

LIBERTY! EQUALITY! AND FIREWORKS!

by

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Liberty! Equality! And Fireworks! was first produced by Pollyanna Theatre Company in Austin TX at the Long Center for the Performing Arts' Rollins Studio Theatre in October 2014. The cast & crew were as follows:

<u>MRS. KARALOT:</u>	Audrey Hicks
<u>SADIE:</u>	Bethany Harbaugh
<u>MARIA:</u>	Olivia Jimenez
<u>PHILIP:</u>	Cameron McKnight
<u>DOROTHY:</u>	Emily Braun
<u>HARRY:</u>	Jacques Colimon
<u>MISS TORIE:</u>	Audrey Hicks
<u>LUNCH COUNTER SERVER:</u>	Craig Kanne
<u>FRANKLIN:</u>	Aaron Alexander
<u>SYLVIA:</u>	Alessandra Manon
<u>BOBBY:</u>	Aaron Alexander
<u>GAME SHOW ASSISTANTS:</u>	Jessica Hughes Craig Kanne Aaron Alexander
<u>DIRECTOR:</u>	Judy Matetzschk-Campbell
<u>STAGE MANAGER:</u>	Andrew Perry
<u>SCENIC DESIGNER:</u>	Jeff Cunningham
<u>COSTUME DESIGNER:</u>	Rikki Tomiko Davis
<u>LIGHTING DESIGNER:</u>	Don Day
<u>SOUND DESIGNER:</u>	Andrew Perry
<u>VIDEO DESIGNER:</u>	Lowell Bartholomee

Cast of Characters

<u>MRS. KARALOT:</u>	Teacher, easily agitated, female, *role may be doubled with MISS TORIE
<u>SADIE:</u>	Very outspoken, 4th grader, female
<u>MARIA:</u>	Sassy, 4th grader, female
<u>PHILIP:</u>	A know-it-all, 4th grader, male
<u>DOROTHY:</u>	Happy go lucky, 4th grader, female
<u>HARRY:</u>	Misfit, 4th grader, male
<u>MISS TORIE:</u>	Other-worldly docent, very colorfully dressed with jewelry and accessories symbolic of eras past and present, female, *role may be doubled with MRS. KARALOT
<u>LUNCH COUNTER SERVER:</u>	Surly and racist, any gender, *role may be doubled with GAME SHOW ASSISTANT
<u>FRANKLIN:</u>	Freshman at NC A&T University (circa 1960), male, *role may be doubled with BOBBY & GAME SHOW ASSISTANT
<u>SYLVIA:</u>	4th grade Mexican American girl at Hoover School, Westminster CA (circa 1945), female, *role may be doubled with GAME SHOW ASSISTANT
<u>BOBBY:</u>	18-year-old, marcher (circa 1965), male, *role may be doubled with FRANKLIN & GAME SHOW ASSISTANT
<u>GAME SHOW ASSISTANTS:</u>	Flashy, any gender, *roles may be doubled with LUNCH COUNTER SERVER, FRANKLIN, SYLVIA, & BOBBY

Scene

A modern history museum.

Time

Present day.

SAMPLE

SETTING: The exhibition gallery of a museum. It is bright and welcoming. There are several tall panels which have quotes from the American Civil Rights Era projected on them. These projections will change to become the exhibits for the museum.

AT RISE: We see a lady walking through the gallery. Then we hear the arrival of a group of students. Mostly we hear the teacher's voice trying to wrangle the students.

MRS. KARALOT

(offstage)

Callaway Garden Cacti! Please settle down.

(We hear the students continue to play and interact with each other. Excited to be away from school.)

Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

(The students quiet down.)

Now, I need you to line up before we go through the museum gallery. Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Remember you are representing Callaway Garden Elementary School. Sadie! Sadie, you get at the front of the line. Everyone, line up behind Sadie. Stay right in this line. I mean it, Cacti! I'm going right there to check our group in.

(SADIE enters first followed by PHILIP, MARIA, DOROTHY, AND HARRY. Their excitement dulls as they look around. HARRY is dressed oddly with thick rimmed glasses and a plaid shirt. It is obvious that HARRY is an outcast. No one is interacting with him. As the other students are talking, HARRY wanders from panel to panel reading the quotes.)

SADIE

This is weird...

MARIA

I thought we were going someplace fun...

PHILIP

Hey, I recognize that quote...

DOROTHY

This is not where I thought we were going...

MARIA

What did Mrs. Karalot say this place was called?

PHILIP

It's a museum!

SADIE

Duh...

PHILIP

Remember the letter Mrs. Karalot gave us for our parents to sign, so we could come on this trip? Well, I read it. It mentioned that we would be spending the day at the museum.

DOROTHY

I thought we were going to that new park on the other side of the freeway.

SADIE

This place doesn't look like fun.

HARRY

It can be fun. You can learn a lot here.

SADIE

Who asked you? I wish you weren't even on this field trip.

(HARRY turns away
embarrassed. The other
students continue to ignore
HARRY.)

PHILIP

(with erudition)

A museum is... a place... sacred to the Muses.

MARIA

What?

PHILIP

It's a... cathedral for inspiration.

DOROTHY

Creepy...

MARIA

Sadie, what is he talking about?

SADIE

Philip, for once talk like regular people.

PHILIP

I looked it up.

MARIA

What?

PHILIP

Museum. I looked up museum and it says, it is a place for Muses.

MARIA

Muses? Do you mean music?

DOROTHY

Are we here for a concert? 'Cause that would be cool!

PHILIP

(sighs)

No. Don't you all understand anything? A muse is a magical lady that inspires you with art, music and knowledge.

DOROTHY

How do you know that?

PHILIP

I looked it up.

HARRY

My dad says a museum is a place where people come to be inspired by interesting and valuable things and ideas.

(All the students turn and look glaringly at HARRY across the room.)

SADIE

(dismissively)

Whatever!

PHILIP

(annoyed at Harry's comment)

Isn't that what I just said.

(MRS. KARALOT enters.)

MRS. KARALOT

Okay, students, let's gather over here and wait for the docent. Isn't this nice.

(looking across the room at HARRY)

You, too, Harry. Come over here, sweetie.

(All the other students begin to talk at the same time trying to get MRS. KARALOT'S attention.)

Five. Four. Three. Two. One.

(Students become quiet and are looking at MRS. KARALOT.)

One person at a time, please.

(All of them except HARRY, shoot their hands up in the air.)

Yes, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Why are we here?

MRS. KARALOT

This-

(Before MRS. KARALOT can finish her response, the other students pelt her with questions.)

HARRY

What's a decent?

PHILIP

That's DOCENT! Geez...

MARIA

Are we here to meet someone?

DOROTHY

Who's in the concert?

SADIE

Can we go somewhere that's fun?

MRS. KARALOT

(frustration building)

Cacti! I can only answer one question at a time. Now. This is going to be fun. Okay!

SADIE

No... I mean... like, if we do this museum thing, do we get to do something fun like... go to the park, to the mall or the movies? Something?

PHILIP

Let's get some ice cream!

(All the students join in chanting for ice cream.)

MRS. KARALOT

Cacti! Keep it down. I can't take much more of this! Now, what you've been learning in class will come to life here at the museum. So, to answer your questions... Five. Four. Three. Two. One. No, we are not here to meet anyone. And a docent is a knowledgeable guide. And if you don't want to be here... we can leave and go back to school.

SADIE

Leave?! We don't want to go back to school.

MRS. KARALOT

Fine.

(All the students are visibly disappointed, except HARRY. SADIE huddles the students without HARRY. She is obviously concocting a plan.)

MRS. KARALOT (Cont.)

Cacti! Get in line! Five. Four. Three. Two. One!

SADIE

(declaratory)

Mrs. Karalot, we have decided. We are not going anywhere. We thought we were coming here to have fun. So we are just going to sit here until something fun happens.

(All the students, except HARRY, lock arms in a line and sit down. HARRY looks at MRS. KARALOT and then at the students. He quickly sits with the other students and tries to lock arms with DOROTHY in the end who pushes HARRY away.)

MRS. KARALOT

(frustrated and trying not to cause a scene)

I'm going to call principal Jacobs.

(MRS. KARALOT exits grumbling.)

PHILIP

Now what do we do?

(The students continue to sit. Looking bored. They begin to hear MISS TORIE offstage singing "We Shall Not be Moved." As the song is getting louder, the lights begin to change color... something mysterious is happening... and the students look worried.)

SADIE

Do you hear that?

MARIA

What's going on?

(The projections change from quotes to photos of student sit-ins from the 1960s. One projection is of the four NC A&T University students at the Woolworth's counter in 1960. MISS TORIE enters singing. She is dressed colorfully with accessories from different eras. Her look indicates something other-worldly and immediately captures the student's attention.)

PHILIP

(puzzled)

Is she a Muse?

DOROTHY

This is creepy.

MARIA

Look at how she's dressed.

MISS TORIE

I like your style, students! You just made history.

MARIA

What do you mean we made history?

PHILIP

We can't make history. Fourth graders only make social studies.

DOROTHY

Yeah... like, history is in textbooks.

MISS TORIE

No, history is now. History is made every day. What you all are doing now is called a sit-in.

(She points to the projections.)

See these students. They did the same thing over 50 years ago that you are doing now.

HARRY

That's cool!

SADIE

(annoyed with HARRY)

That's not cool. Having fun is cool and we are not having any.

MISS TORIE

Sadie, you just got here. What's the rush? We have all day to have fun.

(All the students begin to stand up.)

MARIA

Why did the students in the picture sit-in. They didn't want to go back to school either?

DOROTHY

That doesn't look like a museum to me. It looks like a store.

MISS TORIE

You are right, Dorothy. The store they were in did not want to let them eat there because of who they were.

SADIE

Who were they?

MISS TORIE

They were Black. And in 1960 many stores did not serve Blacks at their lunch counter.

SADIE

Just because they were Black?

MARIA

I don't understand why being Black matters whether you can eat or not.

MISS TORIE

(surprised)

Wait a minute? You all are pulling my leg... right? I thought you already studied this in school.

DOROTHY

Studied what?

MISS TORIE

Look at these exhibits... does any of this look familiar?

(Students look at the
projections. No response.)

Sit-ins... protests... marches... freedom riders... Jim
Crow... separate but equal. Ah, what about the Civil Rights
Movement?

SADIE

No, we haven't studied all that, but we read about the
Civil Rights Movement in Mrs. Karalot's class.

PHILIP

Yeah, we've heard about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa
Parks, and Cesar Chavez.

MARIA

That's all there is to it, right? But no one told us about
sit-ins...

DOROTHY

...and people making history.

MISS TORIE

Well, let's get to it!

(The lights dim on the area
where MISS TORIE is talking
to the students and their
action freezes. We hear the
sounds of a lunch counter.
Through the panel with the
NC A&T projection we see
the silhouettes of a man
being harassed by others.)

LUNCH COUNTER SERVER

What you doing here, boy? You know better than to come in
here.

(HARRY unfreezes and moves
toward the panel and stands
in front of it. The SERVER
pushes FRANKLIN.)

LUNCH COUNTER SERVER (Cont.)

You don't belong here.

(The SERVER pours a drink
on FRANKLIN'S head.)

All you colored folks go back to Africa.

(FRANKLIN enters by
stepping through the
panel.)

FRANKLIN

(wiping the drink off his
head with a handkerchief)

All I ask for is a doughnut and a cup of coffee.

HARRY

Are you all right?

FRANKLIN

I'll make it.

HARRY

Why was that guy fighting with you?

FRANKLIN

He thinks it's his job... and he's scared.

HARRY

Scared? He didn't look scared to me. He looked scary.

FRANKLIN

He's a coward and a bully. It's all he knows how to be when
he talks to me... and he's scared.

HARRY

But he threw a drink in your face...

FRANKLIN

He did that because he thought that would scare me and I
would run away. Problem solved.

HARRY

I would have ran. Why didn't you?

FRANKLIN

Because they are wrong. See, me and my friends are sitting at the lunch counter waiting for them to serve us, but they will not because we are Black.

HARRY

Why does that matter?

FRANKLIN

Come on, dude. You know why. Because the city law says that blacks and whites can't eat together. So they want me to go out and around to the back to be served. You would think it was 1860 instead of 1960.

HARRY

1960... you have to eat outside?

FRANKLIN

Outside... like some animal. I'm not an animal. I'm a student at North Carolina A&T University. By the way, my name is Franklin.

HARRY

I'm Harry. How long have you been sitting at the counter.

FRANKLIN

Hours. We were here yesterday and we will be here tomorrow and the day after that, and the day after that, and the day after that. We will keep coming here until they serve us. We are tired of Jim Crow.

HARRY

Who?

FRANKLIN

Jim Crow. You've heard of Jim Crow haven't you?

HARRY

No, I haven't met him.

FRANKLIN

No, man. Jim Crow isn't a guy... they are the laws that harass, oppress, and treat Black folks as second class citizens. The laws are stupid.

HARRY

Did Mr. Crow make the laws?

FRANKLIN

Mr. Crow! Yo man are you listening to what I'm saying? Let me break it down to you like this... you got a moment?

HARRY

Yeah, I got plenty. I'm with my class at a museum, but they won't miss me. Even fifty years from now, they won't miss me.

FRANKLIN

Cool. So it's like this... the name Jim Crow comes from West African culture. It's the name of a folktale character who is a black bird named Jim. So he's called Jim Crow.

HARRY

But you said that Jim Crow were laws not a bird.

FRANKLIN

Yea, I'm getting to that. The Black Africans who were stolen and kidnapped from their land and brought to the United States by force to be slaves, brought with them their folk culture, which included songs about Jim Crow.

HARRY

Do you know any of the songs?

(The projections change to images of Thomas Dartmouth Rice as the minstrel character, Jim Crow.)

FRANKLIN

Not really. I think one of them was called "Jumpin' Jim Crow". So what happened was this white guy named Thomas Dartmouth Rice hears slaves singing and dancing to this song about jumping Jim Crow and he decides to take that song for his stage act.

HARRY

Cool. So the white guy and the black slaves do a show together?

FRANKLIN

No man. It didn't go down like that. Thomas Dartmouth Rice stole the song without giving credit to the slaves. The worst of it was he created a dance that made fun of blacks. It was very insulting.

HARRY

(amazed)

Wow... how do you know all of that?

FRANKLIN

I learned it in school and I've read books about it.

HARRY

I guess that's why we are at this museum.

FRANKLIN

Perhaps.

HARRY

I think that's why we are here. I think it's fun to read and learn about history, but my friends... well, my classmates don't. My dad and my granddad talk to me about how it was when they were my age, so I was really looking forward to coming here today.

FRANKLIN

It's bad man... and I just don't understand it. The White folks have no problem taking my money and putting it in the same cash drawer as theirs, but I can't sit next to them and eat, or on the bus, or use the same water fountain or restroom. I'm a human just like they are.

(HARRY glances towards the other students.)

HARRY

I know what you mean.

FRANKLIN

So you have experienced Jim Crow also.

HARRY

Not really. My friends over there... I guess, they are not really my friends. We're all in the same 4th grade class, but they don't want me sitting next to them or eating with them. They don't like me for some reason.

FRANKLIN

They must not know you. You seem like a cool cat. Did you do something to them?

HARRY

No.

(FRANKLIN glances back at
the projected images.)

FRANKLIN

Me, neither.

HARRY

But one of them, I really like.

FRANKLIN

Who?

HARRY

Do you see the blonde girl over there? That's Sadie. I
think she's cool.

FRANKLIN

But she won't talk to you, huh?

HARRY

Yeah, she talks to me, and everything she says is ugly.
Every time I say something, she puts me down.

FRANKLIN

Looks like we both have our struggles. You keep working on
yours and I'll keep working on mine. Hey, here's a little
advice. Say something nice to Sadie. She'll come around.

HARRY

Thanks. So do you think this sit-in stuff is going to work?

FRANKLIN

It has too. It's not easy to come here every day. They spit
on us, dump drinks on our heads and say evil things to us.
But I don't say anything bad back to them, because I know
what I'm doing is right. Every day my confidence grows.
Every day I am more proud of myself. Every day I know that
I am becoming a better person.

HARRY

Good luck, Franklin.

(FRANKLIN is gone. HARRY
continues to stare at the
projection.)