

"Nothing is funnier than reality." ~ Me on The David Susskind Show, 1973

PLANET HARPO

FOR PIANO AND HARPO AND ME

For those of you who've been following me on **InYourFacebook**, you know that we just concluded our first week of previews of **Dan Castellaneta's** subversive comedy, **For Piano and Harpo**, in which he portrays the terrifically tortured but terribly funny pianist and movie star Oscar Levant.

Under the direction of the ever-inventive **Stefan Novinski** and supported by our zany stage manager **Leia Crawford** and her able assistants **Mallory Birkrem** and **Trevor Alkazian**, we have managed to build a kaleidoscopic show that has dazzled preview crowds and rewarded us with hard-won Bravos and standing O's.

The cast, led by Dan C and the dazzling **JD Cullum** as Harpo (and others) is among the finest I have ever shared the stage with – **Jonathan Stark** (as Jack Paar, George Gershwin and others), **Deb Lacusta** (as Oscar's wife, Dorothy Parker, et cetera) and **Gail Matthius** (as the exhibitionist Shirley, Fanny Brice and more).

I get to play a dizzying array of roles as manifested in Levant's feverish mind, including his autocratic father, a manic-depressive named Sydney, Harpo's butler, and various orderlies, doctors and bookers. And thanks to our costumer, **Kate Bergh**, for making the quick-changes manageable!



Music is supplied by our pianist/composer **David O** and the fleet-fingered **Jillian Risigari-Gai**, and the psychedelic lighting of our minimalist setting is devised by the devious **Jean-Yves Tessler**; sound by **Drew Dalzell**.

We open on Friday, February 10 and run until March 5, and tickets are going fast! To hear Dan's interview with KPCC's **John Rabe** on Off-Ramp, [**CLICK HERE**](#).

Left to right, above: Jonathan Stark, Dan Castellaneta, Phil Proctor, and JD Cullum (Sasha Venola)

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TRUMP'S RED LINE

Don't cross him ...

IT'S ABOUT TIME

A man died and went to Heaven. As he stood in front of the Pearly Gates he saw a huge wall of clocks before him and asked, "What are all those clocks for? I thought this was Eternity?" "They are Lie-Clocks," explained **St. Peter** patiently. "Everyone who's lived on earth has a Lie-Clock, and every time you lie, the hands move."

"And whose clock is that?" asked the newcomer. "That's Mother Teresa's," replied St. Peter. "The hands have never moved, because she only spoke truth."

"Incredible," said the newly deceased. "And whose clock is that one?"

"That's Abraham Lincoln's clock," St. Peter responded. "The hands have moved twice, revealing that Honest Abe told only two lies in his whole life."

"So ..." asked the man, "where's Donald Trump's clock?"

"Oh that," St. Peter replied. "We're using it as a ceiling fan."

"Let us always meet each other with a smile, for the smile is the beginning of love." ~ **Mother Teresa**

SWEET

A guy was in a terrible accident and his jaw got smashed up so badly that they had to wire it shut and for a few weeks he had to be fed through his butt.

After a couple days, he mumbled, "Nurse, I can't stand it. I gotta have a cup of coffee. I gotta have a cup of coffee."

So the nurse gets a tube, sticks it up his ass, puts a funnel

■ **CONTINUED**

"Machines were mice and men were lions, once upon a time. But now that it's the opposite, it's twice upon a time." ~ **Moondog**

TURNING RED

I recently asked my friend's little girl what she wanted to be when she grew up and she said she wanted to be President of the United States. Both of her parents, liberal Dems, were standing there, so I asked her what she would do first when in office, and she replied: "I'd give food and houses to all the homeless people." Her parents beamed.

"Wow, what a worthy goal," I told her. "But you don't have to wait until you're president to do that. You can come over to my house, mow the lawn, pull weeds and sweep my driveway, and I will pay you \$50. Then I will take you over to the grocery store where a homeless guy hangs out, and you can give him the \$50 to use toward a new house and food."



She thought it over for a few seconds, then asked, "Why doesn't the homeless guy come over to your house and do

the work, and you can just pay him the \$50?"

I said, "Welcome to the Republican Party."

"Once you stop learning, you start dying."
~ **Albert Einstein**

in the tube and pours in the coffee. The guy starts jumping around, going “Unh! Unh!” She asks, “Is it too hot?”

“No!” he yells, It’s too sweet!”

*“Life is like a ten-speed bicycle.
Most of us have gears we never use.”
~ Charles Schultz*

OH, CANADA

Two hunters, **Sven** and **Olaf**, hired a pilot to fly them into the Canadian wilderness where they managed to bag one big Bull Moose apiece, but as they were loading the plane to return, the pilot announced that the plane could take only the hunters, their gear, and *one* Moose.



SIGNING OFF

Put me on the ‘no-fly list.’

The hunters objected strongly saying, “Last year we shot two big ones, and the pilot let us take them both, and he was flyin’ exactly the same airplane as yours.”

Reluctantly, the pilot, not wanting to be outdone by another bush pilot, gave in, and everything was loaded. Unfortunately, even under full power, the little plane couldn’t handle the load and soon went down, crashing into the wooded wilderness.

Somehow, surrounded by the moose, clothing and sleeping bags, Sven and Olaf survived the crash, and after climbing out of the wreckage, Olaf asked Sven, “Any idea where we are?”

Sven replied, “I think we’re pretty close to where we crashed last year.”

*“If everybody is thinking alike,
then somebody isn’t thinking.”
~ General George S. Patton*

A MOVING STORY

On a bitterly cold winter morning a husband and wife sat listening to the radio during breakfast when they heard the announcer say, “We’re going to have 8 to 10 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the even-numbered side of the street, so the snow plows can get through.” So, the good wife bundled up and moved her car.

A week later at breakfast the radio announcer said, “We’re expecting 10 to 12 inches of snow today, so park your car on the odd-numbered side of the street, to let the snow plows get through.” The good wife went out and moved her car again.

The next week they are again having breakfast, when the announcer says, “We are expecting 12 to 14 inches of snow today, so you must park....” but then the electric power went out.

The lady was very upset. “I don’t know what to do,” she said. “Which side of the street do I need to park on so the snow plows can get through?”

Then, with the love and patient understanding that all married men must exhibit, the husband replied, “Why don’t you just leave the car in the garage this time.”

*“We can easily forgive a child who is
afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life
is when men are afraid of the light.”
~ Plato*

DON’T PRESUME

A schoolteacher asked her students to construct a sentence containing the expression, “I presume.” One little girl held up her hand and said: “Yesterday, my mother washed the dinner dishes by hand, so I presume that the dishwasher was broken.”

“Very good,” said the teacher. The next student said, “This morning, my father drove the Volkswagen out of the garage, so I presume that the BMW wouldn’t start.”

“That’s excellent,” says the teacher.

Little Johnny, at the back of the classroom, gets up and says: “Yesterday, I saw grandpa leave the house with a newspaper under his arm and head for the bushes, I presume that —“

■ **CONTINUED**

The teacher interrupted him and said, "I stopped you because you have no idea what your grandfather was going to do, so you can't presume anything."

Johnny says, "Please, Teacher, let me finish my sentence."

"Very well, the teacher says, "Continue."

"As I was saying, I saw my grandpa heading for the bushes with a newspaper under his arm. I presume he was going to take a crap because he can't read."

*"Trump was born in 1946 by the Chinese calendar, so he is a Dog."
~ Phil's Phunny Phacts*

GIVE ME A BRAKE

Three drunk guys entered a taxi, and gave the driver an address. The taxi driver, noticing how soused they were, figured he'd make some easy cash, so he starts the engine, lets it run for a bit and turns it off, announcing, "We have reached your destination."

The first drunk gave him money and the second said, "Thanks." But the third passenger abruptly slapped him in the face. The driver was shocked and, thinking the passenger was wise to his scam, asked, "What was that for?"

"Slow down next time," The drunk replied. "You nearly killed us!"

*"Money often costs too much."
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson*

SUPERMAN

A woman in a supermarket was following a grandfather and his badly behaved grandson. It was obvious to her that he had his hands full with the child screaming for candy, cookies, you name it.

Meanwhile, Grandpa was working his way around, saying in a soft voice, "Easy William, we won't be long . . . easy, boy." Another outburst and she heard the grandpa calmly say, "It's okay, William, just a couple more minutes and we'll be out of here. Hang in there, boy" At the checkout, the little terror was throwing items out of the cart and Grandpa said, again in a controlled voice, "William. William. Relax buddy, don't get upset. We'll be home in five minutes. Stay cool, William."

Very impressed, the woman went outside where the old man was loading his groceries and the boy into the car. She said to him, "It's none of my business, but you were

amazing in there. I don't know how you did it. That whole time you kept your composure, and no matter how loud and disruptive he got, you just calmly kept saying 'things would be okay.' William is very lucky to have you as his grandpa."



JUST WILLIAM
Shoppers take warning.

"Thanks," he said, "but I'm William. That little bastard's name is Brian."

*"Even though you can't expect to defeat the absurdity of the world, you must make the attempt. That's morality, that's religion, that's art, that's life."
~ Folk Singer Phil Ochs*

BAD DAY AT THE BAR

There I was, sitting at the bar staring at my drink when a large, trouble-making biker steps up next to me, grabs my drink and gulps it down in one swig.

"Well, whatcha' gonna do about it?" he says, menacingly, as I burst into tears. "Come on, man," the biker says, "I didn't think you'd cry. I can't stand to see a man crying."

"This is the worst day of my life," I say. "I'm a complete failure. I was late to a meeting and my boss fired me. When I went to the car park, I found my car had been stolen and I don't have any insurance. I left my wallet in the taxi I took home. I found my wife with another man, and then my dog bit me. So, I came to this bar to work up the courage to put an end to it all. I buy myself a drink, I drop a capsule in and sit here watching the poison dissolve; then you show up and drink the whole thing."

"But enough about me, how's your day going?"

*"Chinese buildings sometimes eliminate the fourth floor because it sounds like death."
~ Phil's Phunny Phacts*

OUR LOSSES

I apologize, but I've been having too much fun passing precious hours on stage with the *Harpo* horde to do more than note the passing of several notable icons this past month, like the irreplaceable, spunky, **Mary Tyler Moore**. (below).

I never met the grande dame, but it's worth recalling that not only was she a groundbreaking actress and heartthrob, but she and her husband, **Grant Tinker**, founded MTM Enterprises, delivering such outstanding hits as "WKRP in Cincinnati," "The Bob Newhart Show," and "St. Elsewhere"; and the creative team from "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" also contributed to series like "Taxi," "Cheers," and the film *Broadcast News*.



PLANETCLICK

CLICK WORDS TO OPEN

OUR THANKS

BIG BEN
PUMP IT
FACE IT
TWEET
DANCE
SAFE

And The Firesign Theatre even wrote our screenplay *The Odyssey* at the MTM offices in Studio City, where **Dave Ossman** occupied the couch many a night to shave expenses. Rest you well, Mary.

And farewell as well to **Alan Thicke** and the lovely **Florence Henderson**, with whom I worked in *The Sound of Music*. And finally, a sweet goodbye to the immortal French actress **Emmanuelle Riva**, who said, "I think that being an actor is like being a cat. You have the opportunity to go out and live nine lives, and then you can come home and sleep by the fire." Purrfect.

"A man who won't die for something is not fit to live." – **Martin Luther King Jr.**

OUR THANKS

To Kenneth Wilhite, Jr, Spider Robinson, John Shaffer, Bill Bowles, Alan Sharpe, Joan Allemand, Jackie Martling, Nick Oliva, Ed Ryba, Jamie Alcroft, Kent McCaman, and -- to my artistic collaborator **Cristofer Gross** for (gasp) 11 years of orbits!

And finally, thanks to you all for embracing these last few joke-filled editions. My busy life and the Trumpian times in which we are immersed seem to call for it...

"When you see something beautiful in someone, tell them. It may take a second to say, but for them it could last a lifetime." ~ **Timothy O'Flaherty**

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"I am ready to meet my maker. Whether my maker is ready to meet me is another matter." ~ **Winston Churchill**

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