

# **ACTING OUT!**

**by Paul H. Johnson**

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## STORY OF THE PLAY

This montage of scenes is set in a high school theatre arts class that includes a variety of personalities. The whole show is about the students coming in touch with themselves and others by performing drama exercises and scenes. As they begin to tell their stories, they act them out for the audience. They always come back to the theatre class though, and the lines between the acting and their reality become blurred. The play should be performed as honestly as possible. In a few instances, some of the humor can be "set up." Since the play revolves around a theatre class, it should be very disciplined in its presentation.

The set may be as elaborate or as sparse as the director wishes. The presentation of statistics and other information may be technically involved or simple posters.

### DEDICATION

TO MY WIFE VALORIE

and

To Lori, Sarah, and Emily

and

To Scott Christensen

and

To Mark Tousignant

and

To Christopher Stordalen for his collaboration  
on the original song for this play

and

To "The NINE 8-Balls"

for reading the script as I was writing it:

D.J. Hilley, Kristi Meyer, Josh Shank,

Cara Lee, Ben Cook, Samoeun Oem,

Katie Warwick, Pat McColley, and Beth Brekke.

***ACTING OUT!*** was first produced on November 18, 19, 20, 1999 at  
Faribault High School's Michael J. Hanson Performing Arts Center  
in Faribault, Minnesota

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(This show can be performed with as few as ten actors or as many as thirty. There are numerous MINOR CHARACTERS in each playlet. It is up to the director of the piece to choose a large or a smaller ensemble cast.)*

### **MAIN CHARACTERS**

*(5 male, 5 female)*

**LYLE:** a nerd who strives to do well in school to get attention.

**JOHN:** a nice person who is searching for where he belongs.

**FRANK:** a person with an attitude problem, doesn't seem to fit in.

**PETE:** an artist in the bud stage, hasn't dared to cut loose yet.

**JANE:** a very caustic person on the outside, but a caring person inside.

**KERRY:** a caring soul who is soft spoken, except when backed into a corner.

**\*LISA:** a mixed up "Goth" young lady and former runaway.

**JOE:** an athletic person who took this class for an easy English credit.

**SHERRY:** a shy young girl who best expresses herself through dance.

**TAMMY:** an overachiever: cheerleading, school newspaper, student council.

**Running Time:** Approximately 1 hour, 40 minutes.

\* In Act II, the actress playing Lisa may wish to perform the poem as a song, "The Call." The lyrics are by Paul H. Johnson and the music is by Christopher J. Stordalen. Contact Eldridge Publishing for the vocal score.

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**ACT I**

*(The scene opens up on a theatre classroom. The students are sitting or standing around visiting when the BELL rings.)*

SHERRY: Where ... where's Mr. Lind?

FRANK: Like I'm supposed to know.

PETE: Maybe his wife is having the baby?

FRANK: Then there would be a substitute, Picasso!

JANE: HEY ... don't put him down. That's not accepted ...

FRANK: *(Sarcastically.)* Number three from "Lind's laws."

JOHN: You have an attitude!

LYLE: Logically, we should just continue what we have been working on in class.

FRANK: Oh great. Another bright idea from boy genius over there.

JANE: Stop it, jerk! It's a great idea. Mr. Lind will probably be here any minute anyway.

PETE: Should we wait for him?

JOHN: Nah, let's do something. *(Pause.)* Well, any other ideas?

*(All of the CLASSMATES begin to talk among themselves.)*

JOE: We could play Twister again.

LYLE: *(A little louder.)* We should continue what we were doing yesterday.

KERRY: We could do some improvs.

LYLE: *(Louder yet.)* We should continue what we were doing yesterday.

TAMMY: We could do some pantomimes.

LYLE: *(Louder yet.)* We should continue what we were doing yesterday.

PETE: Hey, everybody. Mr. Lind left a note on the board.

JOHN: *(Reading.)* "Continue what you're doing yesterday."

TAMMY: Great! Let's start.

*(ALL agree. FRANK gets up to leave the room.)*

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TAMMY: What are you doin'?

FRANK: I'm going to do something. I'm going to the student cafeteria for cheddar fries and a Dew.

JANE: Go ahead. Get in trouble again.

KERRY: Have fun at Saturday school when Principal Glare catches you.

FRANK: Yeah ... you're right. (*FRANK goes and sits back down.*) I'm staying but not gonna do anything.

KERRY: You gotta participate.

FRANK: (*Pointing to LISA.*) What, like Morticia Addams over there.

JANE: Leave her alone.

FRANK: Why should she get outta it if I can't?

JOE: Just get off it.

FRANK: You goona stop me, Jock-itch?

*(JOE and FRANK face off.)*

TAMMY: (*Jumping between them.*) Guys ... come on. Give it a rest.

FRANK: "Always-do-the-right-thing-Tammy."

PETE: What were we doing yesterday?

LYLE: We were completing our makeup work.

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Geeze, I don't want to, I did mine already, I handed that in, I lost mine, etc.)

TAMMY: I still think we should warm up first.

JOHN: Yeah. She's right, what do you guys say?

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Ok, yeah, why not, etc.

KERRY: What should we do?

PETE: Hey, I know let's do an improv out of the human machine exercise.

*(There is some applause as the GROUP of actors begin going through a "machine" of other actors and are slowly stripped of something which makes them an individual such as glasses, a jacket, basketball shirt, etc.)*

PETE: In a small village many years ago, there was a man who had built an intelligence machine.

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MAN: People of Scarlatie! This machine will revolutionize the education of all of our young. They will be all the same once they have traveled through the system. They will be intellectual giants. Scarlatie will be the world's leader of knowledge!

*(Cheers from the CROWD.)*

PETE: As the man had said, all of the young people of Scarlatie were processed through the machine and were indeed made very brilliant. One day a young woman from another village came to Scarlatie.

WOMAN: Look at all of the fine improvements to your village.

MAN: Yes. Indeed it is a changed village. *(Walking the WOMAN past a row of bright CHILDREN.)* The key is all of our young are well educated.

WOMAN: Yes, they do look brilliant. What do they do?

MAN: They are the future financiers, politicians, architects, engineers, mathematicians, scientists, and bureaucrats.

WOMAN: Are any of them artists?

MAN: No, no-no, no, no.

WOMAN: Why not?

*(The machine is caught on SOMEONE who does not wish to continue through. The "artist" caught in the machine screams a horrific scream as the machine nearly grinds to a halt.)*

MAN: Ask the others. I must see to my machine which has a very strange noise.

PETE: So the woman walked all through the city and asked all of the people she met why there were no artists in this village.

WOMAN: Financier, could you tell me why there are no artists in this village?

FINANCIER: Art takes money. That would take valuable money away from other more important programs.

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FINANCIER: (*Continued.*) Besides, the arts would make for leisure time, which is time better spent on ... making money.

WOMAN: Scientist, could you tell me why there are no artists in this village?

SCIENTIST: Yes. There is no need for arts in science. Science is pure. Art is not.

WOMAN: Politician, could you tell me why there are no artists in this village?

POLITICIAN: That is a very good question. My opponents have a differing view on the arts than I do. Therefore, I promise you we will have the arts by the end of my ... second term.

PETE: He was elected for life.

WOMAN: Architect, surely you could tell me why there are no artists in this village?

ARCHITECT: Functional buildings will only be erected in this village. We do not need to clutter up the functionality of a building or city through artistic interpretations.

WOMAN: Engineer, could you tell me why there are no artists in this village?

ENGINEER: Artistry is not a well-traveled path in this community. You can't build roads and bridges through art.

WOMAN: Mathematician, could you tell me why there are no artists in this village?

MATHEMATICIAN: Art is illogical, young lady. Therefore, it does not fit into the principle equation or theorem of evolved logical beings.

WOMAN: Bureaucrat, could you tell me, in as few words as possible, why there are no artists in this village?

BUREAUCRAT: Interesting question. I can guarantee you that it will be discussed at our next meeting in length; then it will be turned over to the standing subcommittee on the advancement and dislocation of nonvital organizations in our community to render its decision on the feasibility of the arts in our community. I must elucidate that statement by also maintaining that ...

WOMAN: How long will that take?

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