands beside the piano, waiting for graciously her cue.)*

**EDDIE.** Harry, what about US being happy?

**HARRY.** Us be happy? Eating make-a you happy, Eddie? Look at you. You too skinny! From now on we eat like-a kings! We move up in da world! You always wanted to be on-a Broadway. We halfway there! (*Dropping the accent:*) We'll be so happy.

**EDDIE.** The old act made us happy.

**HARRY.** We played dumps. We did freak shows. You hated it.

**EDDIE.** I didn't hate the act, Harry.

**HARRY.** *(After a beat:)* But, Eddie... *(Quietly:)* We'll be playing to the haircuts. They'll take one look at us and think we're revolting.

**EDDIE.** We SHOULD be revolting! We should start revolting right now!

*(They stare at each other, new resolve changing their expressions.)*

**HARRY.** Alright, Eddie. Let's do it. Let's pull out all the stops and wow these stubholders!

**EDDIE.** Harry, I'd be happy to.

*(A spotlight comes up on the contortionists. The pianist plays an anticipatory chord under HARRY's introduction, during which EDDIE stretches.)*

**HARRY.** Ladies and gentlemen! Prepare for a singular act of STUPENDOUS agility and DAZZLING spectacle the likes of which you've never seen! Two bodies contorted into FANTASTIC shapes with AMAZING grace!

*(HARRY and EDDIE begin to get into position.)*

We're gonna start things off with a real genuine showstopper, folks! This pose, this we call the Texas Wedding!

*(Slowly, gracefully, the two men pull each other into a full, beautiful embrace. They begin to kiss. The red light begins to blink its warning. The soprano squeals melodramatically, and runs up the aisle in a panic.)*

**KATRINA.** My marriage is failing! My marriage is failing!

*(She exits. The pianist stops playing, gets up and walks out. HARRY and EDDIE continue to kiss, silently and passionately. The red light flickers insistently. Then, abruptly, the stage lights go out. It is dark save for the blinking of the red bulb. In the intermittent light, we can just see the figures of the two men still kissing, almost glowing in the dark. And finally, the red bulb burns out.)*

# UNCLE SAM #12 (CHAINED)

by Greg Allen

*(After UNCLE SAM has run hidden behind the piano at the end of "The Contortionists," the TRAPEZE GIRL taps the piano insistently. She then begins her act which he grudgingly accompanies.)*

# THE LADY SINGS THE BLUES

## by Sheila Callaghan

*(Music begins, traditional vaudeville-burlesque.)*

*(GIRL emerges dressed as a sensuous Lady Liberty. She sends a flirty, devious, demure smile around the room, aiming well.)*

*(A trapeze drops suddenly from the ceiling, far too low to the ground to be perilous. GIRL clumsily mounts the trapeze. She sings, sweetly, sexily, playfully, with maybe a \*tinge\* of moroseness.)*

### **TRAPEZE GIRL.**

I'm all alone on my trapeze  
So blue-oooh-oooh

Shall no one take my liberties  
Ooooh-oooh-oooh

My freedom rings in my chemise  
And through-oooh-oooh

I'm dripping with democracies  
For you-oooh-oooh

For you

*(She tosses her crown into the audience, then her torch. She does a few sloppy "tricks" on the trapeze to the music. Then she whips off her gown and throws it into the crowd.)*

*(Beneath the gown, she is wearing a sexy version of a corporate male business suit. She sings.)*

### **TRAPEZE GIRL.**

I'm all alone here in the sky  
Ooooh-oooh-oooh

I'm wearing my designer tie  
For you-oooh-oooh

My bonds are gold, my stocks are high  
It's true-oooh-oooh

So won't you bite my money pie  
And chew-oooh-oooh

And chew

*(She whips off her tie and does something lewd with it, then tosses it into the audience. With much difficulty, she attempts more "tricks" on the trapeze while simultaneously stripping.)*

*(Beneath the suit is a uniform of military fatigues, cut in a suggestive style. She sings.)*

This all alone is such a bore  
Ooooh-oooh-oooh

I wanna wage a holy war  
On you-oooh-oooh

You bomb my mom, I'll topple your  
Statue-oooh-oooh

I'm burnin' like an MK Forty-two-  
Oooh-oooh

Forty-two

*(She mimes some naughty gun-play, then does a few racy [but inept] trapeze stunts. Then, off come the fatigues, hurled into the audience. Now she wears a super-tight, super-slutty T-shirt that reads "I ♥ gwb," along with star-spangled bikini bottoms.)*

*(She sings.)*

I'm all alone and feelin' swell  
Oooh-oooh-oooh

'Cause Jesus has a rebel yell  
Oooh-oooh-oooh

And panic is an easy sell  
Too-oooh-oooh

And I'm prepared to go to hell  
For you-oooh-oooh

For you

*(She rips off the T-shirt and throws it at the audience. She wears an American flag tube top. She makes one last attempt to do some crappy tricks, but she falls off the trapeze.)*

*(It looks as though she might be hurt. She stands slowly and sings a coda, still attempting to be sexy.)*

My soul is feelin' blue  
But my skin's a red red red hue  
It seems I'm bleedin' through  
Oooh-oooh- oooh

I'm bleedin' through

*(She pulls a blood pellet from her cleavage and bursts it in her hand. She smears blood across her face and stomach. She smiles wanly and limps off-stage.)*

# I'M FEELING FINE

music and lyrics by Michael Friedman

**SINGER.**

I'm feeling fine I'm feeling great  
I'm feeling so in touch,  
Like someone popped my clutch,  
Not that I care too much...  
I have the feeling that you get when someone says  
"Are you Yvette?"  
And though you're not Yvette,  
You answer "oui!"  
I'm feeling fine and I don't mind my insecurity  
My country's immaturity  
That I'll die in obscurity,  
And though I worry that my tush is in the hands of Dubya Bush,  
And though I feel a nervous wreck,  
I think, "there always is Quebec!"  
And each time something in me panics  
I just pop a few more Xanax  
And when feeling plagued with doubt  
I just drink wine till I pass out  
I'm feeling fine  
I'm feeling fine  
I'm feeling fine.

# LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

scene by Greg Allen  
music and lyrics by Michael Friedman

*(The BLUE GIRL appears in a follow-spot at the top of the stairs in a sumptuous blue dress. She smiles. She is elegant. She is hot. She is pleased to be given the fabulous final number. Suddenly another follow-spot strikes the RED GIRL at the top of the opposite stairs in an identical, sumptuous red dress. She smiles. She is elegant. She is hot. She is pleased to be given the fabulous final number...that is until she sees the BLUE GIRL who also sees her, both shading their eyes to see in their follow-spots. They return to their presentational smiles as they slightly hustle down the stairs to be the first to the piano. They tie. They look at each other's identical dress. They are smiling through their teeth and occasionally waving at the audience throughout the following:)*

**RED.** So “nice” to see you.

**BLUE.** The feelings are mutual.

**RED.** Nice...dress.

**BLUE.** Why thank you. You look “fabulous.”

**RED.** Yes. Yes I do.

**BLUE.** I thought you were on the road.

**RED.** Apparently. No, I’m right here at home. So kind of you to come visit me.

**BLUE.** Well there are a lot of people who want me here.

**RED.** Just not the majority.

**BLUE.** That’s a matter of opinion.

**RED.** Math doesn’t lie.

**BLUE.** People do.

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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