

10/19/08  
6<sup>th</sup> Draft Script  
Following First Stage Children's Theatre  
Staged Reading/New Play Series 6/10/08

# LIZZIE BRIGHT AND THE BUCKMINSTER BOY <sup>A</sup>

coming-of-age play  
based on true events

The destruction of Malaga Island,  
off the coast of Phippsburg, Maine, 1912

By  
Joan Cushing

Adapted from the book by  
Gary D. Schmidt

Running Time: 77 Minutes  
Written for a Cast of 15  
Featuring Church Hymns and Anthems

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**SCENE TIME AND PLACE**

Phippsburg, Maine

and

Malaga Island

1912

Perusal Copy

## **Characters (Cast of 15)**

### **Members of Phippsburg First Congregational Church (Caucasion)**

**Turner Ernest Buckminster III** - 12 year old son of the the new pastor and his wife

**Reverend Buckminster** - the new pastor, a strict interpreter of the rules

**Deacon Hurd** – a blowhard, self-serving deacon (also plays the Sailor)

**Mr. Stonecrop** - a blowhard, self-important business man and church goer (also plays Boy #1)

**Sheriff Elwell** – the bigot sheriff of Phippsburg (also plays Boy #2)

**Willis Hurd** – 12 year old son of Deacon and Mrs. Hurd, a bully (also plays Old Man Thayer the Gravedigger)

**Mrs. Buckminster** - the pastor's wife, doesn't take life as seriously as her husband

**Mrs. Deacon Hurd** - the deacon's wife (also plays the Matron at Pownal Asylum)

**Mrs. Cobb** - frail, elderly spinster, with a sense of humor (also plays Mrs. Stonecrop)

**Mrs. Elia Hurd** – mother of Deacon Hurd, cranky old lady, who is soft under the surface (also plays Mrs. Elwell)

### **Squatters on Malaga Island (African American)**

**Lizzie Bright Griffin** - 12 year old girl

**Preacher Griffin** - Lizzie's Granddaddy, a wise preacher who leads the congregation on Malaga

**Jacob Eason** - adult male

**Abbie & Perlie Eason** – Jacob Eason's boys girls

## MUSIC

### March

1. Stars & Stripes Forever by John Philip Sousa (instrumental, trombone)

### Hymns

2. Come, Ye That Love the Lord (instrumental/trombone, then sung)
3. Shall We Gather By the River?
4. The Battle Hymn of the Republic
5. Come, Ye That Love the Lord Reprise (Playoff music end of ACT I)
6. Swell the Anthem, Raise the Song (instrumental/organ)
7. We're Marching to Zion (instrumental/organ)
7. Shall We Gather at the River? (instrumental/organ)
8. All People That On Earth Do Dwell
9. Shall We Gather By the River? Reprise (instrumental/organ)
10. A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
11. The Battle Hymn of the Republic/Reprise (a capella)

### March

12. Stars & Stripes Forever/Reprise (trombone) (playoff)

# ACT I

## SCENE 1.

### THE WHARF PHIPPSBURG, MAINE 1911

*SOUND CUE for “Stars & Stripes Forever” by John Philip Sousa (played on trombone).*

*The Steamer Kennebec arrives at the wharf, where a red, white and blue banner reads:  
WELCOME, PASTOR BUCKMINSTER!*

*A CROWD is waiting - DEACON and MRS. HURD, their 12-year-old son WILLIS, MR. and MRS. STONECROP, and SHERIFF ELWELL - to welcome the REVEREND BUCKMINSTER, his WIFE, and their son TURNER, as they step off the ship.*

*The CROWD cheers, the trombone slides into “Come, Ye That Love the Lord,” and the CONGREGATION sings to welcome their new pastor and his family . The MEN lift their hats as MRS. BUCKMINSTER goes by, and the bronze bells of First Congregational Church begin to toll.*

### “COME, YE THAT LOVE THE LORD”

DEACON HURD & CONGREGATION

*(Sing)*

COME, YE THAT LOVE THE LORD.  
AND LET YOUR JOYS BE KNOWN.  
JOIN IN A SONG WITH SWEET ACCORD  
AND THUS SURROUND THE THRONE.

WE’RE MARCHING TO ZION,  
BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL ZION.  
WE’RE MARCHING UPWARD TO ZION,  
THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF GOD.

*(The CONGREGATION continues to hum.)*

DEACON HURD

*(In his booming voice)*

On behalf of the First Congregational Church, I want to officially welcome the Reverend Buckminster, our new pastor, and his wife, Mrs. Buckminster, and this must be your son...

REVEREND BUCKMINSTER

Turner.

DEACON HURD

Turner, to Phippsburg, Maine.

*(EVERYONE claps.)*

DEACON HURD & CONGREGATION

*(Sing)*

WE'RE MARCHING TO ZION,  
BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL ZION.  
WE'RE MARCHING UPWARD TO ZION,  
THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF GOD.

MR. STONECROP

Good to have you, Reverend.

SHERIFF ELWELL

Mrs. Buckminster.

MRS. STONECROP

*(To MRS. BUCKMINSTER)*

Welcome to Phippsburg. Now, if there's anything you need, you just ask.

MRS. BUCKMINSTER

Why, thank you, Mrs.....

MRS. STONECROP

Stonecrop. And this is Mrs. Hurd, the Deacon's wife.

MRS. HURD

We'll be neighbors, you know. Our house is just around the corner from the parsonage.

DEACON HURD

The Ladies Sewing Circle has prepared a picnic in your honor. And a game of baseball for the boys. Turner is it? Turner Buckminster. Well, that's a fine name. Like you to meet my son, Willis Hurd, one heck of a ball player.

WILLIS HURD

*(Stiffly)*

Pleased to meet you.

TURNER

Hey.

*(MR. STONECROP and SHERIFF ELWELL become BOY #1 and BOY #2.)*

*DEACON HURD, WILLIS, and the BOYS mark out the bases and create a home plate.)*

DEACON HURD

*(Shedding his frock coat for the umpire vest)*

You ever play this game before, young Buckminster?

TURNER

Yes, sir.

DEACON HURD

You any good?

TURNER

Yes, sir, I am.

DEACON HURD

*(Now Umpire Hurd)*

Good. Then you're the first man up.

*(TURNER takes a couple of practice swings and steps up to the plate. WILLIS pitches a slow pitch ball.)*

DEACON HURD

Strike One!

TURNER

That was a pitch?

DEACON HURD

That was a strike.

TURNER

It landed on the plate.

DEACON HURD

That's what a strike will do. I thought you said you'd played this game before.

TURNER

I have, but..... *(takes a few practice swings)*

DEACON HURD

You ready? Fire another one, son!

*(WILLIS pitches another slow pitch ball.)*

DEACON HURD

Strike two! You've only got one more. Make it good.

WILLIS

Maybe you'd better bend that front leg of yours.

MRS. STONECROP

Are you holding the bat high enough, boy?

MRS. HURD

I don't think he's holding the bat high enough. Not high enough at all.

*(TURNER steps back from the plate and lets the bat swing low a couple of times.*

*The members of Phippsburg First Congregational gather on the side lines to watch.*

*TURNER comes back to the plate.)*

DEACON HURD

You sure you don't want to bend that leg? You'd balance better.

*(WILLIS loops the pitch.)*

DEACON HURD

Strike three!

WILLIS

Bend your front leg next time.

DEACON HURD

You'll catch on, Turner. Next time.

MRS. STONECROP

Turner, don't you think you need a lighter bat? That one is too heavy for a boy your size. Try a lighter one next time.

REVEREND BUCKMINSTER

Back in Boston they play fast pitch ball. This is slow pitch softball, Turner, a little different than what you're used to. You'll get it.

DEACON HURD

Son, maybe Willis can show you how to stand up at the plate sometime. You be sure to ask him.

TURNER

Yes, sir, I will. *(to himself)* In the next millenium.

*(TURNER stalks off.)*



**SCENE 2.**  
**CLIFF AT THE END OF PARKER HEAD ROAD**  
**THE NEXT DAY**

*SHERIFF ELWELL and the FROCK COATS (Deacon Hurd, Mr. Stonecrop and Reverend Buckminster), followed by TURNER, gather at the edge of the cliff. Down at the beach, LIZZIE BRIGHT is digging clams in the surf. In the distance, across the water, is Malaga Island, with several shanties and some smokestacks visible.*

*LIZZIE looks up and sees the MEN watching her. SHERIFF ELWELL has his hand on a gun inside his coat. LIZZIE runs.*

DEACON HURD

Would you look at that monkey go? Look at her go. She climbing down or falling? Sheriff Elwell, I believe she thought you might shoot her.

SHERIFF ELWELL

Wouldn't have been any trouble, Mr. Hurd. One less colored in the world.

MR. STONECROP

More to the point, one less colored on Malaga Island. (*Laughter*) Though the issue is much larger than one colored. The issue is how to relieve Malaga Island of the whole lot of them.

SHERIFF ELWELL

All it should take is a good sound storm. Good high tide running up there, lift that shanty right on out to sea, Mr. Stonecrop.

MR. STONECROP

God has not seen fit to be so helpful. Reverend Buckminster, behold the cross we bear. A ragtag collection of houses and shacks, filled with thieves and lazy sots. A blight on the town's aspirations.

DEACON HURD

Amen.

MR. STONECROP

If the shanties were gone, think what a resort site this very cliff might be. Picture a hotel with white porticoes, and glass doors opened to bring in the sea breeze. I tell you, Reverend, a resort hotel would be the salvation of Phippsburg.

DEACON HURD

Still, if the Governor takes them off the island, he'll add every blessed one onto Phippsburg's pauper rolls. Before we know it, the town will be paying for them to live somewhere else. Phippsburg couldn't afford it.

SHERIFF ELWELL

And not a single soul will stand for it.

MR. STONECROP

The days of shipbuilding are coming to an end here, Reverend. Traditions change, and we must change with the tide. If Phippsburg is to survive long enough for your boy to grow up here, it needs new capital, a new investment.

REVEREND BUCKMINSTER

Tourists.

MR. STONECROP

Exactly. Tourists from Boston, New York, Philadelphia.

REVEREND BUCKMINSTER

And they won't come if there are shanties by their hotel doors.

MR. STONECROP

Precisely. The question that remains is, How to do it? *(To TURNER)* Perhaps you would enjoy exploring the coastline, young Buckminster. You may find some tidal pools to wade in.

TURNER

It's high tide. There are no tidal pools at high tide.

MR. STONECROP

Why, he's figured out the tides already. And we thought he wasn't very bright.

REVEREND BUCKMINSTER

Go on along, Turner. Maybe you can find the other boys and have some fun.

*(TURNER runs off.)*

### SCENE 3.

#### A CLIFF

*WILLIS HURD and two other BOYS, #1 and #2, are in their bathing suits, getting ready to jump into the water from fairly high up. TURNER enters.*

WILLIS

Hey, look who's here. *(To TURNER)* Best spot to swim in the whole United States.

*(TURNER looks out over the cliff and whistles.)*

TURNER

Woh.

WILLIS

You *do* know how to swim, don't you? You *have* done *that* before?

TURNER

Not from this high up.

BOY #1

You jumping in with your Sunday shirt on?

TURNER

It isn't a Sunday shirt, and I wasn't planning to, no.

WILLIS

I suppose all Buckminsters wear Sunday shirts every day of the week. You do know how to jump, right?

TURNER

I know how to jump.

WILLIS

Wait for the wave to come in, so you don't splatter yourself all over those rocks.

*(WILLIS moves to the edge, waits for his wave, and leaps.)*

WILLIS

Yahoo!

BOY #2

Here goes. *(HE jumps.)*

BOY #1

Watch out. I'm coming in. *(HE jumps.)*

*(TURNER takes off his shirt and walks to the edge.)*

BOY #2

Come on, Turner.

BOY #1

You're not afraid, are you?

WILLIS

Wait for your wave.

BOY #1, #2, WILLIS