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*Dramatic Publishing*

LAUGHING  
ONCE  
MORE

**An Evening of Theatre**  
by  
**MANY-YOUNG-PLAYWRIGTHS**

**Edited and adapted**  
by  
**TOM ERHARD**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**

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LAUGHING ONCE MORE

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(LAUGHING ONCE MORE)

# LAUGHING ONCE MORE

A Full-Length Play  
For Three Men and Six Women\*

## CHARACTERS

|                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| BOY ONE .....    | serious       |
| BOY TWO .....    | comic         |
| BOY THREE .....  | sensitive     |
| GIRL ONE .....   | serious       |
| GIRL TWO .....   | comic         |
| GIRL THREE ..... | sensitive     |
| GIRL FOUR .....  | shy           |
| GIRL FIVE .....  | sophisticated |
| GIRL SIX .....   | angry         |

\*The director can use additional cast members, as desired. The play can also be cut if you need to fit it into a shorter time period, as, for example, in contest use.

TIME: The Present

PLACE: A Stage

**For Bob . . .  
Best Friend, and Brother,  
With Love**

The Student Writers, Their Schools, and Their Teachers  
in Order of Presentation

**"Juxtaposition"**

Scott Schoen  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"Vanessa Bova"**

Vanessa Bova  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"The Poems Flow"**

Chris Mayer  
Catalina High, Tucson  
Teacher: Elaine Caret

**"In the Public Library"**

Eric Smith  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Clarinet Player"**

Amalia Howard  
Cliff High School  
Teacher: Dorothy Pfeifer

**"Spray Paint"**

Jon Jochem  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Ben Rael

**"Inky Stick"**

Jo Ann Bicknell  
Eldorado High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Elizabeth Sleeter

**"The Artist"**  
Sindy L. Steinberg  
Basic High, Henderson  
Teacher: Cheryl Syphus

**"Looking Glasses Into the Past"**  
Eric Nash  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"I'm Tired of Sad Poems"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Mary Rita Haufmann

**"Going Home"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Beverly A. Friedman

**"In Its Place"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Beverly McCrary

**"For Diane"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Beverly McCrary

**"January 17, 1984"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Beverly McCrary

**"Grandmother Likes to Tell Me"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Mary Rita Haufmann

**"I Saved Everything"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Mary Rita Haufmann

**"Tell Him I Said Good-bye"**  
Valerie K. Ingram  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Mary Rita Haufmann

**"A Pass to My Father"**  
Michelle Mills  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"Camera's Eye"**  
Bonnie Brinkman  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"Pieces of Mother and Daughter"**  
Caroline Adams  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Judith M. Duval

**"The Plunge"**  
Wayne Gardner  
Eastwood High, El Paso  
Teacher: N. Kay Valek

**"Only Violets"**  
Roberta Martinez  
Bernalillo High School  
Teacher: Orlando H. Vigil

**"In a Thousand Dreams"**  
Jon Jochem  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Ben Rael

**"Strangling Her Finger"**  
Dolores Calugas  
Shadow Mtn. High, Phoenix  
Teacher: Sharon Gaio

**"Never Been Kissed"**  
Nils Fullerton  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"I Rejected Her"**  
Suna Gurol  
Española Valley High  
Teacher: Catherine Mecklenburg

**"What's Wrong?"**  
Sean Blankett  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Used Confetti and Torn Streamers"**  
Laura Ann Reyes  
Ysleta High, El Paso  
Teacher: Juawanna Newman

**"Imaginative Reality"**  
Ginger Wood  
Las Cruces High School  
Teacher: Phyllis Wright

**"A Cool Breeze"**  
Ted Dewey  
Española Valley High School  
Teacher: Catherine Mecklenburg

**"Backstop at Night"**  
Randy Miranda  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Rainbows Love Introductions"**

**Jon Aragon  
Albuquerque High School  
Teacher: Leah Ready**

**"A Wake of Daisies"**

**Lilia Ramirez  
Ysleta High, El Paso  
Teacher: Juawanna Newman**

**"Don't Walk on the Sunnyside"**

**Jon Jochem  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Ben Rael**

**"The School Bus"**

**David Lynch  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer**

**"The Pedals Fly"**

**John Biebel  
Albuquerque High School  
Teacher: Leah Ready**

**"I Have Closed the Door"**

**Traci Schimpler  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer**

**"Only If You Try"**

**Timothy Shultz  
Eldorado High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Elizabeth Sleeter**

**"Childhood Is . . ."**

**Susan Lassiter  
Deming High School  
Teacher: Harvielee O. Moore**

**"Playing Doctor"**  
Lara Candland  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"All's Well That Ends Well"**  
Cindy Fabian  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"A Haircut for Ralph"**  
Susan Braden  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"The Silver Medallion"**  
Larry Cruise  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"Folk Story"**  
Robert Gutierrez  
Ysleta High, El Paso  
Teacher: Dorothy Lantow

**"Jimmy Lee McKay"**  
Elisa Oliver  
Clifton High School  
Teacher: Eugenia Tadlock

**"Commercials"**  
Jay Turley  
Santa Fe High School  
Nancy Armbruster

**"Working for Ronald McDonald"**  
Kris Marshall  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"Fate of a Butterfly"**  
Julie Podszus  
Shadow Mtn. High, Phoenix  
Teacher: Carol Anderson Gibson

**"Dripping Blood"**  
Vanessa Bova  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Chocolate Staining My Hands"**  
Traci Schimpler  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Walk Bad, Act Tough"**  
Kim Edgmon  
Dobson High, Mesa  
Teacher: Mitch Hamlin

**"Psychosis"**  
Traci Schimpler  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Upon the Coffee Table"**  
Susan Rapp  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

**"Gabe"**  
Rena Baros  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

**"Jenny: Room 203"**  
Scott Schoen  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio  
*(EDITOR'S NOTE: Scott's story supplied the # for this production.)*

"I Dream of Dragons"  
Scott Schoen  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

"Watermelon"  
Ruben Barron  
Ysleta High, El Paso  
Teacher: Juawanna Newman

"My Cold"  
Janice Robbins  
Monte Vista High School  
Teacher: Lucy Bridgewater

"Late One Morning"  
Angelica Sanchez  
Manzano High, Albuquerque  
Teacher: Alan Stringer

"School Cafeteria Blues"  
K.E. Kahle  
Mountain View High, Mesa  
Teacher: Dick Saggio

"The Answer"  
Sandra Williams  
Valley High, Las Vegas  
Teacher: Robert W. Salchert

"Lie in Darkness"  
Jon Jochem  
Santa Fe High School  
Teacher: Ben Rael

"A Slow Death"  
Marlene Kelley  
Tohatchi High School  
Teacher: Glorianna Locklear

## LAUGHING ONCE MORE

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The cast comes onto the empty stage to music, live if possible, and dresses either casually or identically.*

GIRL ONE (*very warmly*). Hi. Glad you could come tonight. (*The others wave and ad-lib greetings to the audience.*) This evening we're going to present an unusual sort of play for you.

BOY TWO. I'll say. No set. No costumes.

GIRL TWO. No plot!

GIRL ONE. But plenty of youthful imagination. We're going to dramatize poems and short stories written by teen-agers. We think you'll have an exciting time. First, let me introduce the actors and actresses. (*She introduces each member of the cast by his or her own name, including herself.*) We'll all play a wide variety of different characters during the evening. Which, by the way, will be about an hour and a half.

BOY ONE. Maybe you've heard about the plays, "I Know I Saw Gypsies" and "I Saved a Winter Just for You." This is the third in that series. They're filled with poems and stories written by young men and women in high school, very recently, and were winners in the Southwest High School Creative Writing Awards.

GIRL ONE. That's a program at New Mexico State University that honors these young people by publishing them in a booklet that goes to more than 500 high schools in seven states every spring.

GIRL SIX. But writing that kids do is always so depressing. And angry.

GIRL FIVE. Yeah. Really downbeat.

GIRL ONE. You're going to be surprised with what we've got tonight.

BOY ONE. In fact, this show is going to tell us a lot about how young writers think.

GIRL ONE. High school students do a lot of serious writing. But it's *not* all downbeat.

BOY THREE. Young writers are very sensitive. They have the ability to see the world as it really is. Lots of people... even adults... refuse to look at life really honestly.

GIRL THREE. That's right. Tonight's writings are, above all else, *honest*.

GIRL ONE. And, in places, surprisingly funny.

BOY TWO. Good! That's what I want... the funny parts!

BOY ONE. Okay, gang, let's get some props out here so we can put on a show. (*Everyone ad-libs shouts of approval as they scurry off, hurrying back on with several stepladders, a number of plastic and folding chairs, some wooden cubes if you have them, and all kinds of hand props and costume bits for the poems and stories.*)

GIRL ONE. Let's start with a short section about the whole business of writing.

GIRL SIX (*grumbling*). Do we have to? (*At appropriate times, as the play goes on, GIRL SIX can scoff at happy poems or stories, to maintain her "stance" as the negative one.*)

GIRL ONE. Just 'cause you don't like to write doesn't mean other kids feel that way. Come on.

BOY ONE. Our first poem is about how some people get their ideas. It's called "Juxtaposition." (*Pantomimes the different approaches to writing as he enacts the poem. Note: In addition to the suggestions listed in this script, you must use every bit of imagination and creativity to bring these poems and stories totally alive. This is not an evening of recitation.*)

I cannot write at my typewriter.  
The space between the touch of the finger  
and the strike of the key  
is too vast a distance  
for my imagination to breach.  
Yet, set a pen in my hand  
and as though encouraged

by the movement of my fingers  
my imagination flows through the ink  
(*Slight pause.*)  
and surprises me!

GIRL TWO. And our next poem is also about finding ideas. It's titled "Vanessa Bova." And it's autobiographical, because the *author is* Vanessa Bova... from Manzano High School in Albuquerque, where they have a really great creative writing program. Alan Stringer is the super teacher there. So... here's what it's like to try to get a good idea to write about. "Vanessa Bova." (*GIRL TWO pantomimes this vigorously all over the stage.*)

I slumped limply over my  
45-year-old Remington typewriter.  
Floating invisibly around my cracked ceiling  
like a playful ghost, hovered "The Idea."  
As I got up and leaped at it, (*She does so.*)  
the folding chair beneath me buckled and fell.  
The Idea smirked at me from atop my icebox.  
I climbed out of the rubble of crumpled notions  
scattered about the kitchen table  
and repositioned myself before the typewriter,  
the blank sheets of paper calmly observing me  
like an executioner surveying a victim.  
While I pounded unmercifully at the keys,  
The Idea crept closer,  
taking the chance of wafting  
just above my typewriter. (*Brief pause.*)  
I sprang again,  
taking The Idea by surprise.  
I wrestled it, locked it  
in a full nelson  
and began to tear, rip and refine  
as carefully as possible. (*Slight pause.*)  
For I would only take  
The Idea back to the typewriter alive!

*(Look of triumph as she now types rapidly. The others all laugh appreciatively.)*

GIRL THREE. Most of us aren't *that* active about writing. *(Pause.)* I like to think of writing poems as... soulful. Like this. *(Said with a carefully enunciated liquid tone. She pantomimes caring for a garden.)*

The poems flow . . . lazily down the poet's stream.  
The letters glide gently down from the alphabet trees.

The noun-vegetables growing big and plump,  
know that there are no verb-weeds to outgrow them,  
for the verbs are outside of the poet's fence,  
guarding the frail adjective-flowers that bloom inside.

The paragraph-bushes line the edges of the syllable-patio.

The pronoun-trellis cascades toward the writer's heaven. *(Pause.)*

This is the poet's garden. *(Pause.)*

Flourishing, alive with words. . . *(Softly.)*

Thoughts . . . waiting to be gathered.

GIRL FIVE. That's elegant. *(The others agree.)*

BOY THREE. You know, one of the things that makes a poem fascinating is the imagery it evokes. Here's another one about trying to find an idea . . . with a terrific visual image. Listen.

One day I sat in the public library staring down at a blank sheet of paper.

I sat trying to compose a poem.

I felt I should give up.

So in disgust I stared at the ceiling.

I had never stared, nor had I even *looked* at this particular ceiling in this

Particular library.

I realized to my great surprise

There was a pencil imbedded  
 In the soft pungent board  
 Which made up the ceiling.  
 I was shocked. (*He pantomimes the throw.*)  
 The only image my mind conferred  
 Was of a person *angrily* trying to write a poem,  
 And frustrated *beyond all frustration*,  
 Hurling with herculean might  
 His pencil into the ceiling. (*Slight pause.*)  
 So there imbedded it sticks.  
 (*He grins in delight.*)  
 A monument to all poets...  
 Real or imaginary. (*Everyone laughs.*)

GIRL FOUR. A poem doesn't have to be about writing to tell us how creativity feels. Here's one about how music touches us. It's called "The Clarinet Player."

Its shivers to me... the  
 Way sound spirals hollow... like down my spine,  
 Somethin' like lookin' far into a narrow pipe.  
 It can make you feel sounds that're  
 Yellow and clean and smooth and rough  
 All at once ...  
 Something like seein' rough-cut, fresh, new lumber  
 With all your senses awake.

GIRL SIX (*irritated*). But not everybody can *find* the *right* creative outlet. Yet there are some people who *just have* to let something out! Did it ever occur to you that some of the yuckiest graffiti is *somebody's* equivalent of a poem?

BOY TWO. How do you mean?

GIRL SIX. Listen to this. (*She pantomimes angry spray painting.*)

I am  
 the person  
 who  
 writes  
 up and down

on the walls  
 on the street  
 that goes  
 up and down  
 near the houses,  
 near the one  
 I live in;  
 for my  
 mind  
 wanders,  
 and spray paint  
 is my  
 only voice.

*(Ends sadly, after starting angrily.)*

BOY TWO. That poem comes from Santa Fe High where the whole English department stresses creative writing. It's by Jon Jochem, and Ben Rael is the teacher. Now here's a funny poem from another school famous for its creative writing. Betty Sleeter has been the teacher at Eldorado High for more than twenty years. Jo Ann Bicknell is the author of this poem which is... sorta' about writing. It's called "Inky Stick." *(He pantomimes vigorously as he sits at a desk.)*

Uh oh,  
 Oh no.  
 The medium ball point  
 Just rolled off my Bic  
 And across the page.  
 Now comes the sticky ink  
 Spilling and spreading  
 In a gummy mess  
 Ruining my homework.  
 Since there's no point  
 In trying to save it,  
 I'll fold it in half,  
 Yeah, now unfold it . . .  
 Now the other way.  
 Oh, how pretty!

What would my teacher say  
If I told him that  
I don't have my  
Biology homework because  
It turned into puddles  
Of spirals of ribbons and rainbows  
Shining between crevices  
Of burgundy seas and violet skies?  
Like swirling colors beneath cars  
After it rains. *(Pause.)*  
Uh oh.  
Oh no. *(Pause.)*  
Navy fingertips...  
And an itching nose!

*(His fingers had begun quivering in anguish an inch from his nose, with all the others laughing at his predicament.)*

GIRL FIVE. I've got an even better "sorta' about creativity" poem. It's called "The Artist." *(The others gradually cluster around her, as if she is a painter at an easel.)*

Six o'clock.  
She is finally inspired.  
Picking the colors carefully,  
Staring at the bleak 'canvas',  
First  
Applying a beige background  
Color after color,  
Pinks and greens and blues,  
Each bringing her closer  
To the image she wants to see.  
At last  
The final touch.

*(At this point she quickly changes her pantomime and is really only putting on makeup! Her gestures tease the*

*others, who hoot and jeer at her as they realize they have been taken.)*

Thick black lashes. (*Pause.*)

She steps back...

Admiring her work of art...in the mirror!

(*Much heckling.*)

BOY ONE. All this talk about writing leads us into our first short story. It's by Eric Nash, of Mountain View High in Mesa, Arizona. They really have a fine creative writing teacher there: Mr. Richard Saggio. His kids lovingly call him Sagg. And this story is about real people: Mr. Saggio himself, and Eric's classmates in creative writing. It happens in a classroom and it's called "Looking Glasses Into The Past." I'll play Mr. Saggio. (*To GIRL FOUR.*) You be the narrator.

GIRL FOUR. The year is 2,006 A.D. We're in Mountain View High. The last period of the last day before summer vacation. (*BOY ONE faces all the others who sit as if in a schoolroom.*) The bell rang, and all the students raced away, free for the summer. (*The others all race away.*) The seniors were free forever. Most of the others would return with renewed excitement in the fall. But not the elderly Mr. Saggio. He was retiring. After the last student scrambled out of the room, the bent-backed teacher tiredly slumped into one of the desks. (*BOY ONE does so.*) He scratched his bald head and looked at the wall clock.)

BOY ONE (*startled*). What the...? The clock just stopped! (*Slight pause.*) That clock has never, never stopped.

GIRL FOUR. Old Mr. Saggio, still puzzled by the clock, returned to the subject that had been on his mind all day...all year.

BOY ONE (*strong discouragement*). I don't think I've accomplished a thing. Not a single thing.

GIRL FOUR. But he *had* published three children's novels, and he *had* taught thousands of students.

BOY ONE. But nobody really listened. Nobody cared.

All those classes and I haven't had any effect whatsoever. Kids just don't care any more. (*Shakes his head sadly.*)

GIRL FOUR. He was so tired. He decided to put his head down, just for a few minutes, and take a little nap before he went home for that final time. (*BOY ONE sleeps.*) He slept a long time. Finally, when he woke up, he was astonished to find himself still in his classroom. The wall clock said 2:37, but his wrist watch showed 9:39!

BOY ONE. I don't understand that clock! (*Still very confused.*) What's that noise? Must be the janitor! Don't tell me he's waited all this time to clean my room! (*He calls offstage.*) I'll be out of here right away!

GIRL FOUR. But it wasn't the janitor. A middle-aged man entered and sat right down at a desk, as if he belonged there.

BOY TWO. Evening, Sagg.

BOY ONE (*standing, still confused*). Who is that? Is that... Steve Campagna? (*Slight pause.*) Steve... from my creative writing class twenty years ago?

BOY TWO (*taking off dark sunglasses*). The one and only.

BOY ONE. Wow. Twenty years. Tell me what you're up to these days.

BOY TWO. I write television shows. Sitcoms.

BOY ONE. You do? (*Chuckles in reminiscence.*) Well, you always were the class clown.

BOY TWO. You know, Sagg. I never would have made it without you.

BOY ONE. You flatter me, Steve. You mean you learned enough in my classes to become a professional writer?

BOY TWO (*loudly teasing*). Nawww. What I mean is, I wouldn't have found the old school without spotting that ancient automobile of yours in the parking lot! (*They both laugh.*)

(*GIRL FIVE enters, wearing dark glasses.*)

GIRL FIVE. Hello there, Sagg.

BOY ONE (*baffled*). Errr... what...

GIRL FIVE. Don't you remember me, Sagg?

BOY ONE. It's... Miss Mills. Michelle Mills. Yes, I remember you!

GIRL FIVE (*sitting, taking off her dark glasses, looking around*). Twenty years!

BOY ONE. What are you doing these days?

GIRL FIVE. I sell short stories to the top magazines. The most sophisticated ones. Your class was the spark I needed.

(*BOY THREE enters wearing dark glasses.*)

BOY ONE. Hey! The whole class from twenty years ago is here! It's Scott Secondo! What are you up to?

BOY THREE (*taking off sunglasses*). I manage a chain of shoe stores here in the Phoenix area. You helped me learn how to write well enough so I could get a degree in business administration.

(*GIRL THREE enters wearing sunglasses.*)

BOY ONE. It's Donna! What are you doing?

GIRL THREE (*taking off sunglasses*). I'm writing science fiction. You helped all of us so much! (*Suddenly, quietly, they all get up and leave, somewhat mysteriously. BOY ONE shakes his head in confusion, then lays his head down and falls asleep again at the desk. After a moment he wakes up.*)

BOY ONE. What's going on?

GIRL FOUR. Finally Mr. Saggio woke up. The clock on the wall still read 2:37, but now his watch read 10:20. It had been a dream.

BOY ONE (*getting up, sternly, lecturing*). But I always taught everybody, year after year, never to end a story with the main character coming out of a dream. That kind of ending is too easy!

GIRL FOUR. So...