

THE HISTORY OF TELEVISION, CONDENSED

A Ten-Minute Comedy Duet

by
John C. Havens



Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

Toll-Free 888-473-8521

Fax 319-368-8011

Web www.brookpub.com

CAUTION: Professionals & amateurs are hereby warned that *The History Of Television, Condensed* is subject to a royalty. This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, Canada, the British Commonwealth and all other countries of the Copyright Union.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this play are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS & ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this play are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. If necessary, we will contact the author or the author's agent. PLEASE NOTE that royalty fees for performing this play can be located online at Brooklyn Publishers, LLC website (<http://www.brookpub.com>). Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. You will find our contact information on the following page.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged. Only forensics competitions are exempt from this fee.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC

(<http://www.brookpub.com>)

TRADE MARKS, PUBLIC FIGURES, & MUSICAL WORKS: This play may include references to brand names or public figures. All references are intended only as parody or other legal means of expression. This play may contain suggestions for the performance of a musical work (either in part or in whole). Brooklyn Publishers, LLC have not obtained performing rights of these works. The direction of such works is only a playwright's suggestion, and the play producer should obtain such permissions on their own. The website for the U.S. copyright office is <http://www.copyright.gov>.

COPYING from the book in any form (in whole or excerpt), whether photocopying, scanning recording, videotaping, storing in a retrieval system, or by any other means, is strictly forbidden without consent of Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

TO PERFORM THIS PLAY

1. Royalty fees must be paid to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC before permission is granted to use and perform the playwright's work.
2. Royalty of the required amount must be paid each time the play is performed, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.
3. When performing one-acts or full-length plays, enough playbooks must be purchased for cast and crew.
4. Copying or duplication of any part of this script is strictly forbidden.
5. Any changes to the script are not allowed without direct authorization by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.
6. Credit to the author and publisher is required on all promotional items associated with this play's performance(s).
7. Do not break copyright laws with any of our plays. This is a very serious matter and the consequences can be quite expensive. We must protect our playwrights, who earn their living through the legal payment of script and performance royalties.
8. If you have questions concerning performance rules, contact us by the various ways listed below:

Toll-free: 888-473-8521

Fax: 319-368-8011

Email: customerservice@brookpub.com

Copying, rather than purchasing cast copies, and/or failure to pay royalties is a federal offense. Cheating us and our wonderful playwrights in this manner will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Please support theatre and follow federal copyright laws.

THE HISTORY OF TELEVISION, CONDENSED

by
John C. Havens

CAST: ONE and TWO

(Two performers of either gender)

AT RISE: ONE and TWO are standing center stage. Although they will both play a number of various characters, they start out as announcers. They return to the announcer characters throughout the duet. They have an announcer-like way about them; somewhat suave, somewhat tacky.

ONE: Some said it would never replace radio.

TWO: Some called it the idiot box.

ONE: Some use it as a way to avoid conversation at dinner.

TWO: But in whatever form it's taken, it's grabbed hold of our collective conscience like a dying man falling off a mountain clinging to the side of a canyon so hard it makes his fingernails bleed.

ONE: **(pause)** That's right. Television. Tonight we'll be taking you through a history of television...

TWO: And commercials.

ONE: As a way of getting to know more about this great country of ours...

TWO: And ourselves.

ONE: First, the ancient origin of television!

(ONE spins around in place and then falls to the floor in a crouching position as a caveman, HE begins grunting and walking around like a neanderthal)

TWO: It's a little known fact, but television didn't have its first introduction in the twentieth century. No, it was invented long before in the caveman era by this man. His name would have been pronounced by contemporaries like this **(in a high voice with lots of grunts, Two also scratches himself, etc.)** Eeeee! Raki, raki, mumpiptu, mumpiptu. Lakrahona-ooooooooopee tang tang! Frekin. However, for the purposes of this demonstration, let's call him "Unibrow, dull-eyed, hairy backed freak show", or "Harry" for short.

ONE: **(as HARRY, waves)** Untuku.

TWO: And Untuku to you. **(ONE acts this next section out as TWO describes it)** It was an ordinary evening for Harry, he'd slain a prehistoric bison, washed his loincloth in sub arctic water and had lost a digit or two while wrestling a boar. To pass the time in the evening, however, he had a favorite game Harry liked to simply call, "Singe". "Singe" consisted of setting himself on fire and seeing how long he could stand the pain before he rolled on the ground and put himself out.

(HARRY does this, laughing at the end.)

ONE: **(after HE's done laughing)** Ow!

TWO: One evening, Harry invited a friend over **(TWO refers to self)**, and that's where ancient TV was first invented. **(Throughout this next section TWO narrates while also taking part in the action.) (to HARRY)** Umbutau, eki pony actu. "Hey, Harry. Love what you've done to the place. Where'd you get the wooly mammoth tusk chair?"

ONE: Ikea.

TWO: Ooooo.

ONE: **(screaming, scratching, etc.)** Tippy! Tippy! Hru hru. **(translates)** "Hey, want to see something totally cool?"

TWO: Mreep. "Always."

ONE: Scrande underpants. "Help light me on fire."

(They both pretend to light flint and light ONE on fire. ONE hops around and screams. In the midst of this, TWO points to the wall behind them.)

TWO: Scoltem! "Hey. Look at the wall behind you! The shadows cast from your image and the fire make moving pictures! This could be a way we could translate ideas and stories to countless numbers of other peoples for generations to come!"

ONE: **(pausing from screaming, etc.)** You got all that from the word "Scoltem"?

TWO: Unfortunately, however, Harry burned to death in this last game of "Singe", and the future birth of TV as we know it would have to wait for later years.

(ONE screams horribly and falls to the stage dead.)

ONE: ***(gets up)*** So now we skip ahead to the invention of modern television.

TWO: ***(spins around to become CRAWFORD T. EMBELLISHMENT, a broad, Southern “good ole’ boy”)*** Hey, ma!

ONE: Enter Crawford T. Embellishment, “good ole’ boy” from Biloxi, Mississippi. The true inventor of modern television.

TWO: ***(as CRAWFORD)*** Pa! I can’t believe it! I found a way to beam light waves through walls to project moving images onto a screen! It’s like them movie shows I heard about with Gark Cable and King Kong!

ONE: ***(as his Pa, spits a wad of chewing tobacco on the stage)*** Well, that’s fine boy! How’d you do it?

TWO: Well, I was a’buildin’ nuclear weapons for the Russians when an alien took control of my...

ONE: ***(interrupting)*** And THAT’S the way it really happened.

TWO: But just go on believing what those history books tell you.

ONE: The truth is out there. ***(an “X-files” reference)***

TWO: So then programming began. Back in TV’s infancy, there weren’t shows on around the clock like there are now. Nope. Families used to sit around watching this.

(TWO pretends to be TV set, ONE is a boy from the fifties.)

ONE: Hurry up everybody! It’s almost on! ***(turns on the “set”)***

TWO: “And that’s all for Uncle Milt right now. Tune in next week for more Milton Burle comedy adventures.” Dooooootttt!

(impersonating the “off air signal” with a high piercing tone)

ONE: I love this part!

TWO: ***(facing the audience, narrating momentarily)*** Two hours later.

(ONE as fifties boy again, turns around in place and pretends to turn on the TV)

TWO: Dooooootttttt! ***(ONE sits down with head in hand, engrossed by the “show”)(facing the audience, narrating again)*** Three hours later. ***(turns back to boy who hasn’t moved)*** Dooooootttttt!

ONE: ***(ONE turns head and pretends to be boy’s mother calling from off stage)*** Jimmy! That’s enough TV for today! ***(as fifties boy again)*** Aw, gee, ma! ***(turns off set)***

TWO: Dooooootttttt! ***(stops when HE gets turned off)***

ONE: But then somebody got smart and discovered a way to fill up all that empty programming space.

TWO: With intelligent and thought provoking shows that commented on our humanity?

ONE: Wrong! With commercials!

TWO: ***(in over-the-top old fashioned “commercial voices”)*** Hey, Beverly, I noticed that you’ve got an unsightly blemish on your leg.

ONE: I sure do, Patty. ***(they both impersonate fifties housewives, as ONE cocks leg at a twisted angle)*** The doctor called it “gangrene”.

TWO: Gee, that sounds bad.

ONE: It is Patty. It ouches something horrible.

TWO: What’d the doc say?

ONE: He said I’d have to lose the leg. That’s why I’ve just found...this! ***(pretends to hold up a package)*** Mr. Medicine’s home amputation kit!

TWO: Well, criminey, Beverly, that’s swell.

END OF FREE PREVIEW