

West Wing Follies

The Complete History of the
United States Presidency
in about 90 minutes

A comedy in two acts

By
Burton Bumgarner

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DEDICATION

*To Dr. John Reed Bumgarner, M.D.,
Physician, Presidential Scholar, and Uncle*

STORY OF THE PLAY

From newscasts, game shows, reality TV, talk shows, beach movies, the Grand Ol' Opry, and Shakespeare soliloquies, a cast of 12 actors presents all of the United States Presidents in twenty brief scenes. Former Presidents interview for jobs, advertise used cars, head to Fort Lauderdale for spring break, and play a game called "Gilded-Age Jeopardy." James Buchanan is interrogated by "Law and Order" type cops; Woodrow Wilson sings a ballad about his attempt to start the League of Nations; and Teddy Roosevelt and William Howard Taft are elementary school students hauled into the principal's office for unruly behavior.

"West Wing Follies" is a hysterical, non-partisan look at our fearless (and not so fearless) leaders -- their achievements, their failures, and their idiosyncrasies. This play offers a flexible, kazoo-playing cast the opportunity to portray history as never before!

Performance Time: About 90 minutes.

SETTING

This play is written to be performed by 12 actors on a mostly bare stage with moveable furniture and simple props. Six chairs form a single row SL and another six chairs form a row SR. A desk and chair are downstage left. A stack of files are on the desk. A café table and chairs are downstage right. An apron is lying across a chair. Four podiums are upstage between the chairs.

COSTUMES

Actors should dress identically such as dark slacks and matching shirts. Personalized, full-color T-shirts are available from Eldridge Publishing. Go to www.histage.com for complete details.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Flexible cast of 12. The actors portray all of the U.S. Presidents, plus other incidental characters, real and fictitious, throughout U.S. history. The script is written for twelve actors, but directors should feel free to use more or fewer, or when necessary recast the roles among the actors. The actors should be as varied as possible with regards to gender, race, physical characteristics, etc. No one should be "type cast."

ACTOR ONE:

Narrator
Andrew Jackson
Stephen Douglas
School Principal
Dwight Eisenhower

ACTOR TWO:

Narrator
Martin Van Buren
Newscaster
Theodore Roosevelt
Adlai Stephenson

ACTOR THREE:

Narrator
Campaign Manager
Abraham Lincoln
William Howard Taft

ACTOR FOUR:

George Washington
John Tyler
John Breckinridge
Game Show Host
Woodrow Wilson
John Kennedy

ACTOR FIVE:

Martha Washington
William Henry Harrison
Ulysses S. Grant
Emcee
Richard Nixon

ACTOR SIX:

Thomas Jefferson

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James K. Polk
Policeman
General Sherman
Rutherford B. Hayes
General MacArthur
Lyndon B. Johnson

ACTOR SEVEN:

Narrator
Alexander Hamilton
Reporter
Policeman
James Garfield
Harry S. Truman

ACTOR EIGHT:

John Adams
James Buchanan
Policeman
Franklin Roosevelt

ACTOR NINE:

Interviewer
Franklin Pierce
Chester Arthur
Herbert Hoover

ACTOR TEN:

James Madison
Millard Fillmore
Grover Cleveland
Calvin Coolidge

ACTOR ELEVEN:

James Monroe
Zachary Taylor
Bagel Shop Owner
Benjamin Harrison
Drew Barry

ACTOR TWELVE:

John Quincey Adams
Talk Show Host
Andrew Johnson
William McKinley
Warren G. Harding

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The scene breakdown is for ease of rehearsal. When performing the play there should be no breaks between scenes. An intermission can fall after Scene 9.

Scene 1: In the Beginning

Actors 1 - 3 as Narrators; all other Actors

Scene 2: The Revolution and President Washington

All 12 Actors

Scene 3: Two Guys Who Don't Like Each Other

Actors 6 - 8

Scene 4: Who Wants a Job?

Actors 9 - 12

Scene 5: The Cowboy and the Dude

Actors 1 & 2

Scene 6: The General, the Man Nobody Liked, and the Salesman

Actors 3 - 7

Scene 7: The Talk Show

Actors 9 - 12

Scene 8: Law and Order

Actors 6 - 8

Scene 9: The Nation at War

Actors 1-6; all other Actors

Scene 10: I Wanna Be a Waiter

Actors 11 & 12, all other Actors

Scene 11: Gilded-Age Jeopardy

Actors 4 - 7

Scene 12: Spring Break

Actors 8 - 12

Scene 13: After School

Actors 1 - 3

Scene 14: Country Western Singer

Actors 4 & 5

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Scene 15: Whose Line Is It, by the Way?

Actors 9 - 12

Scene 16: Shakespeare in the White House

Actors 6 - 8

Scene 17: The General and the Terrier

Actors 1 & 2

Scene 18: The Big Debate

Actors 4 & 5

Scene 19: Barbecue and the Watergate Is Just a Hotel

Actors 5 & 6

Scene 20: Six Presidents in 60 Seconds

All 12 Actors

End of Freeview

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