

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Lift Every Voice

By

G. RILEY MILLS and PRINCE ROC

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXXI by
G. RILEY MILLS and PRINCE ROC

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(LIFT EVERY VOICE)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-263-6

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the authors of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names of the authors *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the authors, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

Lift Every Voice was first presented by Collaboraction Theatre Company at Kennedy-King College in Chicago on Jan. 18, 2020.

CAST:

RICKY TANG.....Gavin D. Pak
TOM BANKSJack Lancaster
ESTRELLA “STAR” RUIZ Alexa Maria Huerta
JAMES WILSON Robert Hunter Bry
GRACE GARRETT..... Cayla Leigh Jones
AMY LANGFORD..... Meredith Rupp

PRODUCTION:

Director RORY JOBST
Scenic Design..... EMMY WELDON
Lighting Design LEVI J. WILKINS
Sound Design WARREN LEVON
Costume DesignONYX ENGOBOR
Prop Design..... NINA D’ANGIER
Stage Management.....MADELEINE SWITZER
Casting CATHERINE MILLER
Producing Director..... SARAH SWIFT
Executive Producer ANTHONY MOSELEY
Executive ProducerDR. MARCUS ROBINSON

Lift Every Voice

CHARACTERS

RICKY TANG: 17.

TOM BANKS: 17.

ESTRELLA “STAR” RUIZ: 17.

JAMES WILSON: 17.

GRACE GARRETT: 17.

AMY LANGFORD: 17.

SETTING: The action of the play takes place at an elite public high school in Chicago.

Lift Every Voice

(In the darkness, “The Star-Spangled Banner” is heard. After a few bars, it starts to become distorted and strange, eventually fading out.

A school bell rings.

Lights rise on an elite public high school in Chicago. We discover the following characters, all in separate locations throughout the school: RICKY TANG, GRACE GARRETT, TOM BANKS, ESTRELLA “STAR” RUIZ and AMY LANGFORD.

We hear the sound of feedback, and then an adult voice comes over the school intercom.)

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.). Good morning, students, and Happy February! In honor of the first day of Black History Month, we’re going to do something a little different today. With that, would everyone please stand for the singing of the Black national anthem.

(Over the intercom we hear “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” The students all react differently to the music. AMY takes a selfie and types a message.

After a moment, each of the students’ phones begins to ping with notifications, one at a time. They each check their phones and read the message. It is clear from their reactions that the message AMY sent is eliciting strong emotions.

Lights and song fade.

Lights snap to full. It is now after school, and we are in a classroom. TOM is alone. After a moment, RICKY appears in the doorway.)

RICKY. Bro.

TOM. Dude.

RICKY. I've been waiting to talk to you about this all day.
You see it?

TOM. Oh, I saw it.

RICKY. Crazy.

TOM. I know, man. I've never seen people at this school so upset.

RICKY. What did Amy say?

TOM. Haven't talked to her.

RICKY. I thought you had Spanish together.

TOM. She didn't come to class. No one's seen her since she got pulled out of advisory.

RICKY. Whoa.

TOM. Bro, she might get expelled.

RICKY. Come on, man. Who we talking about here? Amy Langford isn't getting expelled. Not over a Snapchat.

TOM. Who sent it to you?

RICKY. Like five different people. One who doesn't even go to this school.

TOM. When I first saw it I thought, "No way Amy would put something like that out there on social media."

RICKY. And yet she did.

TOM. You think Grace has seen it?

RICKY. I hope not for Amy's sake. Otherwise white girl about to get her butt kicked.

TOM (*after a pause*). Was it really that bad though?

RICKY. Amy's message? Dude.

TOM. She was just expressing an opinion.

RICKY. You can't post something like that, bro. Not at a school like this. That thing went viral in the span of an hour.

TOM. In calculus today, we didn't even talk about calculus. We spent the whole period trying to figure out what Amy was trying to say.

RICKY. I'm pretty sure I know exactly what she was trying to say.

(ESTRELLA enters.)

RICKY *(cont'd)*. Hey, Star.

ESTRELLA. Did you see it?

TOM. Amy's handiwork?

RICKY. I think everybody's seen it by now.

ESTRELLA. Why would she post something like that?

TOM. Amy didn't post it. She put it on her private story and Chloe took a screenshot.

ESTRELLA. Wait, so Chloe posted it?

TOM. Blasted it out to half the student body.

RICKY. Classic Chloe.

ESTRELLA. Has Grace seen it?

RICKY. I'm pretty sure we would've heard if Grace had seen it.

TOM. You think they'll show up for this meeting?

ESTRELLA. Who?

TOM. Amy and Grace.

RICKY. Class president and vice president, they better.

TOM. This might be the first student council meeting I don't sleep through.

ESTRELLA. I heard there was a death threat against her.

RICKY. Who?

ESTRELLA. Amy.

TOM. For real?

ESTRELLA. That's what the girls in A-PUSH were saying. Apparently someone left a note on a mirror in the third-floor bathroom.

RICKY. It wasn't a death threat. It just said Amy's going to "get what's coming to her."

ESTRELLA. Whatever it said, it was bad enough to get security involved.

RICKY. Security got involved?

ESTRELLA. Yup.

TOM. Brooks probably regrets playing that song now, all the drama it caused.

ESTRELLA. I'd never heard it before, had you?

RICKY. It's called "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

TOM. Hey! Look at Mr. Ricky-pedia here.

RICKY. It was a poem first and then somebody put it to music around 1900. Over time, it became known as the "Negro" national anthem.

TOM. Check this kid out. He's like a little asthmatic Einstein. I'm so proud of you.

RICKY (*smiling*). Shut up.

TOM. So smart. I bet you graduate, what do they call it ... *summana kuma-tada*?

RICKY. *Summa cum laude*?

TOM. Yeah. That.

RICKY. You are so dumb. How did you even get into this school?

TOM. I don't know. Ask your mom.

RICKY. So immature.

(TOM moves closer to ESTRELLA.)

TOM. Hey, Star. You got a date for prom yet?