

August 11 – 16: California Desert Regional Theater’s Americana Series at BPA

Play Synopses

Laundry & Bourbon/Lone Star

Set in 1974 Texas, James McClure’s insightful yet hilarious one-act companion plays, *Laundry & Bourbon* and *Lone Star*, both feature a 1959 Pink Thunderbird Convertible; a symbol of youthful freedom and better times that seem to have abandoned the little town of Maynard.

Roy's wife Elizabeth knows it was the car that led her fall to in love at first sight, while her best-friend Hattie, who remembers drive-in double-dates with the guy who jilted her, thinks Roy will never grow up until he can give up that gleaming chariot. *Laundry & Bourbon* focuses on the women and their busy body friend Amy Lee as they while away an afternoon folding laundry and drinking Bourbon & Coke.

For Roy's kid brother Ray and their envious friend Cletis the convertible is the symbol of youthful freedom they can never hope to experience --- unless Roy lends them the keys. *Lone Star* finds Roy and Ray reminiscing until their awkward friend Cletis shows up and ruins their fun with some bad news about Roy’s beloved car. While extremely humorous, both plays have a bittersweet underpinning that touches on our American love of the wild, and the mixed results we experience when we try to tame it.

John Brown’s Body

Written in 1928 by Stephen Vincent Benet, *John Brown's Body* is an epic American poem. Its title is taken from the radical abolitionist credited with triggering the events leading to the Civil War with his raid on Harper's Ferry in West Virginia in 1859. Brown was captured and hanged as a consequence but his name and rebellion inspired the Civil War song *John Brown's Body*. Benet's poem covers the history of the American Civil War in a classical style and is considered the only great American epic. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1929. It was performed on Broadway in 1953 in a staged dramatic reading starring Tyron Power, Judith Anderson, Raymond Massey and Charles Laughton.

Though *John Brown’s Body* is technically an epic poem, it is actually a highly dramatic work with an impact unrivaled by many plays. The poem begins with John Brown’s attack on Harper’s Ferry and goes on through the Civil War telling much of it from the points of view of Jack Ellyat, a Northern soldier and Clay Wingate, a Southern soldier. The families and backgrounds of both men are woven into the action of the poem as are their romances.

Give ‘em Hell Harry

Give ‘em Hell Harry spotlights the life and times of our 33rd president, from his small town boyhood to his years as our nation’s leader. This unique world figure comments on vital issues of the day and the people who shaped our destiny; the famous (Roosevelt, Churchill and Marshall) as well as the infamous (Stalin and McCarthy) are all grist for Truman’s mill. The play also fondly remembers the beloved Bess.

Often under-appreciated by his contemporaries, Truman now occupies a much revered place in our history. *Give ‘em Hell Harry* is guaranteed to be a thought provoking experience for audiences of all ages, whether or not they share history’s current opinion of the man from Missouri.