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Dramatic Publishing

Out!



Book by Nancy Gilsenan Hersage
and
Molly Hersage

Music and lyrics by Nancy Gilsenan Hersage

Musical arrangement by William Liberatore

“[The script carries] such an important message ...
delivered in such a thoughtful, wonderful,
funny, clever, unpredictable way.”

—Dr. Kevin Skelly, Palo Alto Unified School District, Palo Alto, Calif.

Out!

Musical. Book by Nancy Gilsenan Hersage and Molly Hersage. Music and lyrics by Nancy Gilsenan Hersage. Musical arrangement by William Liberatore. Cast: 7m., 7w., 10 either gender. In the quiet and conservative little town of Decent, Oklahoma, a high-school senior boy named Chives starts rocking the pedestal by running for prom queen. Flamboyant and in-your-face, Chives is determined to bring Decent into the new millennium no matter how many people he upsets. His antics are so outrageous that even his best friend, Maddy Murphy, the most likeable girl on campus, is having trouble sticking by him. When Maddy argues that people are angry with Chives not because he's gay but because he's obnoxiously and provocatively gay, Chives calls her naïve and bets that if the All-American-Girl Maddy were gay, no one would like her either. It's a challenge she can't refuse, and the game is on. What follows is a comedic roller-coaster ride of tap-dancing ranchers, Helen BeGenerous leading a gospel choir, and a potent test of the power of gay-dar. The result is not at all what Maddy is expecting from her town, her friends or herself. What she and Chives learn is a lesson filled with pain, joy and the realization that, despite all the challenges of adolescence, it really does get better. *Area staging. Music excerpts available online. Optional accompaniment CD available. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: O98.*

Cover: Gunn High School Choir, Palo Alto, Calif. (l-r) Elana Loeb and Daniel Wolfert. Photo: Don Anderson. Cover design: Susan Carle.

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Out!

A Musical

Book by

NANCY GILSENAN HERSAGE

and

MOLLY HERSAGE

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Musical arrangement by

WILLIAM LIBERATORE



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Out! was first produced at the Spangenberg Auditorium at Henry M. Gunn High School in Palo Alto, California, on Feb. 8 and 9, 2012. It was presented by the Gunn Choir and featured more than 150 students and 20 faculty members. The production was praised by students, staff, parents and administrators. The superintendent of the Palo Alto Unified School District said the script carried “such an important message that was delivered in such a thoughtful, wonderful, funny, clever, unpredictable way.” The head of the GLBT student group wrote, “I wanted to take a moment to thank you very much for taking a huge risk on producing a gay-themed show! ... and having students and parents take part in something that would likely not happen at many high schools.”

Maddy Murphy	Elana Loeb
Chives Johnson	Daniel Wolfert
Mayor Peppercorn	Tim Farrell
Colonel Oliver Oldkopf.....	Todd Summers
Ms. Bowman	Katherine Moser
Lissa Meeks	Heather Nolan
Jordan Turnbull.....	Tyler Simons
Amy Garner	Hannah Allison
Sara Santini	Robin Oyung
Brenda Lubkowitz.....	Lauren King
Drew Valenchek.....	Ryan Teranishi
Mark DeSalle	Blake Vesey
Will Sandburg	Matthew Leong
Principal Mason	Paul Dunlap
Mr. Turnbull.....	Dave Deggeller
Mr. Valenchek.....	Alec Maclean
Mr. DeSalle	Justin Brown
Mr. Sandburg	Roni Habib
Mrs. Meeks	Lisa Hall
Ellen Degeneres	Liz Matchett
Director	William Liberatore
Choreographer.....	Gay Richards
Costumes.....	Susan Ellis

Out!

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance.)

Additional role options are set within parentheses.

MAYOR PEPPERCORN. Decent's leading politician and biggest booster.
(parent/teacher/student)

COLONEL OLIVER OLDKOPF. Ranchers of Righteousness platoon leader.
(teacher/student/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MADDY MURPHY. High-school senior. She is a bit geeky, principled and interesting; very active, she is president of the student council and chair of the prom committee.

LISSA MEEKS. High-school senior and head of the cheerleading squad.

CHEERLEADERS. Lissa's close friends.

AMY GARNER.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

BRENDA LUBKOWITZ.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/ backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

SARA SANTINI.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

PRINCIPAL MASON. Decent High Principal.

(parent/student/rancher/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

CHIVES JOHNSON. High-school senior who is way out-there gay and provocative.

MS. BOWMAN. Faculty advisor to the student council.

(student/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

JORDAN TURNBULL. High-school senior. He is the president of the Ranchers of Righteousness, and also quarterback of the football team.

(teacher/parent/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

JOCKS. Jordan's close friends.

DREW VALENCHEK.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MARK DESALLE.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

WILL SANDBURG.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MR. TURNBULL. Jordan's outspoken dad. He is a local merchant and an active parent.

(student/teacher/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MR. DESALLE. Mark's father.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MR. VALENCEK. Drew's dad.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MR. SANDBURG. Will's father.

(parent/teacher/townsperson/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

MRS. MEEKS. Lissa's mother.

(student/teacher/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

HELEN BEGENERES. Maddy's illusion of a TV personality.

(student/teacher/parent/townsperson/high-school choir/backup singer)

VARIOUS OTHERS

STUDENTS/HIGH-SCHOOL CHOIR

TEACHERS/GROUP 1 – 4 TEACHERS

GROUP 1, 2 & 3 SOLOISTS, TENORS, ALTOS, SOPRANOS and BASSES

TOWNSPEOPLE/RANCHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS/PARENTS

CHIVES' BACKUP DANCERS

(Beyoncé-style dancers, Village People dancers, Liza Minnelli-style dancers, Pink Ladies-style dancers)

HOME EC CLUB

BARREL RACING CLUB

OFFENSIVE LINE

ELDERLY COUPLE (HUSBAND/WIFE). Traditional in every way.

(student/teacher/backup dancer/high-school choir/gospel choir)

CHOIR GIRLS

HELEN'S GOSPEL CHOIR

SETS

Decent Town Square

Decent High-School Campus

Rancher's Hall of Justice

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Out!

ACT I

SCENE 1

AT RISE. *The stage is decorated like a town square (Decent Town Square) filled with townspeople, students, teachers and CHEERLEADERS. On C stands MAYOR PEPPERCORN, just in front of the HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR, dressed in choir outfits.*

(#1: “Opening”)

MAYOR & CHOIR *(to “America the Beautiful”)*.

IF YOU YEARN FOR SPACIOUS SKIES
AND AMBER WAVES OF GRAIN,
THEN YOU SHOULD TAKE THE INTERSTATE
ACROSS THE FRUITED PLANE,
TO DECENT, OKLAHOMA,
WHERE WE’RE SO RED, WHITE AND BLUE,
THAT WE STILL HAVE HOPE AND ANTELOPE
WAITING JUST FOR YOU.

OH, DECENT, OKLAHOM-MA-MA,
GOD SHED HIS GRACE ON US
AND IF WE HAD TO GRADE OURSELVES,

(CHEERLEADERS form an A+ pyramid.)

WE’D GET A BIG A PLUS!

AH!

MAYOR. Hello everyone! *(Cheer from the crowd.)* Let me, your beloved mayor, Bernard H. Peppercorn, welcome you all to this year’s celebration of Heritage Days. Thank you for joining us in paying tribute to the glorious history of our very special town, Decent, Oklahoma. *(Loud applause. Big cheer.)* I’ve

asked Colonel Oliver Oldkopf, platoon leader of the Decent, Oklahoma, chapter of the Ranchers for Righteousness, to deliver the invocation. Colonel?

(COLONEL OLIVER OLDKOPF joining MAYOR at C.)

OLDKOPF. Thank you, Mayor. Will you all bow your heads, please? *(A la the voice in a movie trailer.)* In a world filled with darkness, one town stands alone against the forces of evil. *(A beat. Another movie trailer—even more dramatic.)* In a time filled with uncertainty, one town remains unmoved. *(Another, even more dramatic trailer.)* In a land *before* time, one town towers above the rest. Give us the strength to carry out our mission—to protect our shores, to defend our liberty and to defeat the Taliban should they cross state lines. Now, more than ever, we are the few, the strong, the proud—and the decent.

(Gigantic cheer.)

MAYOR. Now, let me introduce this afternoon's soloist, who will be leading our anthem. Ladies and gentlemen, the president of the Decent High School Student Council, president of the National Honor Society and chair of this year's prom committee ...

(#2: “Look Out Across America”)

MAYOR *(cont'd)*. Miss Madison Murphy!

(Another cheer. MADDY MURPHY joins MAYOR and OLDKOPF at C.)

MADDY.

LOOK OUT ACROSS AMERICA,
I THINK THAT YOU WILL SEE,
THE USA IS NOT THE KIND

OF PLACE IT USED TO BE.
WHILE OTHER TOWNS KEEP STRAYING
FAR FROM THE GOOD OLD DAYS,
IN DECENT, PEOPLE NEVER, EVER CHANGE THEIR WAYS.

(Crowd cheers.)

I DON'T KNOW HOW WE DO IT.
THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL TO IT.
I GUESS WE'RE JUST THE TOWN THAT SETS THE BAR,
BECAUSE WE'RE SLIGHTLY MORE AMERICAN THAN
OTHER PEOPLE ARE.

CHOIR & TOWNSPEOPLE *(big cheer)*.

BECAUSE WE'RE SLIGHTLY MORE AMERICAN THAN
OTHER PEOPLE ARE.

ALL.

WE'RE SO AMERICAN, WE'RE SO AMERICAN,
SOMETIMES WE LIKE TO BURST RIGHT OUT IN SONG.
IT'S NOT THAT WE'RE SO BRIGHT,
OR EVEN THAT WE'RE RIGHT,
IT'S JUST THAT OTHER PEOPLE ARE SO WRONG.

MADDY.

LOOK OUT ACROSS AMERICA,
I THINK THAT YOU WILL SEE,
IF YOU WANT TO BE AMERICAN,
THEN HERE'S THE PLACE TO BE.
THE HEARTLAND MAKES US HUMBLE SO
WE HESITATE TO SAY,
BUT WE'RE PRETTY SURE THE FOUNDERS WANTED
US TO LEAD THE WAY, LEAD THE WAY.

ALL.

OUR CONVICTION IS STRONGER.
OUR PRAYERS ARE SO MUCH LONGER.
I GUESS WE'RE JUST THE TOWN THAT SETS THE BAR,
BECAUSE WE'RE SLIGHTLY MORE AMERICAN THAN
OTHER PEOPLE ARE.

CHOIR & TOWNSPEOPLE.

BECAUSE WE'RE SLIGHTLY MORE AMERICAN THAN
OTHER PEOPLE ARE.

(CHEERLEADERS rush to C.)

LISSA.

GIVE ME A D.

CHEERLEADERS.

D!

LISSA.

GIVE AN E.

CHEERLEADERS.

E!

LISSA.

GIVE ME A C-E-N-T!

CHEERLEADERS.

C-E-N-T!

LISSA.

WHAT'S IT SPELL?

ALL.

DECENT!

LISSA.

WHO ARE WE?

ALL.

WE'RE DECENT!

LISSA.

AND WHERE ARE WE?

ALL.

IN DECENT!

CHOIR, TOWNSPEOPLE & MADDY.

WE'RE SO AMERICAN, WE'RE SO AMERICAN,
IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH LOYALTY WE'VE GOT.
WE BEAR OUR ARMS OF STEEL,
WE PLEDGE ALLIEGIANCE WITH MORE ZEAL.
OTHERS THINK THEIR EQUAL, BUT THEY'RE NOT.

MADDY.

LOOK OUT ACROSS AMERICA,
I THINK THAT YOU WILL SEE,
WHEN IT COMES TO BEING DECENT,
WE DO IT PERFECTLY.

IT'S HARD TO BE THIS SHINING STAR
IN A TOWN THAT'S SO QUIXOTIC,
BUT IN DECENT PEOPLE ARE SO
GOSH DARN PATRIOTIC.

CHOIR, TOWNSPEOPLE & MADDY.

PATRIOTIC!
THAT'S WHY WE'RE SO AMERICAN,
SO OVERFLOWINGLY AMERICAN.
ENDEAVORING FOREVER TO BE TRUE
TO WHATEVER HIST'RY HAS IN STORE
THAT'S GONNA MAKE US SLIGHTLY MORE,
WELL, SO MUCH MORE AMERICAN,
AMERICAN THAN YOU!

(To "America the Beautiful.")

AND CROWN OUR GOOD WITH BROTHERHOOD
FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA! AH!

(Lights down, curtain down.)

(#2a: "Look Out Across America" [Tag])

SCENE 2

(In the blackout, a classroom bell RINGS. The voice of PRINCIPAL MASON comes on over a loudspeaker or an intercom.)

PRINCIPAL MASON V.O. Good morning, Decent High School! This is Principal Mason with today's announcements. Congratulations to the Decent High Debate Team for their victory over Perry High School in Texas this weekend. Well done. Wrestling practice has been canceled for the foreseeable future. It will resume as soon as Coach Schneider's fungal infection clears up.

(Curtain up as students are on their way to class at Decent High School. MADDY is distributing flyers to students as they pass her in groups entering from R. She's bright and cheery and the other kids clearly like her.)

PRINCIPAL MASON V.O. *(cont'd)*. And don't forget that this year's Dream Song Competition is coming up. Be sure to get your audition numbers ready! Have a great day, everybody!

MADDY. Dream Song Competition sign ups at 3 o'clock. *(Says this to each group that passes as they take flyers.)*

(As this is taking place, CHIVES JOHNSON enters and watches her from the sidelines, shaking his head and rolling his eyes.)

CHIVES *(when the other students disappear, as another bell RINGS)*. Well, aren't you the cat's meow!

MADDY. I hate it when you wear that boa. It brings out the worst in you. *(Turns to go to class.)*

CHIVES. Really, I thought it brought out the blue in my eyes.

Just wanted to say what a spectacularly idiotic performance you gave at Heritage Days. *(This stops MADDY in her tracks.)*

Are you competing for the American Airhead Awards now, too?

MADDY *(turns and looks back at him, annoyed)*. I'm not interested in your commentary, Chives.

CHIVES. I don't know how you take these people seriously, Maddy. "Decent, Oklahoma, the little town that never changes." Please!

MADDY. It's just an annual celebration, Chives.

CHIVES. It's nonsense. These people are living in a time warp.

When are they going to wake up and smell the social progress?

MADDY. It's a tradition. It isn't personal.

CHIVES. Everything's personal, Maddy. Especially tradition. I think the entire event was an insult to gay people.

MADDY. Gay people? Who said anything about gay people?

CHIVES. My point exactly. Some days, I feel as if I don't exist in this town. *(Beat, as he assesses the situation.)* I used to think my friends had principles.

MADDY. You don't have any friends.

CHIVES. Very unkind.

MADDY. OK, you have me. But how can you say I don't have principles?

CHIVES. Because you stand up and say things you don't believe so that people—these people—will like you.

MADDY. What's wrong with wanting people to like me?

CHIVES. It's unprincipled. And it's also boring. Someone should tell these people how ridiculous they are.

MADDY. It seems to me you do that on a regular basis.

CHIVES. Because I'm principled. *(Beat, with grave seriousness.)* And do you know what one, singular truth I hold to be self-evident?

MADDY. I can't imagine.

CHIVES. To thine own self be true. Authenticity, Maddy. Do you know what authenticity is?

MADDY. Wearing a boa and impersonating Lady Gaga? Look, I'm late for class.

(MADDY starts to leave, but what CHIVES says draws her back.)

CHIVES. Authenticity is not caring what people think about me. I don't need the approval of others. Which is why I boycotted today's festivities. And you should have done the same. Instead, you were the star—as you always are.

MADDY. And you want me to apologize for that?

CHIVES. I want you to stand up for what you think!

MADDY. Look, Chives, we're in high school. Nobody cares what we think. In fact, most people in high school don't really "think" anything. We're just trying to get through senior year without making fools of ourselves.

CHIVES. Is that really your goal, Maddy?

MADDY. Absolutely.

(#3: "It Works for Me")

CHIVES. You disappoint me. Deeply.

MADDY. I know. Still, if your best—and only—friend is a people pleaser, you could at least be proud that she's very, very good at it.

I CAN BE ANYTHING, I MEAN ANYTHING,

THAT I NEED TO BE.

THAT'S HOW I GET BY IN HIGH SCHOOL.

IT WORKS, IT WORKS FOR ME.

I GO WITH NICENESS, WITH DON'T ASK TWICENESS.

IT WORKS, IT WORKS FOR ME.

CHIVES *(sarcastically)*.

YOU'RE SO AGREEABLE,

SO DON'T MIND ME-ABLE.

MADDY.

THAT'S WHAT I LIKE TO BE.

CHIVES.

THAT'S HOW YOU GET BY IN HIGH SCHOOL.

MADDY.

IT WORKS, IT WORKS FOR ME.

(As students walk by, MADDY hands them a flyer.)

Dream Song Competition at 3 o'clock. Here you go.

THIS IS MY PERSONA.

THIS IS WHO I CHOOSE TO BE.

YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,

YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,

YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,

BUT IT WORKS, IT WORKS FOR ME.

CHIVES.

I'VE JUST GOTTA BE MYSELF,

I JUMP OFF THE SHELF AND I'M FLYING FREE.

THAT'S HOW I GET BY IN HIGH SCHOOL.

IT WORKS, IT WORKS FOR ME.

A LITTLE FLAGRANT,

MADDY. No kidding!

CHIVES.

A LITTLE BLATANT,

MADDY. There's an understatement.

CHIVES.

NOW THAT'S WHAT WORKS FOR ME.

MADDY.

YOU'RE JUST ANNOYING,

BUZZ-KILL DESTROYING.

CHIVES.

THAT'S WHAT I LIKE TO BE.
THAT'S HOW I SUCCEED IN HIGH SCHOOL.
IT WORKS, JUST LOOK AT ME.

(As the music plays under CHIVES, CHIVES' BACKUP DANCERS dressed a la Beyoncé enter. CHIVES dances with them. It's a stunning performance. As the dance continues, he talks to them, ad-libbing with something appropriate, such as, "Stay with me, girls," "Move those hips," etc. The song ends with a dramatic finish and CHIVES and his dancers hold the pose.)

MADDY. What was that?

CHIVES. I thought we were bursting into song.

MADDY. It's a musical. We're supposed to burst into song.

CHIVES. Well, I never sing without backup dancers. Don't worry. They're only a figment of my imagination.

MADDY. Why don't I have backup dancers?

CHIVES. Because you have no imagination.

MADDY. But—

CHIVES. No, Maddy. That is the reality of the situation. *I* have an imagination. You don't. Live with it.

(#3a: "It Works for Me" [Part 2])

CHIVES (*cont'd*).

UH, UH, UH, UH,
THIS IS MY PERSONA,
IT'S WHO I'M MEANT TO BE.
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
BUT IT WORKS FOR ME.
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
BUT IT WORKS FOR ME.

MADDY.

THIS IS MY PERSONA.

THIS IS WHO I CHOOSE TO BE.

CHIVES.

THIS IS MY PERSONA.
IT'S WHO I'M MEANT TO BE.
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
BUT IT WORKS FOR ME.
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
BUT IT WORKS FOR ME.
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
BUT IT WORKS FOR ME.
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
BUT IT WORKS FOR ME.

MADDY & CHIVES.

YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY,
YOU MAY THINK IT'S CRAZY.
BUT IT WORKS, IT WORKS FOR ME!

(Another dramatic finish for CHIVES, then the dancers exit.)

MADDY *(can hardly believe what she's just seen. Then she looks at her watch)*. Oh no, it's time for the prom committee meeting. I gotta run.

(MADDY exits. CHIVES shakes his head.)

(#3b: "It Works for Me" [Reprise])

CHIVES.

IT'S ONLY HIGH SCHOOL,
AND HIGH SCHOOL'S MADNESS.
I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S DONE.
BUT BEFORE IT'S OVER,
WHY NOT FLAUNT SOME BADNESS?
YOU KNOW, IT'S ONLY HIGH SCHOOL,
BUT I THINK I'LL HAVE SOME FUN!