A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR’S COURT

ADAPTED BY JEFFREY HATCHER
FROM THE NOVEL BY MARK TWAIN

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A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR’S COURT was commissioned and first performed by the Acting Company (Margot Harley, Producer), New York, New York. It was directed by Ian Belknap, the set design was by Neil Patel, the costume design was by Candice Donnelly, the lighting design was by Michael Chybowski, and the sound design was by Fitz Patton. The cast was as follows:

HANK ................................................................. Andy Nogasky
LAINIE/SANDY ........................................................ Suzy Kohane
CHARLIE/CLARENCE ......................................... Grant Fletcher Prewitt
DUFF/ARTHUR .................................................. Adam Mondschein
CHET/LANCELOT .............................................. Torsten Johnson
MR. OLZESKI/MERLIN ...................................... Ian Gould
DOOBER/MORDRED .......................................... Joshua David Robinson
CAROLINE/MORGAN LE FAY ........................... Susanna Stahlmann
JILL/GUINEVERE .............................................. Angela Janas

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR’S COURT was subsequently produced by the Acting Company in association with the Guthrie Theater (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director; Jennifer Bielstein, Managing Director), Minneapolis, Minnesota, with the same cast and creative team.
CHARACTERS

HANK MORGAN
LAINIE / SANDY
CHARLIE / CLARENCE
DUFF / KING ARTHUR
CHET / LANCELOT / WALTER
MR. OLZESKI / MERLIN
DOOBER / MORDRED
RANDY / SIR KAY
CAROLYN / MORGAN LE FAY
JILL / GUINEVERE / MOTHER CARTELOISE / PRINCESS BEAUTEOUS
ASSORTED PEASANTS, PRISONERS, PETITIONERS, GUARDS, DUNGEON MASTERS, MAIDENS, AND MESSENGERS

PLACE

Hartford High School trophy hall
The England of King Arthur

TIME

The present and the 6th century
DOUBLING SCHEME

The play can be performed with as few actors as 10: 7 men, 3 women. In the Acting Company production, the roles were doubled as follows:

HANK MORGAN
CHARLIE, CLARENCE
DUFF, KING ARTHUR
CHET, CROWD 1, PRISONER 2, LANCELOT, WALTER, GUARD 1
MR. OLZESKI, MERLIN, MESSENGER
DOOBER, CROWD 2, PRISONER 1, PETITIONER 1, MORDRED
RANDY, SIR KAY, DUNGEON MASTER, GUARD 2
LAINIE, CROWD 3, SANDY
CAROLYN, PRISONER 2, MAIDEN, PETITIONER 2, MORGAN LE FAY
JILL, CROWD 4, GUINEVERE, MOTHER CARTELOISE, PRINCESS BEAUTEOUS
A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR’S COURT

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Hartford High School trophy hall.

Lights rise on—

A 6th-century knight in full armor. It takes a moment to realize it’s actually a suit of armor on a pedestal d.s. c.

u.s. c. against the trophy wall is a second suit of armor. Above it hangs a banner: “HARTFORD HIGH SCHOOL YANKEE KNIGHTS CLASS OF 2000 15TH REUNION”

Sound: the clang of broadswords.

KNIGHT VOICE 1. (Offstage.) Die! Die, Villain! Die!

KNIGHT VOICE 2. (Offstage.) Nay, Villain, thou diest!

Two knights in helmets enter, swinging broadswords at each other.

CLANG! CLANG-CLANG! CLANG!

KNIGHT 1/KNIGHT 2. There!—Nay!—No!—Ha!—Take that!—Ho!—Ha!

CAROLYN. (From offstage.) CHET!

Carolyn storms on.

CHET, THOU ART AN ASS! If anyone was going to make me regret organizing our high school reunion I didn’t think it would be my own idiot husband.
Carolyn pulls the helmet off Chet’s head. Duff takes off his helmet.

DUFF. Chet was just reliving his glory days as a Yankee Knight.
CHET. And what were you doing?
DUFF. I was going along with it because I look really good with a sword.

Carolyn takes their helmets and swords away.

Jill enters with a cocktail.

JILL. If one more person looks at me and says, “What’s different about you?” I’m gonna shove a swizzle stick in their eye.
CAROLYN. Jill, what are you doing out here? You’re supposed to be running the registration table.
JILL. Lainie and Charlie can handle it. Well, how hard can it be to give out name tags and seat assignments?

Charlie, a nervous type clutching a yearbook, enters.
CHARLIE. Carolyn, about the nametags and seat assignments…?
CAROLYN. It’s very simple, Charlie, your seat number is your SAT score plus your ACT score divided by your GPA.

Lainie, a nice girl, enters. She is laden with nametags. Carolyn grabs the tags from her.

These are a mess, Lainie!
LAINIE. Fire me.
CAROLYN. No RSVP, no RSVP, no RSVP…

Doober, a greaser/stoner type in dark glasses, enters.

DUFF/CHET. DOOBER!
CHET. Doober, my manimal!
DUFF. Hey, Doob, did you, you know, bring any contraband?

Doober takes out a large baggie filled with an herb substance and dangles it in front of them.

DOOBER. Who wants to be Doober’s friend?

DUFF/CHET. DOOBER!

Randy Russell, a mook, enters.

RANDY. Is Cawowyn hewwre?
DUFF/CHET/DOOBER. WANDY WUSSELL!
RANDY. It’s not Wandy! It’s Wandy! Wandy with an AW!
DUFF/CHET/DOOBER. (Joining in.) Wandy with an Aw!
DUFF/CHET/DOOBER/RANDY.
WE ARE THE YANKEE KNIGHTS
MIGHTY MIGHTY YANKEE KNIGHTS
EVERYWHERE WE GO-OH
PEOPLE WANNA KNOW-OH
WHO WE ARE
SO WE TELL THEM:

WE ARE THE YANKEE KNIGHTS
MIGHTY MIGHTY YANKEE KNIGHTS
ANYONE WHO WANNA FIGHT
ROCK ’EM SOCK ’EM OUTTA SIGHT

IF YOU KNOW US
YOU CAN BLOW US

Mr. Olzeski (70s) enters.

CHARLIE.
IF YOU KNOW US
YOU CAN BLOW US

CAROLYN. (À la “Nix, nix, the cops.”) Hi, Mr. Olzeski!

OTHERS. (Ad lib, overlap.) Huh?—Oh!—Erm, hi, Mr. Olzeski!—Mr. O!—Mr. O’Z!

MR. OLZESKI. Charlie, what are you doing with that helmet?

Mr. Olzeski takes the helmet.
This is the prize of the collection.

Mr. Olzeski places the helmet back. Takes out typed sheet.

Carolyn, when am I supposed to speak to the hoi polloi? I have prepared some opening remarks.

CAROLYN. Yes, well, actually—

MR. OLZESKI. (Reads.) “Welcome, Class of the Year 2000, to your 15th-Year Reunion. For over a century Hartford High School has educated Hartford’s young so that they could learn and grow and
leave Hartford immediately. Tomorrow the wrecking ball comes
down on our school, but the symbol of our Yankee pride, the 6th-
century armor you all saw tonight will be given to the state…” And
here is where I need to know, did Hank Morgan RSVP?
LAINIE. Hank Morgan? Hank’s coming?
CAROLYN. I never heard back from him.
LAINIE. Did the invitation get sent to the right place?
CAROLYN. How should I know? The last address we had for him
was the back of a Kia.
CHET. Remember the weird inventions Hank would make for
Science Fair?
MR. OLZESKI. Every year Hank Morgan’s invention would be
the most original, the most useful, the most perfectly crafted, and
every year first prize went to the Baking Soda Volcano.
CAROLYN. (Checks her watch.) Okay, people, we’re two minutes
off schedule! Let’s start moving into the cafeteria. First drink’s free!

    Chet, Doober, Jill, and Charlie bolt for the cafeteria.

Chet, we agreed! No drugs and an eight-drink maximum!

    Chet, Doober, Jill, Charlie, and Carolyn exit offstage.

RANDY. Why won’t they pronounce Wandy the right way? Why?
Why?

    Randy and Mr. Olzeski exit offstage.

    Duff starts for the cafeteria, but stops when he sees Lainie
hesitate.

DUFF. Hey what’s the matter? Aren’t you going in?
LAINIE. In a minute.
DUFF. Hey, where’s my Yankee Knight Homecoming Queen, Fairest
Maiden of Them All, the old Lainie?
LAINIE. That’s the young Lainie. Old Lainie is right here with anxiety
and self-esteem issues.
DUFF. Look, I didn’t come back here so I could hang out with this
bunch of losers. I came to see you. Now that you’re single. And I’m
single. Again. I know I made a mistake dumping you the day I left for
college, but most high school relationships break up by Thanksgiving
of freshman year. I was just trying to save time.

LAINIE. I guess the age of chivalry isn’t dead.

DUFF. Come on, Lainie, I fixed it so we’re sitting together.

LAINIE. But I was valedictorian. Your GPA wasn’t close to mine.

DUFF. I said I fixed it.

_Duff grins and takes Lainie offstage._

_Sound: music, voices, laughter._

_Hank Morgan (30s) enters, in a 1970s powder-blue tux jacket and a BOSS T-shirt with the logo on it. He looks around, uncomfortable. He glances offstage, smooths down his hair, adjusts his lapels. Then he notices the suit of armor._

_Hank pokes a finger into what we now realize is a hole in the armor’s breastplate. His finger gets stuck. He grabs the hand of the armor. It comes off. Hank struggles to deal with this as—_Lainie enters. She looks like she’s trying to escape from the reunion, but she stops in her tracks when she sees Hank._

LAINIE. …Hank?

HANK. Lainie.

LAINIE. What are you doing to that suit of armor?

HANK. I got stuck in it.

LAINIE. Do you want to leave it there?

HANK. No.

_Lainie frees Hank’s finger and reattaches the metal hand._

LAINIE. There.

HANK. My thanks.

LAINIE. My pleasure.

_Beat._

HANK. So, uhm…how are you?

LAINIE. I’m fifteen years older, divorced, two kids, messed up.

HANK. Well, you look great.

LAINIE. You?

HANK. I think I look okay. Except for this jacket. The invitation
Lancelot, Guinevere, and Merlin come tumbling your way in this
contemporary adaptation of the satirical tale from America’s favorite
humorist. Wander with Twain as he time travels to 6th-century England
through the eyes of Hank Morgan of Hartford, Connecticut, who is
unexpectedly transported back to the time of legendary King Arthur.
Hank astonishes the Middle Age with modern technology and pop
culture. These tricks from the future initially advance and improve King
Arthur’s Court, but society ultimately struggles to evolve 1,300 years
into the future. Jeffrey Hatcher’s adaptation of Twain’s romp exposes the
foibles and fortes of both ages, leading audiences to question and laugh
at themselves and the principles of the 21st century.

“Playwright Jeffrey Hatcher can hardly open his mouth or lift his pen
without dropping a dry witticism or an erudite bon mot.”
—TheTangential.com

“Plenty of laughs and a goodly amount of fun...”
—TwinCities.com

“Light and smart... [with a] compelling protagonist [who is] out of
touch with people and out of his own time, both of which are mined for
a great deal of comedy.”
—TwinCitiesDailyPlanet.net

Also by Jeffrey Hatcher
DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE
MRS. MANNERLY
SMASH
and others

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