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Dramatic Publishing

INSPIRED BY THE MEMOIRS OF
HENRY S. TIMBERLAKE

CHEROKEE
FAMILY
REUNION

COMEDY/DRAMA BY
LARISSA FASTHORSE

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CHEROKEE FAMILY REUNION

Comedy/Drama. By Larissa FastHorse. Inspired by the memoirs of Henry S. Timberlake. Cast: 11 to 19m., 8 to 9w., several minor roles either gender. This modern-day Brady Bunch blends two nearly grown families when a Cherokee man, John, and a white woman, Emma, get married and move into his small community, surrounded by *his* family. Before the wedding decorations are down, the two groups are thrown into planning the biggest family reunion in Cherokee, N.C., complete with a historical reenactment! Looking for acceptance, Emma hopes that playing out the story of Henry Timberlake, a white explorer visiting the Cherokees in the 1700s, will help the kids realize what it is like to fit into a foreign world. Instead, cultures clash, young love blooms and history threatens to repeat itself. Through music, dance and some wild fights, everyone learns what it really means to be a family. *One ext. set. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: CP7.*

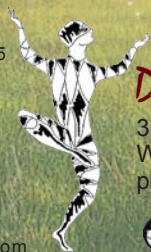
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Cherokee Family Reunion

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(CHEROKEE FAMILY REUNION)

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Cherokee Family Reunion was commissioned and produced by the Cherokee Historical Association. The world premier production opened at the Mountainside Theatre in Cherokee, N.C., on July 16, 2012.

Cast

Henry Timberlake Allen Tedder

Bearmeat family:

Granny Michelle Honaker

John Stephen Swimmer

Twodi Mike Crowe Jr.

Meli Aisha Melham

Justin David Quinones

Levi Justin Charles

John Ustdi Nikolas Anthony Carleo

Lizzie Claire Elise Walton

Uncle Jasper Joe Milliren

Uncle Elias Zach Snyder

Aunt Nell Tamara Sampson

Bryce Chris Alexey Diaz

Abraham Nickolas Stevens

Jax Jarius Gloyne

Tsali Jimmie Gloyne

Lily Ayla Cruz

Shanali Maya Cruz

Sonny Alex Wilson

Kamama Ashley Crowe

Bo Jeff Blackbird

White family:

Emma Morgan McLaughlin

Morgan Austin Freeman

Hillary Judith Roberts

Christopher Joshua Cody Hunt

Dylan David Pickle

The Wedding Singer Lew Whitener

Officer Trent Loggins

Soldiers Matthew Phillip Nersinger, Richard Rosenthal

Production

Director Ted Sharon
Musical Director Dennis Yerry
Costume Designer Alyssa Sampson
Lighting Designer Shawn Evans
Sound Designer Bobby Johnston
Fight Choreographer Ted Sharon
Dance Choreographer Larissa FastHorse
Set Designer Lauren Roberts
Prop Designer..... Billy Pace
Assistant Music Director..... Joseph Milliren
Dance Captain..... Caitlin Cullen
Fight Captain..... Matthew Phillip Nersinger
Assistant Lyricist..... David Quinones

Cherokee Family Reunion

CHARACTERS

HENRY TIMBERLAKE: 30 years old, white. A comedic character who is both a puppet master and a jester.

ENGLISH MILITARY OFFICER & SOLDIERS: any ages. They arrest Timberlake. *Can be doubled.

WEDDING SINGER: any age. *Can be recorded music.

BEARMEAT FAMILY: listed in order of age, all have a Southern accent of Cherokee, N.C.

GRANNY: 70 years old, Cherokee. John's mother and matriarch of the family. She is no nonsense.

UNCLE JASPER: 60 years old, Cherokee. A fun mountain character who can still cut a clogging rug.

AUNT NELL: 55 years old, Cherokee. A busybody who is not afraid to show it.

JOHN: 50 years old, Cherokee. He is the father of the Bearmeat kids. A quiet, solid man who has tried to do his best for his kids since their mother died 12 years ago.

TWODI: 22 years old, Cherokee, strong physical actor, dancer and singer. The pack leader. He is volatile and comfortable with his place in the family.

MELI: 20 years old, Cherokee, strong dancer. Smart and the protective mother bear of her siblings.

JUSTIN: 19 years old, Cherokee, rapper and dancer. The musical one. He is a DJ who is serious about his own path.

LEVI: 17 years old, Cherokee, dancer, part of a physical comedy team with John Ustdi. John's fraternal twin. The two of them are their own unit in the group and tend to talk over each other.

JOHN USTDI: 17 years old, Cherokee, dancer, part of a physical comedy team with Levi. Levi's fraternal twin and the smallest brother. He and Levi are their own unit in the family and tend to talk over each other.

LIZZIE: 15 years old, Cherokee, dancer. The youngest and most innocent who is shielded by her siblings.

BEARMEAT EXTENDED FAMILY & FRIENDS:

ABRAHAM (late teens)

AUNT POLLY (any age)

UNCLE ELIAS (any age)

BRYCE (around 20 years old)

YOUNG COUSINS:

JAX

TSALI

LILY

SHANALI

WHITE FAMILY: listed in order of age, they do not have Southern accents.

EMMA: 45 years old, white, some dancing. She is the mother of the White kids. A widow for 13 years, she sees the reunion as a chance to fulfill ambitions that have been put aside to be a good mom.

MORGAN: 20 years old, white, strong physical actor and dancer. He is used to being the one Emma leans on. The good son of whom much is expected.

HILLARY: 19 years old, white, strong dancer. The secondary mom and co-leader with Morgan.

DYLAN: 16 years old, white, dancer. A fun-loving, passionate kid.

CHRISTOPHER: 16 years old, white, physical comedy and dancer. He is charming and loyal to the Whites.

CHARACTER NOTES

This publication of *Cherokee Family Reunion* represents the original production with 26 speaking parts of all ages. However, the cousin/friend lines can either be doubled up for a smaller cast or further split for a larger cast. Additional nonspeaking soldiers, cousins and friends of any ethnicity are also an option for a very large cast.

Although the author encourages considering Native American actors for the Cherokee roles, due to the universal themes of the play, she supports colorblind casting. The original production had people of all races cast in both families.

SETTING

The time is set during present day in June and July. Unless noted, all action takes place in the yard around the Bearmeat family's home outside Cherokee, N.C.

SCENES

ACT I

Optional Preshow: The wedding day.

Scene 1: Continuous.

Scene 2: The next day.

Scene 3: Minutes later in Granny's garden.

Scene 4: The next day.

Scene 5: The same day, at twilight.

Scene 6: The next day in Granny's garden.

Scene 7: Several days later.

Scene 8: That evening.

Scene 9: The next morning.

ACT II

Scene 1: 1765, English debtor's prison.

Scene 2: The present, later, the day of the fight.

Scene 3: The next morning.

Scene 4: The next day.

Scene 5: Several days later, the reunion.

GLOSSARY

Cherokee, N.C.: A small town on the eastern band of the Cherokee Indians' reservation at the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

Sassafras: A common plant in Appalachia that had many medicinal purposes by the Cherokee.

KWIM: Short for "Know what I mean?"

Yuns: Appalachian word that is a rough contraction of "you ones."

Eagle Dance: A ceremonial dance of the Cherokee involving men and handheld Eagle wands. It is a highly regarded dance of their people.

Feather cape: Capes woven entirely of feathers. The most honored among the Cherokee (chiefs and beloved women) were presented with them and wore them for ceremonies. More information is available from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History at <http://www.mnh.si.edu/exhibits/emissaries/>.

Cherokee War Song: A specific dance and song that is done for ceremonial purposes, a highly regarded dance of the Cherokee.

Ostanaco: The Cherokee leader who became a host to Timberlake during his journey to the Cherokee and eventually accompanied him to England.

Stick Ball: A Cherokee game that resembles lacrosse. It is a very physical game that was sometimes used to settle disputes, earning the nickname "little war."

Cherokee Family Reunion

ACT I

OPTIONAL PRESHOW

*(*Note: The theatre where this play was first produced had a band play before every show. The following scene was used to tie the band into preshow as the wedding band. Without the band, start dialogue with Scene 1 and the following action is shortened to take place at the top.*

The Bearmeat cabin is L. The porch is dressed with benches or chairs and a permanent DJ booth. C has several groupings of furniture, plants and other stuff to make it a well loved yard for a family of boys.

A planter hangs near the porch. A small sassafras bush grows there.

As lights come up, various friends/family are decorating the yard for the wedding and reception. The whole play has a sense of constant movement. FRIENDS and FAMILY are always in the background, playing or crossing or just visiting.

Someone unfurls a banner, "CONGRATULATIONS EMMA AND JOHN." Kids pull open a banner on the cabin "NEWLYWEDS ONLY." Paper wedding bells and other decorations litter the stage.

UNCLE JASPER and the wedding band set up their instruments on the side of the stage. UNCLE JASPER address the following lines to the audience as if they are wedding guests. Cast members can enter through the audience and welcome people, make introductions, etc.)

UNCLE JASPER. Welcome! Welcome everyone to John and Emma's wedding. I'm John's Uncle Jasper and so glad you could make it. We're going to play some mood music, so enjoy yourselves while we wait for the ceremony to begin!

(The band plays a couple songs as the decorating and greetings continue.)

UNCLE JASPER *(cont'd)*. It's exciting to see so many folks show up in Cherokee, North Carolina for John and Emma's wedding! I think we have some out of town family here. Let's see who traveled the farthest to see them get hitched. Who's from out of town? State? Country?

(He finds out which "family" member came the farthest to see JOHN and EMMA get married.)

UNCLE JASPER *(cont'd)*. One more song.

(Last upbeat song.)

SCENE 1: THE WEDDING DAY

(The entire Bearmeat family and friends cast are onstage. Everything is ready to go. They look to UNCLE JASPER, the emcee of the events. Nothing is happening.)

UNCLE JASPER. We're minutes away from the wedding ceremony now! I am sure we'll get going any minute. Mingle!

(Something isn't right. UNCLE JASPER breaks to check with JOHN. JOHN is pacing and very nervous. MELI paces as well.)

HENRY TIMBERLAKE enters in period clothing. He has a follow spot or desk of his own. He addresses the audience as his listeners as he writes in a leather journal. He is not seen by the present day characters.)

TIMBERLAKE. *The Memoirs of Lieutenant Henry Timberlake*, at your service, who accompanied three Cherokee Indians to England in the year 1762. I was at a loss what title to give it. MEMOIRS seemed to answer; but I was afraid the public would expect ... more. I do not mean to suggest that you will find only a bare uninteresting narrative; no. I have added all in my power to make it agreeable. Excuse then, gentle reader, all the faults that may occur. (*Continues writing.*) I have added whatever was curious and entertaining in the Cherokee country. (*Recalls a memory.*) The Indians are very dexterous at dances; several of which I have seen performed that were very diverting.

(TIMBERLAKE takes a position at his desk or is absorbed in his writing somewhere. He is free to come and go from the action of the play. Since he has broken the fourth wall, play with various entrances and positions in the audience, in odd places on the stage, etc.)

UNCLE JASPER rejoins the band.)

UNCLE JASPER. Hey folks! I know the wedding was scheduled to start on the hour, but I'm afraid we're missing the bride. Guess she got cold feet, John.

(Shock and reaction all around.)

GRANNY. Jasper!

UNCLE JASPER. Jokes, jokes. Emma and her kids got caught up in crazy weather. Been traveling from Cincinnati to Cherokee for three days. Could've gotten here faster by horse and buggy.

(MELI joins her father.

**If there is a band, they can play quietly under the following.)*

MELI. She's going to do a traditional Cherokee wedding without any rehearsal?

JOHN. Meli, it's going to be fine. You've done a beautiful job, my girl.

MELI. You should have let me postpone it. This is crazy.

JOHN. I've been waiting a long time to find a new partner, and I'm not waiting another day to start our life together. Emma and her kids landed in Asheville an hour ago. Twodi, come here and help your sister relax.

(TWODI joins MELI as JOHN goes.)

MELI. Relax? They've been dating for six months. Online!

TWODI. Don't make it sound sleazy. Lots of people meet on business trips.

MELI. How is that better? WE haven't met these people and he's making them part of our family.

TWODI. Whatever. They're not Bearmeats, and they never will be.

AUNT NELL *(shakes gifts and reads cards)*. You know I always said it wasn't right for John to remain a widow this long ...

AUNT POLLY. You did say it. For 12 years.

AUNT NELL. But bringing home a stranger?

AUNT POLLY. She's not a stranger to him.

AUNT NELL. I had to tell John that marrying that White woman is a mistake.

AUNT POLLY. Don't be racist, Nell.

AUNT NELL. What's racist? Her last name is White. Emma White.

EMMA *(offstage)*. We're here! We're here!

(EMMA and her kids rush in dragging tons of suitcases. They are half in wedding clothes, half airport clothes. They look a mess.)

EMMA *(cont'd)*. Coming!

(JOHN meets EMMA, takes her suitcase and hugs.)

JOHN. Welcome to Cherokee.

EMMA. I can't believe we're finally here.

JOHN. You brought all your stuff.

EMMA. Just our overnight bags. The rest is coming on the truck tomorrow.

JOHN. Oh. Well, we'll find space somewhere. Kids, give us a hand.

(The Bearmeat cousins help. Looks all around. They pile everything on the porch.)

HILLARY *(to her family)*. This is where we're ALL living? He's got six kids.

EMMA. Isn't it nice and ... cozy?

MORGAN. You said Cherokee is a town. Where's the town part?

JOHN. You must be Morgan. I'm John and these are my kids.

(MORGAN shakes hands while the kids say hello.)

JOHN *(cont'd)*. Cherokee is a 20-minute drive down the valley. But there are Bearmeat kin all over these hills. Granny is just down the road.

HILLARY. Hi y'all!

(GRANNY joins the group.)

EMMA. It's an honor to meet you, Mother Bearmeat.

GRANNY. Everyone calls me Granny.

EMMA. I'm so sorry we're meeting like this. Between my crazy job and the kids—Well, we're all looking forward to learning a slower lifestyle.

JOHN. I'm just glad you're here now and we can start our new family.

(The kids are unsure all around.)

GRANNY. Let's get you two hitched.

EMMA. Right now? We're not ready. My hair—

GRANNY. You're beautiful. I'm with John. Who's standing up with you?

MELI. Traditionally it's your mother and brother.

EMMA. Well, my kids are my only family. So it will be Hillary and Morgan, the oldest.

GRANNY. Get it going, Elias.

(The kids move into two groups, Bearmeats on one side, Whites on the other.)

DYLAN. It's like they're speaking another language. KWIM?

HILLARY. I don't think they understand us either. I tried saying "ya-all" and they just stared at me.

MELI. The girl came up to me saying, "YA-ALL this and YA-ALL that." Have any of yuns ever said "y'all"?

LEVI. Never. I hate it when people do that.

EMMA *(to JOHN)*. Are you sure we should do this type of wedding?

JOHN. You and the kids are joining our family and part of our traditions now.

(UNCLE ELIAS takes C. The family gathers. MELI directs. She gives HILLARY a blue blanket. HILLARY doesn't know what to do. She and MORGAN open it.

MELI puts another blue blanket on JOHN's shoulders. The White kids follow her lead.)

EMMA. Dylan, my purse.

(Confused, DYLAN gets the purse. EMMA pulls out ears of corn. JOHN smiles to MELI.)

JOHN. Guess she did her research.

(TWODI sings a traditional Cherokee song as UNCLE ELIAS walks them through the ceremony.)

**Note: A recording of traditional Cherokee music can be substituted.*

JOHN presents EMMA with a bow to show his willingness to provide for the family. EMMA presents JOHN with the corn to show her willingness to keep the home. They drink together from a wedding vase.

UNCLE ELIAS removes the blue blankets and ties one white blanket over them both, literally “tying the knot.”)

UNCLE ELIAS. You may kiss your bride, John!

(They kiss. Everyone cheers.)

UNCLE JASPER. This is my favorite part, the reception! Take it away!

WEDDING SINGER. This is a little song I wrote for Emma and John’s first dance.

(The wedding band plays while JOHN and EMMA dance.)

**Note: Recorded music can be used and UNCLE JASPER announces the first dance.)*

UNCLE JASPER. Everyone join in. Bearmeat family, find a White to dance with! Come on, mix it up now.

(The kids awkwardly pair up and dance. CHRISTOPHER and LIZZIE spot each other and walk slowly together; it’s a movie moment. Suddenly AUNT NELL and AUNT POLLY pop up between them. AUNT NELL speaks right in front of CHRISTOPHER.)

AUNT NELL. We don’t know anything about these kids. They could be thieves. Hooligans. Hare Krishnas.

AUNT POLLY. Oh, Nell. You're being dramatic.

AUNT NELL. Am I? (*Notices CHRISTOPHER.*) What do you want?

CHRISTOPHER. I'd love to have this dance, ma'am.

(CHRISTOPHER dramatically sweeps AUNT NELL into his arms and leads her into a dance. LIZZIE and AUNT POLLY are smitten.)

The dance ends. Whites and Bearmeats can't get away from each other fast enough.)

CHRISTOPHER (*cont'd*). If you need anything at all, just ask for Christopher. (*Joins his family.*)

GRANNY. Clearly a hooligan.

AUNT NELL. It's the smooth ones you have to watch.

EMMA (*to her kids*). It's so nice of my children to celebrate my wedding in a clump like this. I had a beautiful childhood in hills very like these. I want Cherokee to feel like your home.

MORGAN. Hillary and I are only here for the summer, Mom.

DYLAN. Christopher and I only got two years of high school, then we're going back to civilization. They roasted a whole pig. It's got a face.

JOHN. Twodi, Meli you are the grown-ups, act like it. This is your turf so it's up to yuns to make the first move.

MELI. Dad, this isn't the first Thanksgiving.

TWODI. Well, their last name is White and they are ... white.

JOHN. Not funny, Twodi. You want your old dad happy, right? Emma and I want you kids to have this summer together to become a family. By fall half of you will be gone to college.

MELI. I'm not going anywhere.

JOHN. I know, Meli.

EMMA. Can you try to mingle a little? Make like it's a party?

HILLARY. Sure, Mom.

(EMMA goes to mingle. HILLARY gets an idea.)

HILLARY. Hey guys, this is a wedding right? What dance does EVERY wedding need?

DYLAN. Yes! Perfect!

HILLARY. Get my iPod.

(DYLAN goes.)

JOHN. How about a Friendship Dance? To share the culture you are proud of with your new step siblings. Go share. Now.

MELI. Come on guys. Let's share. Twodi, you sing. We'll dance.

(The kids gather onstage. DYLAN returns and gives JUSTIN the iPod. The White kids circle up. Bearmeats are unsure.)

HILLARY *(to MELI)*. It's silly, but it's not a wedding without the "Chicken Dance," right?

MELI. Do you mean the Quail Dance?

HILLARY. What?

MELI. The traditional Cherokee Quail Dance?

HILLARY. Whatever. Come on, join the circle. Hit it!

(JUSTIN hits the music, the "Chicken Dance." The White kids enthusiastically do the "Chicken Dance" in all its glorious, accordion stupidity.

The Bearmeats have clearly never seen anything like it. They are horrified or laughing heartily.)

LIZZIE. What kind of dance is that?

MELI. Are they making fun of us?

MORGAN. It's the "Chicken Dance," it's stupid but you have to do it.

TWODI. No, we don't.

MORGAN. Oh, you're too cool for the "Chicken Dance"?

TWODI. Yes.

(UNCLE JASPER jumps in. JUSTIN cuts the music.)

UNCLE JASPER. Okie dokie. I think that's enough dancing.
GRANNY. Thank you for coming to celebrate my son and my new daughter-in-law, but I am sure they would like some time alone. Let's get this place cleaned up.

(Everyone cleans. TWODI and MORGAN toss a couple glares at each other. CHRISTOPHER and LIZZIE bump into each other on the porch. It's instant chemistry.)

CHRISTOPHER. Sorry.

LIZZIE. I'm a klutz. You're totally cute. *(Horrorified.)* I mean it was cute what you did with Aunt Nell. You're not cute. I mean you are but—Hi.

CHRISTOPHER. You're cute too, roomie.

LIZZIE. Roomie?

CHRISTOPHER. We're living together now, *Brady Bunch* style.

LIZZIE. Yeah, right. Welcome to the family.

(LIZZIE flees. CHRISTOPHER smiles.)

GRANNY. Come on young 'uns. We've got beds for you all over the valley. A man and woman need to spend their first night without a bunch of kids running wild. Kids, get their bags!

(Bearmeat kids grab bags for the Whites, leading them off to various homes. Goodbyes all around.)

EMMA. Granny Bearmeat, thank you for everything. I didn't know what to expect and . . . well, I look forward to making this family work. The next party will be better.

GRANNY. I am glad you think so since the next shindig is on you. As that Tim Gunn says, "Make it work." *(Starts to go.)*

EMMA. Oh, sure. I'm happy to throw a party anytime you like.

GRANNY. It's always been on July 3rd.

EMMA. What is?

GRANNY. The Bearmeat Family Reunion. It's the largest reunion in Cherokee. Every year it rotates to another family, and this time around is yours.

EMMA. But that is two weeks away.

JOHN. Ma, you can't expect Emma to hold the reunion. I assumed someone else would do it this year.

GRANNY. It is tradition. Who else is going to do it this late?

JOHN. But, there isn't enough time.

EMMA. John, it's OK. I don't want to mess with tradition.

JOHN. You don't know what you're saying.

EMMA. How difficult can a reunion be? I'm honored.

GRANNY. There, John. Listen to your wife. Let me know as soon as you decide on the presentation theme. The family can help you with costumes and sets, no time to waste.

EMMA. Costumes and sets?

GRANNY. John will help you. *Do' da da go' hv i. (Cherokee for "Until we meet again.")*

(GRANNY goes. A light has gone on in EMMA.)

JOHN. Good night, Mom.

EMMA. What are the costumes and sets for?

JOHN. The host family puts on a "show."

EMMA. I'd be the director!?

JOHN. The whole thing has gotten crazy. Last year there were live animals AND fireworks.

EMMA. Are you serious?

JOHN. I never thought they'd ask you ... it's a Cherokee thing.

EMMA. I can't come here, the white woman, and mess up tradition and pass the buck. If I don't do this I'll be an outsider for the rest of my life.

JOHN. Not the rest of your life. Maybe a decade or two.

EMMA. I want our kids to be one family before the next decade.

JOHN. I love you, Emma, but Cherokee culture isn't really your thing.

EMMA (*excited*). Oh, but it is! I've been reading this book. (*Digs in her purse for the book.*)

JOHN. Oh, great, she read a book.

TIMBERLAKE. The king of the Cherokees came to our camp to bargain for peace, which was soon granted.

EMMA. MEMOIRS by Henry Timberlake.

TIMBERLAKE (*looks up, pleased*). Their king requested an officer travel with them to Cherokee country, to convince the Indians of the good intentions and sincerity of the English toward them. My colonel could not command any on so dangerous a duty.

EMMA. It's the diary of this white guy who visits the Cherokee in 1761. His observations of early Cherokee life have been proven right by lots of scholars. It's the perfect way for all of us to learn about each other.

JOHN. Didn't some say he exploited the Cherokees in England and died in debtor's prison?

TIMBERLAKE. I relieved him from this dilemma by offering my service.

EMMA. We won't do the England part. Your kids can teach my kids the Cherokee traditions and my kids can give them the perspective of a stranger in a new culture. (*Basks in her imagined utopia.*)

JOHN. But it has to be big.

EMMA. I know! Make a list of all the reunions you remember. (*Opens the book and folds page corners.*)

JOHN. It's been awhile Emma, but I don't remember lists on my first wedding night.

EMMA. Please, John? Besides, I think lists are sexy.

(*EMMA gives JOHN a long kiss.*)

JOHN. OK, highlight your book and I'll make my list.

(EMMA kisses him again.)

JOHN *(cont'd)*. Lists. Lists. Lists.

(EMMA kisses him each time he says "Lists.")

EMMA. Don't kill it, John.

(They go into the cabin. Lights down.)