

Acting Edition

SHOW OF FARCE!

BY
JONES HOPE WOOTEN

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SHOW OF FARCE! received its world premiere by the Vagabond Players on the Iris Theatre stage in Terrell, Texas, on March 27, 2026. The production was directed by Ron Harris assisted by Gayle Harris, with lights/sound tech by Grayson Sykora and playbill design by Gwynna Six. The stage manager was Savannah Johnson and the technical manager was Helden Hoierman. The original Jones Hope Wooten logo was designed by Luis Morales and Joe Conner. The cast was as follows:

WANELLE WILBURN	Crystal Persall
QUENTIN PICKERING	Don Smallwood
D. GENE WILBURN	David McGee
MAXIE SUGGS	Sharon Vance
TY WILBURN	Jaden Tolliver
JENNA WILBURN	Erin Green
MELBA WILBURN	Charlotte Parrish
FREDRICKA HANSON	Cozette Moore
LUCINDA GALLOWAY	Linda Craker

CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

WANELLE WILBURN

QUENTIN PICKERING

D. GENE WILBURN

MAXIE SUGGS

TY WILBURN

JENNA WILBURN

MELBA WILBURN

FREDRICKA HANSON

LUCINDA GALLOWAY

SETTING

Main lobby of a small fishing lodge in the Ozark Mountains, Arkansas.

TIME

The present. One hot summer weekend.

ACT ONE

Scene One: Thursday morning

Scene Two: That afternoon

Scene Three: Friday afternoon

ACT TWO

Scene One: Friday night

Scene Two: Sunday morning

AUTHORS' NOTES

We suggest up-tempo music be played pre- and post-show, at intermission, and especially during scene transitions.*

We urge scene and costume changes be done as quickly as possible to maintain a lively pace for the play.

Throughout the dialogue of this play, there are numerous words or phrases that are italicized. This is to indicate that those words or phrases should be delivered with emphasis.

The costumes in this play are an integral part of the comedy. Therefore, great care and specificity should be taken in selecting and/or constructing each of them.

We have taken great care to insure each character has ample time to exit and change costumes before their appearance in the next scene. This was designed to allow all scenes to begin without “holding” for all actors to be in costume in order to keep the show’s pace lively.

In Act Two, Scene One, the bigger and wilder Fred’s hair is, the funnier.

In Act Two, Scene One, the effects of the explosion should be as big and believable as possible.

On licensing *Show of Farce!*

Under no circumstances should any female role in this comedy be played by a male or any male role be played by a female.

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All of the characters portrayed in *Show of Farce!* are fictional creations, and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

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SHOW OF FARCE!

by Jones Hope Wooten

3 men, 6 women

Comedy chaos explodes in *Show of Farce!*, and it rocks The Reel 'Em Inn, the finest little fishing lodge in the Ozarks, with pure hilarity! The owner, D. Gene Wilburn, is desperate to win an award to save his business, but can't determine which of his comically stressed-out guests is the anonymous judge to impress. His feisty sister, Maxie, is determined to reach her police retirement in two days without killing her brother in frustration. His overwhelmed son, Ty, and wife, Jenna, are frantic for their weeks-overdue baby to arrive, and his whacked-out cousin, Melba, is stirring up trouble with his secretive neighbor, who's evidently hidden a load of dynamite somewhere inside the lodge. Add in his wife's ill-timed juice cleanse, a missing diamond, and a giant white rabbit and what could possibly go wrong over a hot summer weekend in rural Arkansas? How about...everything? This Southern-fried laugh riot – a stand-alone play in its own right – is the final entry in the trilogy of lunacy that includes *Farce of Nature* and *Farce of Habit*. The fall-down funny absurdity of this Jones Hope Wooten comedy is definitely a farce to be reckoned with!

ACT ONE

Scene One

(Early morning. Lights comes up on the lobby of The Reel 'Em Inn, a rustic, family-owned fishing lodge on Lake Lorraine in the beautiful Ozarks. The main entrance is upstage center. Upstage left is the door to the owners' living quarters. On the stage left wall is a swinging door to the kitchen. A window is on the stage right wall. Downstage right a door leads to the guest wing. The registration desk with a reception bell and telephone on it is downstage left, along with an easy chair and side table. A small sofa sits center stage. Sound effects: telephone rings. WANELLE WILBURN, 50s, a determined ball of fire in trousers and button-down short-sleeved blouse, hustles through kitchen door, large cup of coffee in hand, grabs the telephone.)

WANELLE. *(Perky.)* Thank you for calling The Reel 'Em Inn, located in beautiful Mayhew, Arkansas, how can I... Oh, hi, Bev...no, I've got it in my hand right now, I'm good... What? I never said I'd die if I didn't get my coffee. I said *other people* might... Yes, Jenna's still cooking for us... No, girl, her due date's come and gone and there's nothing wrong. It's just that she's moody, big as a Winnebago and about as pleasant as a root canal... Oh, D. Gene's out somewhere. He's still ticked at me for last night... Well, it's his fault. He's the one who told me I should "embrace my mistakes," so I hugged him.

WANELLE. (*Chuckles.*) Yeah, he should've seen that one coming. (*Laughs.*) Hey, listen, I – (**QUENTIN PICKERING**, *a very demanding Brit, 40s–60s, dressed in expensive khakis, shirt, and shoes, enters from the guest wing. Low.*) Uh-oh, I've got to go. It's another British invasion. Call you back. (*Hangs up phone. Chirpy.*) Hello, Mr. Pickering. How are you this fine Thursday morning?

QUENTIN. Hot! This stifling heat is unbearable! We don't have temperatures like this in the UK, we'd never allow it. We don't even serve shepherd's pie this hot!

WANELLE. Now, my son, Ty, has been working on the air-conditioning and I think he's done a very good job. It feels comfortable in here to me.

QUENTIN. (*Snarls.*) I'm not talking about in here! I'm talking about *outside*. You must stop this dreadful heat or I'll file an official complaint about your establishment so *do something!* (*Strides to the guest wing door, exits.*)

WANELLE. (*Calls after him.*) Right-o! I'll talk to God about that immediately! (*To herself.*) Sometimes I just have to stop, breathe and remind myself it's not worth the jail time. (*Sips coffee.*) Men act out, bless their hearts. We just have to tolerate the messes they get themselves into. (**D. GENE WILBURN**, *50s, a beleaguered, good-hearted guy in camouflage fatigues, black smeared under eyes, hurries in front door with a large, leafy branch, hides behind it like a spy, peeks out window.*)

D. GENE. (*Breathless.*) Am I crazy or is someone following me?

WANELLE. Which of those two questions would you like me to answer first?

D. GENE. I'm talking about Jasper Biggs. His lodge across the lake, The Bass and Biscuit, is our only rival and he hasn't said so much as "boo" to me in years. Then out of the blue he comes over last night with beer for us to share "just 'cause"? *Just 'cause* my Aunt Fanny! I'm

telling you, he's up to something. That's why I slipped over to the other side of the lake to see what's going on over there.

WANELLE. (*Doesn't buy into it.*) Okay, Double-O-Seven. (*Goes to him, massages his shoulders.*) I will not let you work yourself into a stroke over this. What you need to do is let go, release that pent-up energy. In fact, *I* need to release quite a bit of pent-up energy, too. And... (*Flirts.*) wouldn't it be fun to release that pent-up energy *together* since we haven't done that for a long, long time? (*Big smile.*)

D. GENE. Really? Now? (*She nods.*) Well...that's a great idea, let's do it! You mow the front yard, I'll mow the back. (*Starts for the door. WANELLE wilts.*)

WANELLE. For the love of mud. Can someone just finish me off?! (**MAXIE SUGGS**, 60s, **D. GENE's** older sister, hearty, no-nonsense, bursts through front door in a police uniform with short pants, cowboy boots, and Stetson, brandishes a handgun.)

MAXIE. Move and you're dead meat, thief!

WANELLE. Question asked, question answered.

D. GENE. (*Annoyed.*) You're about to retire, what the heck are you doing?

MAXIE. (*Practices several dramatic postures.*) For your information, baby brother, a true professional keeps her skills sharp to the bitter end. (*After the third posture, she freezes in a squat, holding her gun with both hands out in front of her.*)

D. GENE. Come on, Max. We've seen all your scary cop moves, give it up.

MAXIE. Can't. My hip just popped out of joint and my arthritis has froze my fingers on this gun. Help me, help me! (**D. GENE** rushes to help **MAXIE**.) Ow, ow, ow! I swear sometimes I think life isn't *passing* me by, it's trying to *run me over*!

D. GENE. (*Wry.*) I can't tell you how safe I'll feel on Sunday when you're officially *off* the force. I'll get the Icy Hot. (*Exits to living quarters.*)

WANELLE. (*Helps MAXIE to the couch.*) You know, Maxie, this is happening more often lately. Are you sure you want to continue living in town alone?

MAXIE. Hey, I'm not alone. I've got a lot of men in my life – soon as I wake up Will Power helps me get out of bed, first thing like clockwork I go see my friend John, then every afternoon Charlie Horse comes for a visit and every single night I go to bed with Ben Gay and before I know it, he's all over me. I'm a popular chick.

WANELLE. Well, at least *you're* getting some action at night.

MAXIE. Uh-oh. So you're going through another dry spell, huh? Sorry to say, my brother's never had a clue on *that* front. So, how can I help you? What do you need? (*Unseen by the women, QUENTIN reenters from the guest wing.*)

WANELLE. What do I *need*? (*Grabs MAXIE by the shoulders.*) I need a man! Right now! I can't wait another minute!

QUENTIN. (*Taken aback.*) I *was* going to ask for a snack, however... I think I'll return to my room. And lock the door. And move some heavy furniture in front of it. If you'll excuse me. (*Turns, races back into the guest wing.*)

MAXIE. Know what I think you need? On of my guaranteed love potions. I'll whip one up for my brother – I think I've finally perfected it.

WANELLE. No way! The last time D. Gene drank one of your voodoo juices his voice didn't come down from soprano for months. If you're trying to kill off my love life, then having my husband (*Speaks in a high tone.*) whisper sweet nothings in my ear (*Normal voice.*) is the perfect way to do it! (*Exits into the guest wing.*)

MAXIE. I'm starting to think some people need to use a *glue stick* instead of *chapstick*.

D. GENE. (*Enters from living quarters with the salve.*) Here's your salve, you do it. I don't want to know where it goes or how it feels. I don't want to know when women rub anything on anything. And as soon as you're done greasin' yourself down, I want you to come with me so we can spy on Jasper Biggs together.

MAXIE. No way, José. I am not doing anything to screw up my retirement in the last seventy-two hours of my illustrious career in law enforcement.

D. GENE. You've always been Miss Bitter Britches 'cause you never got one medal in your "illustrious career." If you could nail Biggs's big butt for whatever he's cooking up, you might score one. Help The Reel 'Em Inn *reel him in!*

MAXIE. That's penny-ante stuff. The last chance I had for nabbin' a medal would've been working last week's big diamond heist over in the museum in Herndon. But did they bother asking an accomplished long-term veteran? Noooo! And you've made up this problem with Jasper Biggs in what's left of your mind. (**TY WILBURN**, 30s, handsome, charming, bursts in through the guest wing door in shorts and T-shirt. He's laden with a tool kit, paint buckets, and a small ladder.)

TY. Okay, I've got the AC running better, painted the trim around the windows and replaced some shingles. Oh, when I was on the roof I saw old Jasper Biggs poking around the back end of our property, don't know what that was about.

D. GENE. (*To MAXIE.*) Made it up, did I? (*Enraged.*) I knew it! I'm going to find out what that no-count freak is up to. I don't trust anyone who doesn't act normal. (*Grabs his branch, slinks out the front door like a spy.*)

MAXIE. Well, shave my legs and call me Smoothy. Ty Wilburn, I am impressed. You have really stepped up your responsibilities around this place.

TY. Thanks for noticing, Aunt Max. I promised Dad I'd take on more around here to help him out, and I am not going to let him down. I said the same thing to Dahlia Dunwoody at the community theatre, and I'm not letting her down, either.

MAXIE. I thought you were giving up theatre since you're about to be a dad.

TY. Well, the baby's not here yet, is it? So I'm just squeezing in one last show. The Mayhew Footlighters' production of *Alice in Wonderland* opens tomorrow night, and I only have to get through tech night and dress rehearsal. And I'm just Assistant Stage Manager, there really isn't that much I have to do but be there. (**MAXIE** circles **TY**, loudly sniffing around him as she does.) What are you doing?

MAXIE. You think you're getting a false statement past an experienced police officer such as myself? I smell bull pucky when it walks in the door. And you're so full of it you're leaving tracks. People who make themselves extra busy are always hiding from something. So spill it, boy. What're you hiding from?

TY. No, no, no, Aunt Max. I'm just a little overextended, that's all. Everything's fine. I'm not hiding from anything.

JENNA. (*Offstage, angry.*) TY!!!! (**TY** immediately drops the tool kit, paint buckets, and ladder and falls to his knees behind **MAXIE**, terrified.)

TY. It's her! Don't let her see me! (**JENNA WILBURN**, 30s, usually sweet-natured, though not at this second, in an extreme state of pregnancy, wears maternity top and slacks, carries a small paper bag, bursts into the room from the kitchen.)

JENNA. (*Strident.*) Ty Wilburn, I have been texting you for the past five minutes. The sink is clogged again. How

am I supposed to make lunch for the guests if I don't have a working sink?

TY. (*Scrambles to pick up dropped items.*) Yes, Jenna. I'm on it, sweetheart.

JENNA. (*Mood flips, sweet.*) Oh, Honey. You're the best. I wuv ooh.

TY. I love you, too. Now I'm just going to go get my –

JENNA. (*Suddenly tough again.*) Where you're going is into that kitchen and fixing that sink, mister! (*Flips to sweet and loving again.*) Because the happier we make our guests, the better life we're making for our darling little baby.

TY. Oh, Jenna, that's a very sweet of you to – (*Starts to touch her stomach.*)

JENNA. (*Tough.*) Oh, you are NOT going to touch my stomach. I hate when everyone wants to touch my stomach. This is not an iPad! In fact, *you* did this, Ty Wilburn, and you are never touching any part of me ever again!

MAXIE. (*Off TY's pleading look.*) O-kay, I get it now. Run like the wind. Run for your life. (*TY runs into the kitchen. To JENNA.*) Soooo, how are we feeling today, little girl? Maybe a few hormonal ups and downs? Just guessin', mind you.

JENNA. Considering I'm *eleven days overdue*, I think I'm doing really well. I mean, I'm very happy. (*Starts to cry.*) Happy, happy, happy. (*Then, starts to giggle.*) It's like I'm on a rollercoaster I can't get off of. (*Grabs MAXIE by the shoulders.*) Help me get this bun out of the oven. **JENNA.** Try anything! Get it out of me! Arrest the baby if you have to! (*WANELLE reenters from the guest wing.*)

MAXIE. (*Gently sits JENNA down on couch, sits beside her.*) Darlin', Nature will take care of this, just like she always does. Everything is going to be just fine.

WANELLE. *(Crosses to them.)* Max is right, Jenna. Look around. You have everything a baby could ever need – Mama, Grandmama, and Great Aunt. Look at all the love waiting for this child already.

MAXIE. It's going to be so much fun having a little one around again after all these years. But it's hard work. It's going to take all three of us.

JENNA. Oh! That reminds me, I need you to help me with this. *(Hands paper bag to WANELLE, who drops it to the floor.)*

WANELLE. Sorry, Jenna. I'll get it. *(Has trouble leaning down to pick it up, does a tortured, comic twist-and-bend motion to get to the bag.)*

MAXIE. Woman, you've got the flexibility of a two-by-four. Ever take a stretch?

WANELLE. I get enough exercise just pushing my luck. *(Off MAXIE's look.)* Hey, I never thought I'd ever be the kind of person who woke up early to work out. Know what? I was right! *(Hands the bag to JENNA, sits.)*

JENNA. I need your take on these. I couldn't decide in the store between these three and you need to help me choose the right one. *(Reaches into the bag, takes out three different baby pacifiers, passes two of them to the others.)*

MAXIE. But...they're pacifiers. How do we figure out which one is the best?

JENNA. Exactly. How do you judge fit, mouthfeel, comfort? This is my first important decision for my child. *(Desperate.)* I have to get it right! Help me!

WANELLE. Oh, for pity's sake. When you're a mom, you have got to make decisions faster than this. *(Takes Jenna's pacifier, pops it into JENNA's mouth, takes her by surprise.)* There is only one way – *be the baby.* *(Pops her pacifier into her own mouth. She and JENNA turn and stare at MAXIE.)*

MAXIE. Not on your life. There is no way in hell I'm –
(JENNA shoves Maxie's pacifier into her mouth. They all suck on the pacifiers, check how each is doing, judge their own, make ooh, hmm sounds. TY enters from kitchen with plunger.)

TY. Hey Mama, do you know if we have any – *(They all turn and stare at him, suck their pacifiers.)* O-kay. Is this one of those “Ty, this is none of your business, get out while you still can” things? *(The WOMEN nod “yes” together.)* Then I guess this would be a super bad time to say something like “The three of y'all *really* suck.” *(The WOMEN all nod vigorously “yes.”)* That's what I thought. *(TY hustles back into the kitchen. The WOMEN all remove their pacifiers.)*

JENNA. *(Studies pacifier.)* I just realized the only way we can actually judge these is to all try each other's, too. *(WANELLE and MAXIE react to that realization.)*

MAXIE. Yeah, that ain't happening. But if the baby doesn't like this one, circle back around to me. Something about it is...relaxing. And if you tell anybody I said that, y'all are both dead women walkin'. *(They drop their pacifiers into the bag.)*

WANELLE. Oh, I can't believe the baby'll be here anytime now. And I am so happy you didn't have one of those “gender reveal” parties.

JENNA. I think those are just silly. There's gonna be a “gender reveal” alright. It's called “birth.” And I have never cared if it's a boy or a girl. Either is wonderful.

WANELLE. I agree. There are so many precious things to look forward to if it's a Wilburn girl, and there are so many exciting things to look forward to if it's a Wilburn boy. *(D. GENE bursts through front door, holds his tree branch for cover.)*

D. GENE. I think Jasper Biggs just caught me looking into his boathouse. If he comes here accusing me, I'll need an alibi. Max, take out your gun and shoot me! Now, Now! *(The WOMEN turn and look at one another.)*

JENNA, WANELLE & MAXIE. Please let it be a girl.

MAXIE. (*Stands.*) D. Gene, I cannot have one of my bullets connected with a murder this close to getting my full retirement package. I get vision *and* dental. But tell you what, come meet me out back. I won't shoot you, but I can kick you real hard in the shins to prove you couldn't possibly have walked over there.

D. GENE. (*Touched.*) You'd do that for me?

MAXIE. (*Pats his shoulder.*) What are big sisters for?
(**MAXIE** *exits kitchen door.*)

D. GENE. Maybe I should've left well enough alone with Jasper Biggs.

WANELLE. Oh, Shug, don't blame yourself for being a big fool. Let me do it.

D. GENE. The Reel 'Em Inn is *so* much better than The Bass and Biscuit. There *has* to be a way to let the public know. I just need something to go right *soon*.

JENNA. Well, this might lift your spirits. (*Struggles to get up from couch.*) Early this morning one of your cousins called, said they were in the area and want to stop in. I told them since they were family you would love to see them and to come on!

WANELLE. Well, that's something good right there, D. Gene.

D. GENE. Not necessarily. Depends on which cousin. If it's Cousin Boyce, he only shows up to ask for money. If it's Cousin Renfrow, he's looking for someplace to hide from a really ticked-off female. But I could take an hour even with them. No, there's only one cousin I don't ever, ever want to cross paths with ever again –

JENNA. She said her name was –

D. GENE & JENNA. Melba. (**D. GENE** *instantly recoils.*)

D. GENE. *No!* Not Cousin Melba! Why did you let her know I was still alive?!

JENNA. I don't understand. Why don't you want to see your Cousin Melba?

D. GENE. Because she's one of the (*Whispers.*) "Oklahoma Wilburns." They are not like us. They are not like anybody. Those Wilburns are Looney Tunes crazy.

WANELLE. Says the man wearing camouflage carrying a large tree branch.

D. GENE. Yeah? Well, *you're* not the one who always got stuck having to play with her at every family reunion. Cousin Melba is...well, she's just too much. Too loud, too talkative. She was always playing jokes on me, always getting me into trouble. Terrible things always happened whenever she was around. During a Fourth of July in the park, Melba knew I had on red, white and blue flag underwear and yanked down my pants during *My Country 'Tis of Thee*. When I squatted to pull 'em back up, I...well, I passed gas, okay? The crowd fell over laughing. Old Lady Blodgett still taunts me every year when I'm setting up the town's fireworks. "Watch out, everyone. If Wilburn bends over, this whole place is gonna blow!" (**D. GENE** *is rattled by the memory.* **WANELLE** and **JENNA** *try to stifle their laughter.*)

JENNA. Yeah, that's terrible, D. Gene. I can just picture it now.

WANELLE. So can I! (*She and JENNA can't hold it in any longer and guffaw.*)

D. GENE. That's right, yuk it up at my expense. I'm used to it, thanks to Melba. Well, you two can keep her entertained. I have no intention of seeing that –

MELBA. (*Offstage.*) Yoo-hoo! Where is my Darnell Gene?

D GENE. This is my nightmare come true!

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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