

## ***SCENE ONE***

### ***Actor 1***

The subject of tonight's seminar, Tom Lehrer, enjoyed an enormous limited popularity during the 1950's and early 1960's, performing dubious songs of his own devising – all of them totally uncalled for. It was while he was still an undergraduate at Harvard that he decided to devote his life to what has since become a rather successful scientific project, namely, the attempt to prolong adolescence beyond all previous limits. For example, although he is now more than seventy-five years old, he still prefers to think of himself as twenty-five Celsius.

### ***Actor 2***

He has taught at several universities, all of which are still standing, and played at several nightclubs, all now mercifully gone. He also made numerous concert appearances before allegedly live audiences the world over, and tonight's show is drawn almost entirely from material that he performed in those appearances between 1953 and 1965. Since that time, he has performed in public on only a few occasions and he hasn't published or recorded any new songs in many years.

### ***Actor 3***

He has been quoted as saying that political satire became obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. So, for the next two hours or so, the five of us will demonstrate his work and, in doing so, illustrate his general attitude towards it, namely that if, after hearing these songs, just one of you is inspired to say something nasty to a friend, or perhaps to strike a loved one, then it will all have been worth the while.

## ***SCENE TWO***

### ***Man***

When Tom Lehrer attended college, he had the benefit of being there before social mores had dramatically changed the landscape. In those days, for instance, there were many words you couldn't say in front of a girl. Words like... (*encourages audience*)... well, I shouldn't say them! Today, of course, you can say all those words, but you can't say "girl". Since this next song was written long before coeducation had come to Harvard...

### ***Woman***

Go Harvard!!! (*She jumps up and down like a giggly cheerleader.*)

### ***Man***

Excuse me, Hah-vahd...

### ***Woman***

(*Attempt to be much more dignified.*) Go Hah-vahd. (*But after, still acts like a giggly cheerleader.*)

### ***David***

We must ask our girl -- (*She gives him a menacing look*) excuse me, our gender-challenged fellow actor (*even more menacing looks*), to please leave the stage (*She stalks off in disgust*).

### ***SCENE THREE***

#### ***Actor 1***

*(Like a stoned-out hippie.)* We'd like to move on to a sub-species of the folk-song form which came into increasing prominence during the 1960's: The Folk Song of Protest.

#### ***Actor 2***

*(Like a militant peace activist.)* Actually, one has to admire the people who sang these songs. It took a certain amount of courage to get up in a coffee house or a college auditorium and sing out strongly in favor of things like peace, justice, brotherhood, and so on... things, of course, that almost everyone in the audience was against.

#### ***Actor 1***

One of the nicest things about a protest song is that, no matter how bad it was, singing it always made you feel good!

#### ***Actor 2***

Of course, the real reason we all work so hard for peace is, well, maybe we won't have to listen to those songs anymore!

## ***SCENE FOUR***

### ***Woman***

Some people feel that marriage as an institution is dying out, and this was driven home to me rather forcefully the other morning when I received a letter which said: “Darling, I love you and cannot live without you. Marry me or I will kill myself.” Well, I was rather thrilled by that until I glanced at the envelope and saw that it was addressed to Occupant.

In that spirit, here are two songs about long-standing relationships. I’m sure you’re all familiar with love songs along the lines of “He’s Just My Bill,” “My Man,” “My Max,” and so on, sung by a woman who finds herself in love with a man who has nothing whatsoever to recommend him. David will sing a torch song from the analogous male point of view called “She’s My Girl.”

## ***SCENE FIVE***

### ***Man***

As many of you already know, yesterday was the birthday of the late Dr. Samuel Gall, the beloved inventor of the gall bladder. Yes, they always laughed at Dr. Gall. “Who needs another bladder?” they said. But his faith in his invention was dramatically vindicated in 1965 when, in a nation-wide poll, the gall bladder was voted among the top ten organs.

Dr. Gall’s educational career began in agricultural school where he majored in animal husbandry... until they caught him at it one day, after which he switched to the field of medicine, in which he also won renown as the inventor of gargling, which prior to that time had been practiced only furtively by a remote tribe in the Andes, who had passed the secret down from generation to generation as part of their oral tradition.

In any event, he finally became a specialist, specializing in diseases of the rich, which enabled him to retire at an early age to the land we all dream about. I refer of course to sunny Mexico, about which, by remarkable coincidence, Becky is dreaming about this very moment.

## ***SCENE SIX***

### ***Actor 1***

One week of every year is designated National Brotherhood Week. This is just one of many such weeks honoring various worthy causes. One of my favorites is National Legalize Marijuana week. There's only one problem: no one remembers when it is.

### ***Actor 2***

During National Brotherhood week, various special events are arranged to drive home the message of brotherhood. One year, for example, on the first day of the week, Malcolm X was killed... which shows you how effective the whole thing is.

### ***Actor 3***

Now, I'm sure we all agree that we ought to love one another, but I do know that there are people in the world who do not love their fellow human beings, and I hate people like that! So, here now is our own tribute to National Brotherhood Week.

## ***SCENE SEVEN***

### ***Actor 1***

Well, we're back. Those of you who didn't make your escape during intermission may regret it, because we're armed now. You see, this is where we do several of Tom Lehrer's favorite "war" songs.

### ***Actor 2***

You may be asking yourself what's the difference between modern wars like Vietnam and Desert Storm and those "good old" wars of days gone by? Why, it's the music, of course! Those of you who were around for World War Two will fondly remember that, although it was not primarily a musical, it produced many hit songs.

### ***Actor 1***

Every really great war produces its share of hit songs, and afterwards, we all like to gather 'round the piano, getting terrifically nostalgic singing those songs, because of course they reminded us of how much we enjoyed the war.

### ***Actor 2***

We feel that if any hit songs are going to come out of World War Three, perhaps we'd better start writing them now. So here is a typical piece of what might be called "pre-nostalgia": a song our brave young boys sang as they went off to fight World War Three.

## ***SCENE EIGHT***

### ***Actor 1***

In order to achieve a sense of political correctness and balance, we wanted to also perform a Hanukkah song for you tonight. At many Christmas concerts, you will often see this accomplished by a group singing Hava Nagila, which is, of course, a song having absolutely nothing to do with Hanukkah, or Christmas for that matter.

### ***Actor 2***

Of course, when you think about it, there is a good reason for that: there simply aren't many popular Hanukkah songs. That's mostly because no Gentile song writer ever thought of writing one, and all the great Jewish songwriters, like Irving Berlin and Mel Torme, well, they were way too busy writing all the popular Christmas songs.

### ***Actor 1***

So tonight, to remedy this deplorable "lacuna in the repertoire" (you can look it up when you get home), Tom Lehrer wrote this next song, a sort of Jewish retort to Irving Berlin's "White Christmas".

## *SCENE NINE*

### *Actor*

We would now like to return to the folk song, which during the 50's became a particularly fashionable form of idiocy among the self-styled intellectuals. It seems clear that the reason most authentic folk songs are so atrocious is that they were written by the people. Here then is an ancient Irish ballad, which was written by Tom Lehrer in 1947 and which is replete with all the accoutrements of this art form, in particular the mandatory idiotic refrain – in this case “rickety-tickety-tin”, which you will notice cropping up through interminable verses, a large number of verses being a feature expressly designed to please the true devotees of the folk song, who seems to find singing fifty verses of “On Top of Old Smoky” twice as enjoyable as singing twenty-five. An Irish Ballad.

*(As the music begins...)*

Oh, excuse me. I should point out that this type of song has what is known technically as a modal tune, which means, for the benefit of any laymen who may have wandered in, that the band plays a wrong note every now and then.

An Irish Ballad.

*(The music begins again, but is stopped as before.)*

One last thing. A characteristic feature of public folk-singing is audience participation. And this happens to be a very good song for group singing. So if any of you feel like joining in on some of the choruses, we would be delighted if you would please leave the theater RIGHT NOW!

An Irish Ballad.

## *SCENE TEN*

### *Actor*

In this permissive age, when adultery is called “open marriage” and perversions are called “alternate life-styles,” when the Golden Rule becomes “Do unto others and with any luck they just might do unto you,” in an age of jeweled handcuffs and designer whips, it has become increasingly difficult to find anything really dirty to do.

There are still taboos, of course, but their nature has changed. And people, who defend pornography, do so on the basis of civil liberties or freedom of speech, but they are really ignoring the fundamental fact that dirty books are fun. Why don't we let Ashley, Dan and David tell us all about it?