

This is our last chance, this Christmas Eve. We don't have much time.

BROTHER (*Looking toward wall*): There is a way. An easy way.

CROWD (*Excited; ad lib*): A way! What way? (*Etc.*)

SISTER: Tear down the wall.

MAN (*Amazed; frightened*): Tear down the wall? But what about our enemies?

SISTER: If we start tearing it down, they will help. They'll want it down, too. It's the only chance for all of us, on both sides. Walls make people afraid and suspicious and mean. Walls fence out all the best things, like brotherhood and goodwill, and fence in all the worst things, like distrust and hate. We must tear down the wall! (**BROTHER and SISTER walk over to wall, begin to pry at stones. SINGERS begin to sing "Silent Night." A few members of crowd join in singing; some of them pry at stones. At the end of the first stanza, 1ST WOMAN turns to look at the statue.)**

1ST WOMAN (*Gasping; excited*): Look! Look! The angel is beginning to smile.

CROWD (*Turning; ad lib in amazement*): She's beginning to smile! Tear

down the wall! (*Etc. All go to wall and begin pulling down stones.*)

CRIER: The angel's smiling! She's really smiling! (*Goes to BROTHER and SISTER*) You children have won the reward. One half the gold in the town. Wait until the Mayor hears about this!

BROTHER (*Hesitantly*): Sir, about the reward.

CRIER: Yes, what about it?

BROTHER: We'd like the Mayor to spend the money for a park between our two countries, where the wall was — a park, with trees and grass and flowers, where everyone can go, from both sides.

CROWD (*Cheering; ad lib*): Tear down the wall! Tear down the wall! A park, a park! (*Etc.*)

CRIER (*Ringing bell, holding up hand for silence*): Listen, my friends! Listen! (*Crowd becomes quiet. Then, from the other side of the wall, comes the sound of people singing the first stanza of "Silent Night." Crowd listens silently for a moment, then, facing the statue, begins to sing along. Slow curtain*)

THE END



PRODUCTION NOTES

THE SMILING ANGEL

Characters: 6 male; 6 female; 12 or more male or female for Singers, Town Crier, and Townspeople.

Playing Time: 15 minutes.

Costumes: Modern, winter clothing for all.

Properties: Roll of paper; bell; pen.

Setting: The town square. At the back is a conspic-

uous stone wall. A section of the wall may be made on painted cardboard boxes, so that it can be torn down. On either side of wall toward wings are low steps. At front, above audience, stands statue of an angel.

Lighting and Sound: No special effects.

We've Got Our Rights!

by Mary Satchell

A girl with no sense of history comes to understand the true meaning of the Bill of Rights. . . .

Characters

LYNN MARSHALL } students at
ARTY JOHNSON } Mapleville School
OTHER STUDENTS
POLICE OFFICER
PREAMBLE } Spirits of the
ARTICLES } U.S. Constitution
AMENDMENTS }
TESS HAWKINS } peddlers in Old
MRS. ROBINSON } Philadelphia Marketplace
MAGISTRATE, peace officer
FARMER MASON, prisoner
MRS. MASON
MASON CHILDREN, young boy and girl
TOWNSPEOPLE
PHINEAS HAWKINS, town crier
GEORGE WASHINGTON }
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN } delegates to
JAMES MADISON } Constitutional
ALEXANDER HAMILTON } Convention
WILLIAM PATERSON }
OTHER DELEGATES

SCENE 1

TIME: An afternoon in the present.

SETTING: A small park in Mapleville. Park bench is up center. Trash bin stands left of bench, and old-fashioned street lamp is up right. A sign reading KEEP OFF GRASS is posted near trash bin. Exits are right and left.

AT RISE: LYNN rushes in right, followed by ARTY, wearing a backpack and carrying an empty crate. LYNN walks to front of bench.

LYNN (*Pointing*): You can put the crate right here, Arty. This will be the perfect spot to make my speech to the kids about the school cafeteria. (*Gestures fiercely*) They've given us nothing but bad food, and we've had enough. This means war!

ARTY (*Putting down crate; taking off backpack and placing it on bench*): Lynn, every time you go to war for one of your causes, I end up being your first casualty.

LYNN: Oh, stop complaining, Arty. The kids will be here any minute.

ARTY (*Opening backpack*): Let me give you the speech I wrote for you.

LYNN: After the gang gets here, we'll plan next week's boycott of the cafeteria.

ARTY (*Quickly; surprised*): Boycott! Hold it right there, Lynn. I thought you were just going to make a speech.

LYNN: What good is talk without action? (*Excitedly*) Don't you understand, Arty? Our rights are at stake here.

ARTY (*Groaning*): Lynn, something tells me you're going too far on this.

LYNN: Trust me, Arty.

ARTY (*Handing paper to LYNN*): Here's your speech. (*LYNN stands on crate as other STUDENTS enter right.*)

1ST STUDENT: Hey, Lynn. What gives with this big meeting in the park? Why didn't you just use a classroom at school, or the cafeteria?

LYNN (*Stepping off crate*): This meeting has to be kept secret. I didn't want Dean Parks to interfere with our protest and boycott plans.

STUDENTS (*Ad lib*): Protest? Boycott? What are you up to this time? (*Etc.*)

LYNN (*Impatiently*): I'm talking about the serious matter of protecting our rights.

2ND STUDENT: Our right to do what?

LYNN: To have decent meals in the cafeteria.

ARTY (*Pointing to paper*): Lynn, you're getting ahead of yourself.

LYNN: Oh, my speech. I almost forgot. (*Climbs on crate and reads from paper*) My fellow classmates, I have called this meeting today — (*POLICE OFFICER enters right.*)

OFFICER (*Gruffly*): What are you kids up to?

ARTY (*Sheepishly*): Nothing, officer.

LYNN: We're just holding a meeting.

OFFICER (*Moving through group toward bench*): What kind of meeting, young lady?

LYNN: It's a secret meeting, officer.

OFFICER (*Suspiciously*): You're holding a meeting in this park without a permit. (*Smugly*) I could run you kids in for breaking the law.

STUDENTS (*Ad lib*): Hey, let's get out of here. We don't want trouble. (*Etc.*)

STUDENTS *start to exit.*

LYNN: Wait! (*STUDENTS stop.*) In American history class, Ms. Hall said that we have rights as free citizens. (*To OFFICER*) What about freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly? This meeting is a very peaceful one.

OFFICER: And it's going to stay that way. I want you kids out of here — *pronto.* (*Scowling at STUDENTS*) Any complaints?

STUDENTS (*Together*): No, sir! (*Exit hurriedly right and left*)

OFFICER (*To LYNN and ARTY*): And that also goes for you two. (*Moves left, then looks back in warning*) I'll be walking my beat through here again in fifteen minutes. (*Exits*)

LYNN (*Fuming; stepping down from box*): How could he be so unfair? We've got our rights!

ARTY (*Wearily*): There you go again, Lynn. Do you honestly care about what our rights as American citizens mean, and how we got them in the first place?

LYNN (*Shrugging*): Not really. All I care about is that I have them.

ARTY (*Picking up backpack*): I'm going home. I have to work on Ms. Hall's

assignment about the U.S. Constitution. (*Turns to LYNN*) You do, too.

LYNN: Don't bother me with that dull and unimportant subject, Arty. (*Instantly, lights flicker twice, followed by sharp crack of thunder.*)

ARTY *drops backpack and LYNN grabs ARTY's arm.*

ARTY (*Looking overhead*): Hey! What's going on? (*Thunder rolls menacingly, then lights go out.*)

LYNN (*Panicking*): Arty, where are you? I can't see! (*Lights come up.*)

PREAMBLE, ARTICLES, and AMENDMENTS *stand on stage.*

PREAMBLE *holds a torch high, and AMENDMENTS holds scroll. They give LYNN stern looks.*

ARTY (*Weakly*): Who . . . who are you?

PREAMBLE (*Proudly*): We are the Spirits of the United States Constitution. I represent the Preamble, which states that the Constitution's powers come from the people.

ARTICLES: I am the symbol of the seven articles, which explain how the three branches of our great government work.

AMENDMENTS: I represent the twenty-six amendments to our Constitution. (*Unrolls scroll, which reads BILL OF RIGHTS*) The first ten amendments are known as the Bill of Rights. These ten amendments protect the rights of individual citizens.

PREAMBLE: We protect the rights of all our nation's citizens. (*Pointedly*) Even those citizens who don't deserve them.

ARTICLES: My sisters and I are not happy with what we've heard here today.

AMENDMENTS: Our sworn duty is to

teach a lesson to anyone who lacks respect for the Constitution.

ARTY (*Cautiously*): What kind of lesson?

PREAMBLE: Not for you, Arty Johnson. (*Points accusingly at LYNN*) She's the one we've come to see.

LYNN: Why me?

ARTICLES (*Heatedly*): Because you must learn that your nation's Constitution is vitally important. We'll show you what it means to have your rights taken away.

LYNN (*Tossing head*): I don't believe in spirits. This is the twentieth century, you know. (*Thunder sounds ominously in distance.*)

PREAMBLE (*Sternly*): You, Lynn Marshall, will be sent back two hundred years into America's past, when citizens had no effective Constitution to ensure their rights.

ARTICLES: You will be allowed to return to the present only when you deserve to return.

LYNN: I've had enough of this. (*Takes books from ARTY's backpack*)

AMENDMENTS (*To PREAMBLE and ARTICLES*): Should we send her to Phineas Hawkins? He'll be a help — of sorts. (*Spirits chuckle*)

LYNN: Are you coming, Arty, or are you going to stay here and waste your time? (*Carries books toward left exit*)

SPIRITS (*Together*): That does it! (*PREAMBLE holds torch higher.*)

ARTICLES and AMENDMENTS *raise hands imploringly to heavens.*)

PREAMBLE (*Fiercely*): Exalted Spirit of Nations, declare your strength and power! (*Awesome thunder is heard. Lights flash rapidly.*)

LYNN (*Dropping books; frantically*

struggling against an invisible power): Arty, I can't move! Something's holding me back.

ARTY (*Urgently, as lights quickly fade*): Spirits, please let me go with Lynn. She'll never make it by herself.

PREAMBLE (*Pointing to ARTY*): You're taking a big risk, Arty Johnson, but if you wish, go with your friend, and see if you both will ever come back here alive. (*Gestures as if flinging a thunderbolt, as thunder booms. Lights flash, and wind whistles offstage, as LYNN and ARTY cling to each other. Curtain*)

SCENE 2

TIME: Morning. May 25, 1787.

SETTING: Market Street in Old Philadelphia Town. A flower cart is right, center. A stall with fruits and vegetables is left. Several barrels and boxes mark gathering place for townsmen. Up left is the stocks, a wooden frame with holes large enough for a person's head and wrists. Exits are down right and left.

AT RISE: TESS arranges fresh flowers in her cart, and MRS. ROBINSON, at produce stall, polishes apples with her apron. LYNN and ARTY enter right, looking around in bewilderment.

LYNN (*Dazed; blinking*): Where are we? I've never seen this place before. (*Rubs forehead*) It's all so confusing, Arty. One minute we were in the park . . . and then everything just seemed to get blown away.

ARTY (*Thoughtfully*): I don't remember much after that crazy thunder-

storm, either. (*Stares at TESS and MRS. ROBINSON*) Lynn, take a look at those ladies over there.

LYNN (*Turning to look*): Why, they're wearing clothes from the eighteenth century!

ARTY (*Nodding*): And remember what the Spirits said? We'd be sent back to the time in American history before people had any guaranteed rights.

LYNN: That's ridiculous. (*Stubbornly*) But no matter where we are, I won't give up my rights.

ARTY (*Looking around and relaxing*): Well, things seem harmless enough around here.

LYNN (*Enthusiastically*): I like this place. It's quaint and clean. Why don't we ask those ladies where we are.

ARTY: O.K., but let me do the talking. (*Crosses to MRS. ROBINSON's stall and speaks politely*) Good afternoon, ma'am. (*MRS. ROBINSON turns in surprise.*)

MRS. ROBINSON (*In unfriendly tone*): Goodness, boy, don't ye know that it's morning? What a strange-looking pair you two make.

TESS (*Stopping work*): Why in the world are you dressed like that?

MRS. ROBINSON: I declare, this town attracts more riffraff everyday.

TESS (*Smiling*): I think they look cute.

ARTY: I'm Arty Johnson, and this is my friend, Lynn Marshall.

TESS (*Curtysying*): Pleased to meet you both. I'm Tess Hawkins and this is my neighbor, Mrs. Robinson.

MRS. ROBINSON (*Suspiciously*): This being the City of Brotherly Love, I guess we have to take in everybody.

ARTY: City of Brotherly Love? (*Gulping*) You mean Philadelphia?

MRS. ROBINSON (*Testily*): Are ye deaf, boy?

LYNN (*Pleasantly*): Life must be very peaceful here. (*MAGISTRATE enters left, leading FARMER MASON by rope tied around FARMER's neck. FARMER's hands are bound with rope in front of him. MRS. MASON and CHILDREN follow, sobbing pitifully. The group proceeds across stage and exits right.*)

LYNN (*Shocked*): That man must have done something terrible to deserve such punishment?

ARTY: What did he do?

TESS: Farmer Mason couldn't pay his debts.

LYNN: He must owe a lot of money.

MRS. ROBINSON (*Matter-of-factly*): He owes the storekeeper for fifty pounds of seed.

ARTY (*Shocked*): Fifty pounds of seed? Is that all?

TESS: A person could go to debtor's prison for a lot less than that.

LYNN (*Importantly*): A man shouldn't go to prison for owing somebody for a sack of seeds. Farmer Mason's got rights.

ARTY: People may not have any constitutional rights now. (*To MRS. ROBINSON*) What year is this? (*TESS bursts out laughing.*)

MRS. ROBINSON (*Squinting*): People can lose their heads for being too dumb around here. Today is May 25, 1787. (*Brusquely*) Tess, watch the produce till I get back. I need to put out some more apples. (*Exits right. Ladies carrying baskets enter from both exits. They look at produce and*

flowers, ad lib conversation too low to be heard. TESS busies herself with the customers.)

LYNN (*Glancing toward produce stall*): I'm hungry. Those apples look good. (*Moves to stall*)

ARTY (*Following*): Don't you think we should wait till Mrs. Robinson gets back?

LYNN: No need. I'll just leave her some money. (*Takes dollar from pocket, puts it on stall, then selects apple, and begins eating it hungrily*) Mmmm! This is delicious! (*Townsmen enter and stroll to barrels to ad lib quiet conversation. MRS. ROBINSON returns with basket of apples and looks angrily at LYNN.*)

MRS. ROBINSON (*Shrieking*): Thief! Thief! Somebody fetch the magistrate. (*Points to LYNN*) This girl stole my fruit! (*TOWNSPEOPLE turn toward commotion. One man rushes off right. LYNN stares blankly.*)

ARTY (*Rushing forward*): Mrs. Robinson, it's all a mistake. Lynn paid for that apple. (*Pointing to dollar*) See?

MRS. ROBINSON (*Putting down basket and peering at dollar*): Pshaw! Counterfeit!

LYNN (*Indignantly*): This dollar's backed by the United States Treasury. There's even a picture of George Washington. (*MAGISTRATE rushes in right.*)

MRS. ROBINSON (*Imperiously; pointing to LYNN*): Magistrate, arrest this girl!

MAGISTRATE: What's she done?

MRS. ROBINSON: She tried to pay for an apple with a strange-looking paper.

TESS (*Hesitantly*): I think there may be some mistake.

MRS. ROBINSON (*Gruffly*): Hush, Tess.

There's no mistake. The girl's a thief, and she's standing there with the evidence in her hand. (*Points to half-eaten apple*)

MAGISTRATE (*Coldly, to LYNN*): Looks as if you were caught in the act.

LYNN (*Arrogantly*): I never stole anything in my life. Anyway, I've got my rights.

ARTY (*Touching LYNN's arm*): Cool it, Lynn. We're from another world — remember?

MRS. ROBINSON (*Nudging MAGISTRATE*): Do ye hear how they talk about other worlds and such? They're strange ones, I tell ye. And this girl would be better off in stocks. (*MAGISTRATE nods*)

ARTY (*Dumbfounded*): The stocks!

LYNN: What's that? (*All, including TOWNSPEOPLE, point upstage. LYNN puts hand to throat and gasps.*) But that's unfair! (*MAGISTRATE moves menacingly toward her.*) What about the Bill of Rights — freedom from cruel punishment?

ARTY (*Soberly*): Lynn, we're too early for the Bill of Rights.

MAGISTRATE (*Severely; taking LYNN's arm*): Come, you must pay for your crime.

LYNN (*Voice squeaking in fear*): But I haven't committed any crime. (*MAGISTRATE pulls LYNN toward stocks. LYNN cries loudly.*) Arty, help! I couldn't stand it if they put me in there.

ARTY (*Blocking MAGISTRATE's way*): You can't lock her in the stocks.

MAGISTRATE (*Growling*): Who says I can't?

ARTY (*In quavering voice*): Sir, uh, I'll . . . I'll take Lynn's place.

LYNN (*Overwhelmed with relief*): Oh, Arty!

TESS (*Looking admiringly at ARTY*): Lynn, you're lucky to have a friend like that.

MAGISTRATE: Lad, are you sure you want to do this?

ARTY (*Nervously*): I'm sure. (*MAGISTRATE releases LYNN and takes out large key.*)

LYNN: How long will he have to stay in there?

MAGISTRATE: Two weeks. Maybe three.

LYNN (*Horrified*): Two or three weeks? That's terrible! What about his right to a fair trial?

ARTY (*Stepping forward to be locked up*): Lynn, if you want to help me, just shut up. (*MAGISTRATE locks ARTY in stocks; TOWNSPEOPLE resume their low, ad lib conversations, moving upstage. Bell rings off-stage. PHINEAS HAWKINS enters left, ringing handbell.*)

PHINEAS (*Shouting*): Eight o'clock and all is well.

TESS (*Wryly*): All is *not* well. (*Rushes downstage to PHINEAS*) Father, please do something to help these poor children.

PHINEAS (*Peering over spectacles at ARTY*): My word! (*Very upset*) A prisoner in stocks today? (*Moves quickly to ARTY*) Who is this lad?

TESS (*Following PHINEAS and gesturing helplessly*): Father, you must help my new friend, Arty Johnson.

PHINEAS (*Saluting*): P. Phineas Hawkins, at your service.

ARTY: Lynn, the Spirits said they were sending us to Phineas Hawkins.

MRS. ROBINSON (*Starting forward*):

Don't ye go interfering in something that's none of your business, Phineas. You're always defending criminals!

PHINEAS (*Bellowing*): Hold your tongue, Molly! (*MRS. ROBINSON stops and gasps.*) I'm in charge of things today.

MAGISTRATE (*Defensively*): What do you mean, you're in charge? I'm the law enforcer here, Phineas. What's gotten into you, man?

PHINEAS (*Snapping to attention*): The illustrious Ben Franklin has made me doorkeeper to the constitutional convention.

MAGISTRATE: What does *that* have to do with anything?

PHINEAS (*Confidently*): Why, everything! I am also charged with conducting General George Washington through our city and pointing out the sights to him. What do you think the General will say when I bring him here and he sees a young lad locked in stocks?

MAGISTRATE (*Hesitating*): Well, er . . . I suppose we may have been too hasty. (*MRS. ROBINSON opens her mouth and PHINEAS glares her into silence.*)

PHINEAS: That settles it. The lad is free! (*MAGISTRATE releases ARTY*)

ARTY: Gee, thanks, Phineas!

PHINEAS: Now, you children must come with me.

LYNN: Where are we going?

PHINEAS: To the constitutional convention at Independence Hall, of course. Today, the states have sent delegates to this grand convention to draw up a new national constitution.

LYNN: Who's going to be there?

PHINEAS: Why, some of our nation's most famous citizens: George Washington, Ben Franklin, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton, to name a few.

LYNN (*Excitedly*): You mean, we'll get the chance to see the great Founding Fathers of our country? Let's hurry! (*She and ARTY grab PHINEAS and pull him right.*) Wait until we tell the kids in Mapleville that we've seen George Washington! (*Exits quickly with ARTY, pulling PHINEAS along. Curtain*)

SCENE 3

TIME: *Minutes later.*

SETTING: *Meeting room in Independence Hall. Small table with paper, quill pen, and chair are downstage. Right center, desk with gavel and chair face audience on low platform. Distinct picture of sun on horizon is inside back of chair at desk. U.S. flag with thirteen stars and stripes hangs on pole beside desk. Two rows of chairs are arranged left center. Upstage is a long table with bowl of flowers or other centerpiece on tablecloth trailing to floor. Exit is left.*

AT RISE: PHINEAS *cautiously enters, looks around, puts finger to his lips, and beckons to ARTY and LYNN, who tiptoe on.*

ARTY: Gee, Lynn, Independence Hall!

PHINEAS: Sh-h! Don't talk so loud. (*Looking around quickly*) You two must hide before the delegates come in.

LYNN: Why is that?

PHINEAS: All meetings at the convention are to be held in strictest secrecy (*Looks off*) They're coming! (*Pointing upstage*) Get under that table.

ARTY: What a great time to take notes! (*Patting pockets*) Here's my pen. (*Rushes to get paper from small table*)

PHINEAS: Quickly! (*Pushes LYNN and ARTY upstage*) You're not to make a sound. (*LYNN and ARTY crawl under table*) PHINEAS *hurriedly stands beside exit*. GEORGE WASHINGTON, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, JAMES MADISON, ALEXANDER HAMILTON, and OTHER DELEGATES *enter*.)

GEORGE WASHINGTON (*Jovially*): This is a fine day to begin our important work. (*To BENJAMIN FRANKLIN*) Dr. Franklin, how did you enjoy our walk in the park this morning?

FRANKLIN (*With humor, mopping face with handkerchief*): General Washington, I'm sure you enjoyed the walk much more than I did. (*PHINEAS clears throat loudly and FRANKLIN turns toward him*.) Oh, yes, Phineas, I almost forgot my promise to introduce you to the General. (*Gesturing*) General Washington, this is P. Phineas Hawkins, the town crier of our city, and official doorkeeper of this convention.

PHINEAS (*Saluting*): A pleasure to serve you, General.

WASHINGTON (*Bowing*): Thank you, Phineas.

FRANKLIN (*To DELEGATES*): Our first order of business is to select a chairman.

HAMILTON: General Washington must preside.

OTHER DELEGATES (*Heartily*): Hear, hear!

FRANKLIN (*Presenting gavel to WASHINGTON*): General Washington, will you please take your seat in this chair with a picture of the sun on the horizon. (*Gestures*. WASHINGTON and OTHER DELEGATES *sit*.)

WASHINGTON (*Rapping with gavel*): The Constitutional Convention of these United States is now in session. James Madison, would you take notes until an official secretary is elected?

MADISON (*Coming forward*): Yes, Mr. Chairman. (*Takes seat at small table downstage and writes at intervals throughout meeting*)

HAMILTON (*Standing*): May I have the floor, Mr. Chairman?

WASHINGTON (*Nodding*): Of course. The chair recognizes Alexander Hamilton.

HAMILTON (*Self-assured*): One thing is sure; we *must* have a strong central government. Our present situation is unbearable. We have no President to see that things get done.

PATERSON: If we give the national government too much power, our thirteen states will be sorry.

HAMILTON (*Politely, but firmly*): William Paterson, can we let our country go to pieces for lack of a strong central government?

PATERSON: I cannot accept your idea, Mr. Hamilton.

DELEGATES (*Ad lib*): Hamilton is right! Paterson's point is well-taken. The issue is a sure deadlock. (*Etc.*)

WASHINGTON (*Rapping for order*): Gentlemen, I suggest we take some time to think about this matter. (*Rises and paces before platform*. ARTY's hand appears from beneath

tablecloth and PHINEAS makes frantic gestures; paper folded like airplane sails across room and lands near WASHINGTON.)

FRANKLIN (*Annoyed*): Phineas, we haven't time for games.

PHINEAS: But, I...I didn't — (*Glares over spectacles at tablecloth*)

WASHINGTON (*Picking up folded paper, opening and reading*): Gentlemen, listen to this. (*Reads*) "Give specific powers to the federal government, and leave the remaining powers to the states." (*To assembly*) This idea Phineas has come up with is truly remarkable! (*Shakes a beaming PHINEAS's hand while DELEGATES applaud*)

WASHINGTON (*Sitting as MADISON stands*): The Chair recognizes James Madison of Virginia.

MADISON: Our nation's law-making body should be based on each state's population.

PATERSON (*Quickly rising*): Mr. Chairman, all states should have one vote in Congress.

DELEGATES (*Ad lib*): An excellent idea. Such a thing would never work! Another deadlock. (*Etc.* WASHINGTON pounds gavel and uproar stops.)

PATERSON: James Madison, before I submit to your plans, I'll say goodbye forever to this convention!

DELEGATES (*Ad lib*): Let's go home. This meeting is a waste of our time. Don't be so hasty. Our meeting is too important. (*Etc.*)

WASHINGTON (*Banging gavel*): Sirs, we can't let this issue destroy our convention. We'll take a short break to let tempers cool. (*Rises and leads DELEGATES out*)

PHINEAS (*Cautiously, to ARTY and LYNN*): You can come out now, but be quiet. (*ARTY and LYNN crawl from under table*.)

LYNN (*Upset*): The convention's on the brink of falling apart.

ARTY: But, Lynn, we know everything that will happen. We know the Constitution was adopted by the delegates in September, 1787, but it didn't go into effect until March 4, 1789. James Madison drew up the first ten amendments called the Bill of Rights, including the right to assemble and the right to free speech. These became an official part of the Constitution in 1791.

LYNN: Arty, there's no harm in making a few suggestions. This situation calls for immediate action. (*Sits at MADISON's table and writes*) Our U.S. Congress has a House based on population and a Senate having equal votes. (*Continues writing*) I'll put it all down so President Washington can find it.

PHINEAS: Our country has no President.

ARTY: You *will* have one soon. In fact, there were two future Presidents in this room. George Washington and James Madison.

PHINEAS (*Confused*): What are you talking about? (*WASHINGTON and FRANKLIN enter unexpectedly*. LYNN springs to her feet.)

FRANKLIN (*Firmly*): Phineas, who are these children?

LYNN (*Blurting*): Please, don't blame Phineas. (*Holding out paper*) We wanted to get this message to Mr. Washington.

WASHINGTON (*Taking paper and read-*

ing): Listen, Ben. This note says we should make a Congress of two houses: a House based on states' populations and a Senate with one vote for each state. (To LYNN) Is this compromise your idea?

LYNN (Smiling): Well, mine and Arty's — with a little help from American history.

FRANKLIN: To whom do we owe our thanks for saving this convention?

PHINEAS (Pointing): He's Arty Johnson and she's Lynn Marshall. And I've taught them all they know.

WASHINGTON: You've done well, Phineas.

FRANKLIN (Pointing to chair): General Washington, that sun on your chair is obviously rising on a new day, and a strong, new nation.

WASHINGTON (Nodding): You young people have shown us that our efforts to draw up a new Constitution will be successful.

FRANKLIN: There's still much to be done before our work is completed. (Rubs chin thoughtfully) I'm especially concerned about guaranteeing certain basic rights to our nation's citizens.

PHINEAS: What kind of rights, sir?

FRANKLIN: Basic human rights, Phineas, such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

WASHINGTON: Ben, that's a splendid idea! I'll ask James Madison to look into this matter. (Lights flicker; thunder sounds in distance)

FRANKLIN (Looking up): A storm's brewing.

LYNN: The Spirits must be calling us back. (Lights slowly fade; thunder rumbles.)

ARTY: We have to go home.

PHINEAS (Sadly): Must you go?

LYNN: Yes, Phineas. I came here to learn a very important lesson.

FRANKLIN: What have you learned?

LYNN: I know that my Constitutional rights as an American citizen are among the most precious possessions I'll ever have.

ARTY: Those rights must be respected and appreciated, or we may lose them someday. (Lightning flashes. LYNN and ARTY start off.)

LYNN (Hurriedly): Goodbye, Mr. Washington. Goodbye, Mr. Franklin. (Stage is almost dark.)

ARTY and LYNN (Together, waving): Goodbye, Phineas! And thank you! (Loud thunder; lights out. Quick curtain)

SCENE 4

TIME: Several minutes later.

SETTING: Same as Scene 1.

AT RISE: ARTY and LYNN enter right, and sit on bench.

ARTY (Incredulously): I don't believe what's just happened to us.

LYNN: We couldn't possibly have dreamed up anything that far out. (Wryly) Those three weird sisters sure know how to make a point.

ARTY (Looking up quickly): Bite your tongue Lynn. Next time, the Spirits may zap us back to the Stone Age.

LYNN (Rising): Arty, now I know firsthand how terrible it feels not to have a strong, reliable Constitution to protect our rights. (OFFICER enters left and frowns at LYNN and ARTY.)

OFFICER: So you two are still here, eh? You kids clearly don't respect the law.

LYNN (Fervently): Officer, I can't begin to tell you how much I've learned to respect the law.

OFFICER (Pushing hat back on his head): What's brought on such a big change in you?

LYNN (Slyly): What if we told you about our adventure in Old Philadelphia?

ARTY (Warning): Lynn! Do you want him to think we're crazy?

LYNN: I guess you're right, Arty. We'll probably always have to keep quiet about what's happened to us today. But, even though we can't tell our friends about our adventure, we can show them what we've learned by the way we act.

ARTY: Does that mean you'll stop being a crusader? (Puts on backpack)

LYNN: Of course not. I'll always be a crusader, but from now on, I'll follow the rules. (To OFFICER) Sir, how can

we get a legal permit to hold a meeting in the park?

OFFICER: Go down to City Hall. The folks there will tell you what to do.

LYNN: Thanks, Officer. Come on, Arty. We've got a lot to do. First, there's that homework to finish for Ms. Hall, and tomorrow, we'll negotiate with Dean Parks about getting better food at school. (Picks up crate and moves left)

ARTY (Following): Negotiate? I thought all you ever did was protest.

LYNN: You're looking at a new Lynn Marshall, Arty!

ARTY (Waving): See you around, officer. (Exits with LYNN)

OFFICER (Smiling and shaking his head): Kids. They're always up to something. (Fife and drum playing "Yankee Doodle" is heard. Curtain.)

THE END

PRODUCTION NOTES

WE'VE GOT OUR RIGHTS!

Characters: 11 male; 8 female; 18 or more male and female for Students, Townspeople, and Other Delegates.

Playing Time: 25 minutes.

Costumes: Lynn, Arty, and Students wear modern, everyday dress. Officer wears uniform. Preamble, Articles and Amendments wear ankle-length grecian-type gowns and ballet slippers. Jess, Mrs. Robinson, Phineas, Magistrate, Farmer, Children and Townspeople wear appropriate eighteenth century clothing. Phineas has white wig and spectacles. Delegates wear hair styles and clothes traditional for time period. Benjamin Franklin has on spectacles and carries handkerchief.

Properties: Backpack; crate; papers, books; torch; scroll reading BILL OF RIGHTS; baskets; rope, large key; dollar bill; handbell; note.

Setting: Scenes 1 and 4: A small park in Mapleville. Park bench is up center. Trash bin stands left of bench, and an old-fashioned street lamp is up right. Sign reading KEEP OFF GRASS is posted

near trash bin. Exits are right and left. Scene 2: Marketplace in Old Philadelphia Town. A flower cart is left. Several barrels and boxes mark gathering place for townsmen. Up left is the stocks, a wooden frame with holes large enough for a person's head and wrists. Exits are down right and left. Scene 3: Meeting room in Independence Hall. Small table with paper, quill pen, and chair are downstage. Right center, desk with gavel and chair faces audience on low platform. Distinct picture of sun on horizon is inside back of chair at desk. U.S. flag with thirteen stars and stripes hangs on pole beside desk. Two rows of chairs are arranged left center. Upstage is a long table with tablecloth trailing to floor. Bowl of flowers or other centerpiece is on table. Exit is left.

Lighting: Flickering and rapidly flashing lights; slow fading to blackout, as indicated.

Sound: Booming thunder; whistling wind, bell ringing, fife and drum playing "Yankee Doodle," as indicated.