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AMERICA

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***MORE GREAT PLAYS FROM
ORIGINAL WORKS PUBLISHING***

ARTIFICIAL

by Sean Kenealy

2 Males

Synopsis: When Dan enters an empty cafe just after midnight on New Years, wielding a guitar case and razor sharp tongue, he sparks the ire of cafe manager Charles, who wants nothing more than to close up, albeit a bit early. What transpires between the two are conversations and stories ranging from the trivial to the tragic, almost bringing the men to blows, and definitely blurring the lines between the truth and the artificial.

THE BAD HABIT

by Constance Humphrey Egan

3 Females

Synopsis: A mother and daughter finally confront their issues of addiction, dependency, and self-destruction, with the help of their New Age Yoga instructor.

ROBERTA LAUGHS

by Bekah Brunstetter

1 Senior Male, 1 Senior Female, 1 Teen Male

Synopsis: Roger doesn't know his Grandma Roberta very well - but he knows she's "wicked awesome." In an effort to impress the girls at school he's decided to take up the accordion, just as his Grandma played when she was his age. But when the fiercely independent Roberta suffers a debilitating stroke and is close to death - Roger takes action to know her better, even if it means getting to know her "boyfriend" Billy too.

AMERICA

by
Kim Yaged

Playwright's Note

America explores ethnicity, race, religion, and culture in the United States. Sound collage, music and movement complement the text as it undresses stereotypes and prejudices, creating a provocative social commentary that challenges us to examine our belief systems. *America* was conceived as a 90-minute theater-dance hybrid. The play can also be performed as an hour-long one-act with minimal choreography. What's most important is the spirit of the play is conveyed in the production.

CHARACTERS: (9 ACTORS)

BLACK, a black man, dressed athletically with a hip hop flair.

NEW ASIA, an Asian woman, wears a kimono.

LATINA, a Latina, dressed lasciviously.

NATIVE AMERICAN, a Native American man, wears traditional regalia.

DYKE-MAN, a gay character played by a woman and a man, each dressed in jeans and a T-shirt.

MIDDLE EAST/THE MAGICIAN, a Middle Eastern man, wears traditional Islamic attire.

WHITE, a white woman, dressed as a ballerina.

STRAIGHT, a straight man, wears khakis, button-down shirt and tie.

TIME: The Present.

PLACE: The United States of America.

AMERICA

MOVEMENT 1: Creation

(DRUMS RISE, borrowing from a variety of influences -- African, Latin, Asian, etc. ALL, except NATIVE AMERICAN, dance on in leotards. The dance is tribal, eclectic, celebratory.)

BLACK: In the beginning...

WHITE: There was man.

LATINA: But, he did not walk upright.

NEW ASIA: Then there was light.

(A MILITARY MARCH drowns out the other drumming. The dance becomes more rigid, uniform as a United States flag descends from the ceiling.)

STRAIGHT: And it was good.

*(The MILITARY MARCH FADES as a white block with **Ox'y-môr'ön** printed on it in black is wheeled out. ALL sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" as they change into their respective character costume. The singing is interrupted when a DRUNK MAN, dressed in jeans, jersey and baseball hat, stumbles onto the stage. ALL try to help the man stand, but he keeps falling over, to their amusement. Their mirth is cut short when the man turns, revealing he's NATIVE AMERICAN, face decorated with tribal paint. NATIVE AMERICAN DRUMMING RISES.)*

NATIVE AMERICAN: I pound a drum. I paint my face. I drink the liquor you use to appease. Dilute my blood. Change the color of my skin. You speak of holocausts and racism. I stare genocide in the eye and wonder if it is my fate. Pillage a village. Scalp a head. Shoot an arrow. Cannibalism's not dead. I'm Native American, kemosabe. I'm your friend.

(A DRUMMING COLLAGE RISES, drowning out the Native American drumming. ALL dance, stripping NATIVE AMERICAN of his jeans, jersey and baseball hat, and dressing him in traditional regalia. DRUMMING COLLAGE CUTS OFF.)

MOVEMENT 2: The Gospel

(SOUND: Rhythm, feet sliding across a wooden floor, wooden block against wooden block, sandpaper rubbing. ALL slither around one another.)

STRAIGHT: In my world.

NATIVE AMERICAN: In this world.

NEW ASIA: Color counts.

WHITE: Color, color, color...

DYKE-MAN: Counts.

MIDDLE EAST: I walk in,

WHITE: With my all too white face,

NEW ASIA: And see them looking.

NATIVE AMERICAN: For a slant,

DYKE-MAN: A curve,

LATINA: A hint of color,

STRAIGHT: That's not mine.

BLACK: To find meaning.

MIDDLE EAST: In my not worth mentioning.

DYKE-MAN: Reason.

WHITE: In my not here to--

NEW ASIA: Help me.

NATIVE AMERICAN, NEW ASIA, LATINA, BLACK:
Appease.

MIDDLE EAST: In my world...

LATINA: This world.

BLACK: Color counts.

NEW ASIA: Color.

LATINA: Color.

NATIVE AMERICAN: Color.

DYKE-MAN, MIDDLE EAST, WHITE, STRAIGHT:
Counts.

(ALL slither off except MIDDLE EAST. SOUND FADES.)

MOVEMENT 3: Patriot

(MAGICIAN MUSIC RISES. MIDDLE EAST, AKA THE MAGICIAN, rolls up his sleeves, showing the audience -- nothing up my sleeves. He rolls his sleeves back down then removes a United States flag from his seemingly empty sleeve, waving it in celebration. THE MAGICIAN puts a finger to his head, thinking for a moment, then folds up the flag and begins tearing it into tiny pieces. He throws the pieces up in the air, letting them float to the ground like confetti, and runs off. MUSIC FADES.)

MOVEMENT 4: Prophet

*(BLACK pushes a black block with the word **Open-ended**. written on it in white letters onto the stage as a RELIGIOUS COLLAGE RISES, borrowing from a variety of influences -- church bells, call to prayer, gospel, responsive voices, hymns, chanting, singing, etc.)*

BLACK: You don't know me, but I'm your lover. I sit precariously in the corner. You've seen me in the movies. I run swiftly on the field. I'm first pick at the pick-up game. The one you hope don't sit next to you on the bus. I'm the one who makes you hold your breath when he steps on the elevator. Me? You know who I am. I am Black man.

(RELIGIOUS COLLAGE FADES.)

MOVEMENT 5: Prophecy

(ALL run on. WHITE and LATINA play "Miss Mary Mack" with an urban beat. DYKE-MAN spins a couple jump ropes for some Double Dutch. NEW ASIA jumps in. ALL take turns spinning the ropes and jumping. Those who aren't spinning or jumping continue the clapping game.)

NATIVE AMERICAN: I would like to believe

STRAIGHT: "Oh, say can you see..."

NEW ASIA: I would like to believe

MIDDLE EAST: The country is me

WHITE: I would like to see

DYKE-MAN: "The dawn's early light"

LATINA: I would like to be free

BLACK: I'm too tired to fight

NEW ASIA: From atop mountains high

DYKE-MAN: Streams

BLACK: Valleys low

NATIVE AMERICAN: I used to believe

WHITE: In a dream

STRAIGHT: In this land

MIDDLE EAST: I believed in a future

NATIVE AMERICAN: But now...

BLACK: I would like to believe

DYKE-MAN: "Oh say can you see..."

NEW ASIA: I would like to believe

LATINA: This country includes me.

(The clapping game builds to a frenetic pace, culminating with--)

ALL: *(with hand motions)* Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, look at these!

(ALL EXIT playfully except NEW ASIA.)

MOVEMENT 6: The Model

(A COLLAGE OF TRADITIONAL ASIAN MUSIC RISES. NEW ASIA performs an eclectic dance to match.)

NEW ASIA: Ching chong, gook, FOB -- who? No, not wop. I slant my eyes and speak beneath my breath. In dainty words and small steps. I always score better than you on tests.

(NEW ASIA removes her kimono, revealing a business suit underneath.)

NEW ASIA: Lots of film, lots of photos. Electronics is my game. You look at me like this isn't my nation. You think, "Why don't you go home?"

(RAP samples intercut. NEW ASIA removes the business suit, revealing a skimpy skirt and top.)

NEW ASIA: I could be Chinese, Japanese, Korean, from India, or Bali. But, you don't know. So, you can't even tell me where to go. I'll stay here and be myself. I am me, New Asia here. This is my home.

(MUSIC CUTS OUT.)

MOVEMENT 7: Caste

*(A yellow block with **Laconic** stretched along the length of it in white is wheeled onto stage as ALL ENTER.)*

ALL: Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

(ALL dance mechanically across the stage like targets on a firing range.)

BLACK: Doctor

NEW ASIA: Lawyer

STRAIGHT: Garbage collector.

DYKE: Film

MAN: And Video.

WHITE: Local solicitor.

LATINA: Teacher

NATIVE AMERICAN: Student

MIDDLE EAST: Corner gibberisher.

ALL: Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

(GUNSHOT. ALL fall like they've been hit except LATINA.)

MOVEMENT 8: Love/Hate

*(WHISTLES and CATCALLS as a red block with **Virgin Mary** scripted in white is wheeled on. LATIN MUSIC COLLAGE RISES. LATINA solos. NATIVE AMERICAN, BLACK, MIDDLE EAST then STRAIGHT join her. LATINA fluctuates between flirtatious and coy.)*

LATINA: I shake my hips and sway my ass. You look at me. You'd like a grasp. I speak in words ustedes no comprenden. You drive through my town and think it un-American. All these signs en español. It makes you insane. You prefer I leave and not come back again. But, here I sit in my own little corner. Mis amigos. Mis jóvenes. ¿Quién soy? I am Latina. El mejor país en todo el mundo.

(ALL dance into a circle and sit. LATIN MUSIC COLLAGE FADES.)

MOVEMENT 9: Natural Selection

*(A block painted in camouflage with the words **Military Intelligence** is wheeled on. MAN touches each person on the head as he goes around the circle.)*

MAN: Duck, duck, duck, duck, duck, duck, duck... (*touching DYKE's head*) Goose!

(*DYKE chases MAN, tapping him on the back before he can get to the spot where she was sitting. MAN takes his place in the middle of the circle as DYKE goes around, touching each person on the head.*)

DYKE: Duck, duck, duck, duck...

BLACK: You're in the goose pot!

NEW ASIA: Loser!

LATINA: Queer!

MAN: Sticks and stones may break my bones...

NATIVE AMERICAN: Cry, baby!

MIDDLE EAST: Crybaby!

MAN: I'm rubber and you're glue...

WHITE: Smear the queer!

STRAIGHT: Smear the queer!

ALL: Smear the queer! Smear the queer! Smear the queer!

(*ALL close in on MAN.*)

MOVEMENT 10: Pride

(*GAY MUSIC COLLAGE RISES. ALL dance, aggressively at first -- more like a beating than a dance, but the dance slowly evolves into something more playful and fun. DYKE-MAN emerges from the melee.*)

DYKE-MAN: We are faggots.

DYKE: We are queer.

MAN: And, oh yes.

DYKE: By the way.

DYKE-MAN: We are here.

DYKE: You can tell by the roar of my motorcycle.

MAN: The twinkle in my toes. I'm light in the slipper.

DYKE: I'm firm on the ground. Don't look at my ass.

MAN: At least not right away.

DYKE: Don't look at my breasts.

MAN: I'll flash them later anyway.

DYKE: You know who I am.

MAN: Oh, yes, I could see that immediately.

DYKE: You recognize my face.

MAN: Because these days you can see me in movies.

DYKE: On TV.

MAN: All over the place!

(DYKE-MAN skips off. ALL, except MIDDLE EAST, chase after DYKE-MAN like groupies. MUSIC FADES.)

MOVEMENT 11: The Conflict

(Collage of MIDDLE EASTERN MUSIC RISES. MIDDLE EAST removes his head covering, revealing a yarmulke underneath.)

MIDDLE EAST: Did you say television? Which sitcom? What show? Who gave you permission? How much do you know? This is Hollywood. I am a Jew. I won't run for President. Because I don't like to lose. I prefer to sit back and just make fun. My decisions are based on the money I can make in the long run. I don't have an agenda or social mores. I produce what I think's best. If it fails, you don't get paid.

(MUSIC FADES.)

MOVEMENT 12: Propaganda

(ALL dance on to a collage of MOVIE THEME SONGS.)

LATINA: "What would you do with a brain if you had one?"

MIDDLE EAST: "What's happening hot stuff?"

WHITE: "You make someone a bridesmaid and they shit all over you."

(Evolves into a collage of TELEVISION THEME SONGS.)

DYKE: "All I want is to be loved."

MAN: "Is that so wrong?"

(Evolves into a collage of ADVERTISING SPOTS.)

STRAIGHT: "I dare you to knock it off, I dare you."

NATIVE AMERICAN: "It takes a licking and keeps on ticking."