

FAMILY ALBUM

By Robert Frankel

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SYNOPSIS

Picture yourself in your own Family Album with this incredibly funny, sometimes touching, always entertaining play. Pick and choose from more than 15 different scenes about family life to design a play that makes your drama family unique. The scenes are under five headings, "Getting Along," "Bustin' Loose," "Problems and Opportunities," "Life and Death," and "The Future."

Rap numbers bridge your scenes while an opening and closing family "photo" ties it all neatly together. Scenes may be removed or rearranged as desired. In addition, most adults are portrayed as offstage voices. However, a production which either has the advantage of real adults, or would like to stretch the younger actors, can certainly add these characters to the onstage set. Finally, this play was written as a traveling show so that the "scenery" consisting of three large wooden blocks and some odd and ends is very simple, very portable.

FAMILY ALBUM was originally produced in Rochester, Minnesota in May, 1991. The original concept was created by Connie Maragos. It was written by playwright-in-residence Robert Frankel in collaboration with director Connie Maragos, and members of the Rochester Civic Theater 1991 Inside-Out Players: Amanda Adams, Myriam Baumhoefener*, Gwen Buchanan, Sam Chafos*, Jessica Donze*, Jennifer French, Aimee Gross*, Molly Hair, Mandy Kahesterf, Kane Kline, Shayna Kramer, Dustin Manguson, John Maragos, Tia Maragos*, Tom Moody III, Andrew Rasmussen, Alison Reinertson, Erik Sinclair*, Jennifer Smith*, Siri Stenberg*.

* - *contributing writers*

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Album Effect

A nice production effect is to use a "photographer" (one of the actors) to take a picture of the last frozen tableau in each scene. Then, if your budget permits, slides of the last pose from each scene can be immediately projected onto a scrim while the next scene is being set up.

At the side of the stage place an easel or stand with a large picture album. Separate pages should list the main sections, "Gettin' Along," "Bustin' Loose," "Problems and Opportunities," "Life and Death," and "The Future."

Costumes

Simple costumes work best for this production. Simple articles of clothing such as t-shirts and jackets, or accessories such as hats or glasses can be used to suggest each of the characters. Because each actor will play several parts and because you never know what your offstage area will look like if you are taking this on tour to a group of schools, for example, keeping the costume changes simple will prevent any gray hair the director might be prone to.

Set

Four large wooden blocks can serve as tables, beds, podiums, etc. In addition, four short stools work well in doubling as chairs, TV stands, steps, etc. Like costumes, keep it simple.

Flexible Casting

There are 5 monologues that can be performed with minor alteration by either male or female actors. This play can run with as few as 6 females and 5 males, if double casting is used, or as many as 20 or more. .

Sound

Music helps establish the shift of theme as the page of the family album is turned. The sound of an offstage bell or buzzer is helpful in the "Name That Stress" scene.

Run Time

The run time for this play is approximately 90 minutes, with a 10-minute intermission. Further, depending on whether scenes are removed, the normal two-act can be reduced to a one-act.

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**INTRODUCTION
FAMILY REUNION**

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| DONNIE | KAREN |
| MOM | DAD |
| UNCLE LOU | AUNT LINDA |
| COUSIN MARCIE | FRED |
| GRANDMA HELEN | GRANDPA DAN |

Additional family members, if desired

(SETTING: The dining room for the Levitt family's annual family reunion. There is a table and up to ten chairs around it. Table is parallel to the stage apron.)

(AT RISE: All FAMILY members are standing frozen in various poses behind the table, with the exception of GRANDMA HELEN, offstage, and GRANDPA DAN, the family photographer, who stands off to the side focusing and re-focusing his camera on them.)

GRANDPA: *(Adjusting HIS camera, again.)* Okay...just...
one.... more...second...

LOU: *(Under HIS breath while smiling insanely.)* This is the
27th time he's said "one more second," Linda! My cheeks are
beginning to cramp!

LINDA: *(Under HER breath.)* Ssshhh, Lou. He'll hear you!

GRANDPA: *(Aiming camera as if to shoot.)* Okay, okay.
Ready. One, two-- *(EVERYONE says "Cheese." There is a
pause. GRANDPA DAN takes his camera down and checks
the flash.)* It's the flash. It's just the flash.
Just...one...more...second ... *(HE works on his camera.)*

DONNIE: *(Under HIS breath.)* Da-ad! I gotta go to bowling
league in thirty minutes. Can't someone else take the
pictures besides Gramps?

MOM: *(Under HER breath.)* Sssh, Donnie! He'll hear you.

KAREN: I don't really think that's a problem, Mom.

DAD: *(Under HIS breath.)* Now look, you two. We've been
having the annual Levitt family reunion for twenty-three years
now and-

MOM: Twenty-four, dear.

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DAD: Twenty-four years now and your Grandpa Dan has always taken the picture. So just be a little patient. That's all I ask. A little patience. By the way, Susan, who is this guy Marcie decided to bring over? What a phony!

MOM: "Just a friend," she says. Her fifth friend in two years!

GRANDPA: *(Ready and aiming HIS camera again.)* Okay, okay. Quiet on the set! *(HE laughs at his own joke.)*

MARCIE: *(To FRED, under her breath.)* My dad thinks he's a director.

FRED: *(Oozing charm.)* That's just wonderful, chickie!

DAD: Pop, please -

GRANDPA: I'm going, I'm going. Ready? One...two...
(EVERYBODY says, "Cheese." There is a pause. GRANDPA DAN looks up.) Where's Helen? What happened to Helen? Can't have a family picture without Helen. Helen? Where'd you go? He-len?

(EVERYBODY looks around and after a moment, GRANDMA HELEN enters, wiping her hands on a dish towel. She notices everybody looking at her strangely.)

GRANDMA: What? What? Well, I had to start on the dinner dishes in the kitchen. So, let's take a picture. What are we waiting for? Dan, take a picture for goodness sake. Everybody's ready for dessert.

GRANDPA: *(Under HIS breath.)* What are we waiting for? What are we waiting for? *(Out loud.)* What are we waiting for? I'll tell you what we are waiting for. We are waiting for our dear Grandma Helen to return from the kitchen. That's what we're waiting for!

LOU: Dad, come on. We're getting tired!

GRANDPA: *(Still muttering.)* What are we waiting for...*(HE aims the camera.)* All right. All right. Don't no one move. Ready? One...two...

(EVERYBODY says, "Cheese." The camera flashes. ALL shout "hooray." Can insert song here, if desired. By the end of the song, one of the actors has set up an easel to the side of the acting space. On the easel is a large book reading, "Family Album" on its cover. The actor then opens the book, and turns to the page entitled, "Getting Along." And the play begins....)

End of Freeview

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