

The Gettysburg Canon

A play in two acts
By Dan Kehde

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Early morning July 1, 1863. Gettysburg, Pa. As thousands of troops from both North and South mass for the impending battle, five teenagers from several local farms escape to the safety of the surrounding hills. There's the level-headed Eliza and her little sister, Justine, who's strong-willed; Georgina, whose mother has sheared her hair to make her look like a boy; and Rachel and Jeremiah, a brother and sister from a wealthier family. As they witness the horrors of battle over the next three days, the teens are forced to learn the responsibilities that come with growing up, especially as they deal with limited food, a murderous bushwhacker, and a young Confederate soldier they capture. Ultimately, the young people learn the value of life and freedom ... and the lessons of war. A dramatic and challenging play.

(This play is age appropriate for audiences from late middle school through adult. See end of script for brief historical notes of the battle.)

"The Gettysburg Canon" premiered on the stage of the historic WVSU Capitol Center theatre in Charleston, West Virginia, on Feb. 22, 2007. The original cast was as follows:

<i>Rodney...Evan Wilson</i>	<i>Jeb...Ben McCoy</i>
<i>Sergeant Major...Nick Curnutte</i>	<i>Henry...Quentin Acord</i>
<i>Justine (Lil Bit)...Emily White</i>	<i>Eliza...Abigail Miskowiec</i>
<i>Georgina...Jaclyn Cobb</i>	<i>Rachel...Courtney Forbes</i>
<i>Jeremiah...Nick Foster</i>	<i>Jack...Andrew Branham</i>
<i>Emily...Laura Glassburn</i>	

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 5 w)

JEB: Confederate soldier.

HENRY: Confederate soldier.

RODNEY: 17, a veteran Confederate soldier.

SERGEANT MAJOR: Confederate soldier.

JUSTINE (LIL BIT): 13, Eliza's little sister.

ELIZA: 17, daughter of a widower farmer.

GEORGINA: 15, formerly the prettiest girl in the Gettysburg Valley; has eyes for Jeremiah.

RACHEL: 17, daughter of a wealthy farmer east of town.

JEREMIAH: 15, Rachel's little brother.

JACK: A Northern soldier turned bushwhacker.

EMILY: 15, a young resident of the town.

Performance time: About 1 hour, 45 minutes.

SETTING

A small clearing before a cave high in the forested hills above Gettysburg. It is barely dawn. It is July 1st and, in a short while, the valley down below will be filled with the armies of North and South facing off for what will be the bloodiest battle in American history. Low bushes line both sides of the stage. There are a few large rocks left and a single boulder right. Upstage left center is a small opening for a cave. The entire upstage area is a rocky plateau. A few bushes dot the tops. Large trees stand off left and right so the branches hang over the stage area. Some action and sound will originate from the back of the house (BOH).

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Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Sc. 1: Before dawn. (July 1, 1863)

Sc. 2: That night. (July 1)

Sc. 3: Pre-dawn, the next morning. (July 2)

ACT II

Sc. 1: Later that morning. (July 2)

Sc. 2: The following morning. (July 3)

Sc. 3: The next morning. (July 4)

PROPS

Muskets for Soldiers

Sacks of food (Lil and Eliza)

Musket for Eliza

Sack of supplies and musket for Georgina

Satchel for Rachel containing man's shirt, Bible

Firewood

Knife

Blanket

Canteen

Tobacco and matches

Folded note

Rocks

Half a loaf of bread wrapped in brown paper

Rope ties

Stage blood

Large tree branch

Blanket roll

Broken musket

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Scene 1

(AT RISE: Before dawn, July 1, 1863. FOUR CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS sit on the rocks, center, resting. They are a ragtag bunch, most without shoes or proper uniforms. Three of them wear the grey cap of the South; one wears the remnant of a uniform shirt with sergeant stripes sewn on the sleeve.)

JEB: This ain't no place to fight a battle, I'm telling you that.

HENRY: A fine place to watch it, though. What is that town?

RODNEY: Does it matter? They're all the same. Hope they got shoes down there.

SERGEANT MAJOR: All towns got shoes. Even in the North.

RODNEY: What's so North about this anyway? There's a church like that in every town twixt here and Kingsport.

HENRY: And we marched through every one of them, too. Well, it feels like I have.

SERGEANT MAJOR: Well, this looks to me to be the high ground. We best get back to Gen. Longstreet and tell him what we found.

HENRY: You think those Union boys down there are going get a taste of the General's southern hospitality?

SERGEANT MAJOR: That's up to the General.

JEB: Look like we got company comin'. Civilians by the looks of it.

SERGEANT MAJOR: *(Leading THEM off SL.)* Come on, boys. We got strict orders not to be seen.

HENRY: I thought old Jeb Stuart was supposed to do the scoutin'?

SERGEANT MAJOR: So does the General.

JEB: What's the name of this town?

RODNEY: Gettysburg.

JEB: Sounds like a good place to win a war, don't it?

RODNEY: *(Last to leave.)* Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. *(Pause.)*

LIL: *(Entering from R.)* Are you sure this is the right way?

ELIZA: *(Following, cautiously.)* Shut up. They'll hear you. *(They're BOTH carrying pillowcases or feedbag full of food. ELIZA also carries a rifle.)*

LIL: They can't hear us all the way up here. *(Crossing to C and looking out over audience.)*

ELIZA: You never know.

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LIL: Look at all of them.

ELIZA: Here, give me those. We'll hide 'em back in the Indian Cave. *(Takes the satchels and crosses UPS, disappearing into cave.)*

LIL: You reckon there are still redskins around these parts?

ELIZA: *(From inside the cave. Laughs.)* Justine! You're sounding like Grandpa again. "You reckon."

LIL: Don't call me that.

ELIZA: *(Emerging.)* Then speak English like Mama taught you.

LIL: *(Crosses to rock DL and sits.)* Mama wouldn't make us hide out in the woods like this. That's for certain. On the most exciting day this whole valley has ever seen.

ELIZA: She'd be right with us. Daddy would have made sure of that.

LIL: I miss her.

(SFX: Noises off stage. The GIRLS jump up.)

ELIZA: Quick, in the cave. *(SHE crosses to cave mouth; LIL lags behind.)*

LIL: Get the rifle!

ELIZA: Would you get in here?

(The GIRLS hide in cave UPS. GEORGINA enters. She's a boyish looking girl of 14-15, with hair cut short, wearing men's clothing and cap, and carrying a large musket. She comes across from right, looks around and sits down on the rock, left center, placing her sack and rifle wearily on the ground beside her. LIL charges out of the cave and jumps on her back.)

LIL: *(Beating furiously.)* I gotcha!

ELIZA: *(Following to UC.)* Lil!

GEORGINA: *(Screams and falls to the ground.)* Get off me. Get off me!

ELIZA: *(Pulling LIL off.)* Lil, get off her!

LIL: I'll getcha. I'll getcha! You Reb! *(Still battling.)*

GEORGINA: I'm no Reb, Lil' Bit. Get off me!

ELIZA: Get off her!

(ELIZA finally pulls LIL away. She stops fighting suddenly and stares in awe at GEORGINA. She crosses to get a closer look.)

End of Freeview

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