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Dramatic Publishing

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THE REBEL:



JOHNNY YUMA
AT APPOMATTOX

DRAMA BY
ANDREW J. FENADY
FROM HIS NOVEL
THE REBEL: JOHNNY YUMA

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JOHNNY YUMA AT APPOMATTOX

Drama. By Andrew J. Fenady. From his novel The Rebel: Johnny Yuma. Cast: 9 or 10m. The author of the television series *The Rebel* presents his character, Johnny Yuma, in an original stage adaptation placing him in the thick of the action at a pivotal point in history. The final battle has been fought and lost. General Robert E. Lee is about to surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865. But Johnny Yuma has a plan. If he assassinates Grant, if a Southerner kills Grant, the south will go on fighting—and the North, without their great general, will lose. Yuma knows that Grant will humiliate Lee during the surrender. From the attic, Yuma has a bead on Grant, and he takes dead aim. Fenady, who wrote the lyrics to the song “The Rebel” made famous by Johnny Cash, has used Lee’s and Grant’s actual words in the play’s reenactment. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 35 to 40 minutes.*

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The Rebel: Johnny Yuma at Appomattox

Andrew J. Fenady

Dramatic Publishing



The Rebel: Johnny Yuma at Appomattox

A One-act Play

By

ANDREW J. FENADY

From his novel

THE REBEL: Johnny Yuma



Dramatic Publishing

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THE REBEL: JOHNNY YUMA AT APPOMATTOX received its world premiere at the Palmdale Playhouse, Palmdale, California, January 27-30, 2005, with the following artists:

CAST

GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE William Armstrong
PRIVATE DOUGLAS BAINES Ryan August
GENERAL PHILIP HENRY SHERIDAN Dean Berg
COLONEL PARKER Jacob Edwards
COLONEL ORD Nick Edwards
NARRATOR Ted Huetter
GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT Bill Kramer
CORPORAL JOHNNY YUMA Michael Murray
COLONEL CHARLES MARSHALL William Smith

ARTISTIC STAFF

Producer Dea McAllister
Director David Alan Smith
Production Design Anthony Moore
Makeup/Hair Design Constance Hansen
Light Design Philip Hopper & Anthony Moore
Sound Design M. Steven Felty
Playbill Design/Assembly Debbie Barrientes
Poster/Flyer Design Angel Elizondo

PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Director Anthony Moore
Production Manager Linda Willis
Stage Manager Constance Hansen
Audio Engineer M. Steven Felty
Light Board Operator Philip Hopper
American Sign Language Interpreter . . Wendy Kaye Reuschling
Backstage Crew Anthony Moore & David Alan Smith

THE REBEL: JOHNNY YUMA AT APPOMATTOX

A One-act Play
For 9 or 10 men

CHARACTERS

NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)
GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE
GENERAL WILLIAM BABCOCK
COLONEL CHARLES MARSHALL
CORPORAL JOHNNY YUMA
PRIVATE DOUGLAS BAINES
GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT
GENERAL PHILIP HENRY SHERIDAN
COLONEL ORD (Non-speaking)
COLONEL PARKER (Non-speaking)
COLONEL WILLIAMS (Non-speaking)

THE REBEL: JOHNNY YUMA AT APPOMATTOX

(The stage is dark—silent. Faintly—the melancholy, staccato sound of a military DRUMBEAT—then louder—but still a sad tempo—the echo of marching ghosts, footfalls to battles lost and won.

Note: Use drumbeat as deemed appropriate in the course of the play.

Light cue. Slowly, two spotlights illuminate—on high—first the Confederate flag, Stars and Bars—then the U.S. flag, 36 stars.

Note: Drumbeat fades as NARRATOR speaks. When the NARRATOR mentions Palm Sunday, we hear the tolling of a CHURCH BELL.)

NARRATOR'S VOICE OVER. Appomattox, Virginia. Palm Sunday. April 9, 1865. A nation less than a hundred years old, divided and bleeding. A nation whose 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, wanted peace—but who led his country into a bloodbath. Battle after battle—thousands of sons and fathers buried. Thousands more, blue and grey, maimed, with limbs torn—survivors who would never be the same.

(Music. Gentle strains of “Dixie” intermingled with heavier chords of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”)

NARRATOR’S VOICE OVER. Clashes on land and sea, in fields and streams, on horseback and foot—fire and devastation—all leading to the inevitable end—Appomattox. From the recent spring rain, the sky above the McLean house remained melancholy.

(As the lights fade from the flags, the center stage is illuminated revealing the McLean parlor. The set may consist of dark drapes with a practical door on stage left—or as much construction as desired. GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE, GENERAL WILLIAM BABCOCK and COLONEL CHARLES MARSHALL are all in Confederate uniforms. LEE’s uniform is immaculate, his boots polished, his sword gleaming. GENERAL LEE, looking straight ahead, sits on a hard-back chair near a small table. There is another small writing table, or secretary—upstage—and a chair. Other furniture optional. BABCOCK lifts his pocket watch and checks the time. They wait in heavy silence. Background music now only “Dixie.”)

NARRATOR’S VOICE OVER. Within the McLean house, General Robert Edward Lee. He had graduated from West Point at the head of his class—served with honor and glory in the Mexican War—became the superintendent at West Point and suppressed the uprising led by John Brown at Harper’s Ferry. Now commander of the army of Northern Virginia, General Robert E. Lee, a man of elegance and dignity even in defeat, awaits the

arrival of General Ulysses Simpson Grant—the North’s sledgehammer of victory.

(COLONEL MARSHALL steps forward toward GENERAL LEE.)

MARSHALL *(softly)*. General... *(LEE still looks straight ahead—doesn’t respond. MARSHALL continues, louder.)*
General Lee...

LEE *(reacts)*. Yes...I’m sorry, Colonel...what is it?

MARSHALL. Can I get you anything? Is there anything you need, sir?

LEE *(a beat—then with a trace of irony, but no bitterness)*.
Is there anything we *don’t* need, Colonel? Guns—ammunition—rations—medicine. But it’s too late. What’s left of our army is hungry and worn out—no match for the overwhelming numbers against us. I think I’ve known from the beginning that the Confederacy would never have enough of anything—except courage. And in war it takes more than courage to be on the winning side.

MARSHALL. Begging your pardon, sir, but—you could have been on the winning side. Lincoln offered you command of his armies.

LEE. But he couldn’t offer me command of my conscience.
The Lees fought for Virginia before there *was* a United States. Whether I chose correctly—is for God and history to judge and decide.

MARSHALL. Permission to speak freely, sir?

LEE. Of course, Colonel.

(MARSHALL is a strong man and a superior soldier, but there is a tremor in his voice. He is one of the weary who stayed with the colors because of his unshakable confidence in—and love for LEE.)

MARSHALL. I don't know about God, sir—and I don't care about history—but I do know that I've had the privilege, the honor—of serving with the most distinguished, most compassionate, the most brilliant officer of this—or any other army. From Sumter to Lexington—to Belmont and Shiloh. Fort Royal. Manassas. No one else could have won those victories. No one else could have held out this long—and in your heart you know that, sir.

LEE. Maybe I do. And maybe that's what preys on my mind.

MARSHALL. What do you mean, sir?

LEE. If we hadn't won in the beginning, then the end would have come sooner—and how many young soldiers—the best and bravest of the North and South—still would be alive.

MARSHALL. No, sir. Without you more of us would have died, many more. You beat all those Yankee generals...

LEE. All but one.

MARSHALL. By the time he came along, sir, by the time Grant took command, we...

LEE. Colonel...

MARSHALL. Yes, sir?

LEE *(quietly, but firmly)*. Thank you.

(Light cue. Center stage lights slowly fade.)

NARRATOR'S VOICE OVER. Outside the McLean house they stood—some of the Rebel remnants—stood with a weary rigidity—and waited, looking to the North.

(A small area, stage right, is illuminated, revealing part of the interior of a barn—a stall and bales of hay. Two Confederate soldiers—CORPORAL JOHNNY YUMA and PRIVATE DOUGLAS BAINES—their uniforms dirty and torn. YUMA faces upstage leaning against a stall. BAINES, who is older than YUMA, sits on a bale of hay with a small Bible in his hands.)

NARRATOR'S VOICE OVER. But inside a nearby barn there were two others—soldiers of the South—who, only the day before, had fought the last battle for the Confederacy.

(BAINES begins to read aloud from the Bible. Once again, we hear the tolling of a CHURCH BELL.)

BAINES. “He shall cover thee...and under his wings shalt thou trust;
his torch will be thy shield and buckler,
thou shalt not be afraid for the terror of the night;
nor the arrow that flieth by day,
a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.
He shall raise you up on eagle's wings.”

(BAINES looks up toward JOHNNY—whose face we haven't seen yet.)

BAINES. Thousands did fall, Johnny, to our left and right, but it looks like we're gonna make it.

(YUMA turns toward BAINES—speaks in a hushed nervousness—then paces.)

YUMA. Doug, we can't let it happen...

BAINES. Let what happen?

YUMA. The surrender.

BAINES. Johnny...

YUMA. It's got to be stopped.

BAINES. Johnny, your saddle's slippin'. You're off your feed...

YUMA. I'm telling you...

BAINES. You can tell me whatever you like, but you think a little ol' nubbin of a corporal, Johnny Yuma, is going to tell General Robert E. Lee what to do? It's all over, son.

YUMA. Not yet, it's not!

(BAINES rises from the stool and faces YUMA.)

BAINES. Well, it will be, and thank God, in a matter of minutes. No more fear and death every morning. Pretty soon old fuzzy-face Grant and his staff'll ride up to McLean's house outside and Lee'll sign a piece of paper and give him a tin sword and we can all go home, son.

YUMA. To what?

BAINES. Johnny...

YUMA. To boot lickin' shame and sufferin'—that's what!

BAINES. To life! To my Cora and little Jimmy. Johnny, we're the lucky ones. We get to go home.

YUMA. What home? I fought with the third Texas, with Jubal Early and Lee—like my father fought with Sam Houston—for the Lone Star, for Texas. But there won't be any Texas.

BAINES. Your father and Sam Houston both were against this war Johnny—against slavery...

YUMA. So am I, but I'm *for* Texas—and always will be.

BAINES. Well Texas is going to have to change some and so are you—and so am I—so we might just as well go home and get at it. You to Texas and me to Kansas. Lawrence, Kansas—what's left of it. Easy to find and not much out of your way. Johnny, come visit a contented old farmer and his family. Cora'll cook you up the best beef stew you ever sat down to.

YUMA. No!

BAINES (*trying for humor*). What's the matter? Don't you like stew?

YUMA. Have you forgotten the last four years just like that?! (*Snaps his fingers.*) We started out a battalion and ended up a platoon. A lot of dead men ago, Doug—good men. Have you forgotten what happened yesterday at that bridge, not more than a mile away?

BAINES. Johnny...

YUMA. Have you forgotten Lieutenant Cane? A few months ago he was teaching English in a high school—yesterday he was leading what was left of our brigade.

BAINES. And where is he today?

(*YUMA ignores the question.*)

YUMA. Listen to me, Doug—just the night before, that new boy, Randy, he was shivering with fear—afraid that

he'd turn and run, instead of stand and fight. He told that to the lieutenant. And the lieutenant quoted him and all of us some words from some poem—or play.

BAINES. I heard. I was there.

YUMA. I'll never forget those words, Doug—*“It seems to me most strange that men should fear, knowing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come. A coward dies many times. The valiant never taste of death but once.”* Why should we surrender so long as we're still alive?

(YUMA comes closer to BAINES.)

YUMA. Have you forgotten the lieutenant on that bridge screaming “Charge! Follow me, you valiant Rebs...valiant Rebels follow me!” We took that bridge, Doug!

BAINES. What difference does it make? Lieutenant Cane never lived to see it. Neither did Randy or most of the rest of 'em. We're beat, Johnny. Everybody knows it.

YUMA. Not me. I don't know any such thing!

(BAINES turns away and walks two steps.)

BAINES. Well then, you stay and keep playin' soldier.

(YUMA advances, grabs BAINES and whirls him so they are face to face.)

YUMA. Don't fun me, paperback. I fought every day you fought...

BAINES. Did you fight as much as Stone Jackson and Jeb Stuart? Hill and Pender? And Rhodes? They're all dead, too...and most their soldier boys with 'em!

YUMA. Sure they are, all dead. And if we give up now, what'd they all die for—what?

BAINES. Sometimes you lose.

YUMA. Well, not yet.

BAINES. Yes, yet! Now! Lost! Listen to me. I ain't no general, but I know somethin'. Two weeks ago Gordon had seventy-five hundred men. Now there's less than two thousand, all starved. (*YUMA turns away.*) You listenin'?

YUMA. I'm listening.

BAINES. Field's got more men absent than present! All that's left of Pickett's whole army is sixty bone beaten men! Now what do you expect to fight with?

YUMA (*turns and faces BAINES*). So long as I got a gun I fight!

BAINES. Johnny...

YUMA. If I didn't, I'd be untrue to those Rebs I charged with at Cedar Creek and Cold Harbor. We vowed together that we'd fight until we were all dead if we had to—and then our ghosts'd go right on fighting.

BAINES. Yeah, well that's about all we got left is a phantom army—and as far as I'm concerned, Grant's welcome to the leavin's.

(It's as if a thundercloud comes across YUMA's face at the mention of GRANT's name.)

YUMA. Grant! That hog-back blisterface! That craven drunk, no good blue-belly! I can see him strutting up to

General Lee, trying to make him grovel—humiliating a saint—beating him over the head with the bones of the Confederacy. Grant. *U.S. Grant!* He's butchered and bled us dry. He won't be satisfied till every man, woman and child south of the Mason-Dixon is starving and begging for mercy.

BAINES. There's nothin' to be done about it, son. So you better be content to witness some history this here Palm Sunday.

YUMA. Witness? (*He draws his side arm from its holster.*) I'm gonna *make* history—and alone if you're not of a mind to help...

BAINES. Johnny...what're you nurturin' in that hot Texas head of yours?

(YUMA takes a couple of steps away, then turns back still gripping the gun in his hand.)

YUMA. Here's what I've been nurturing! Suppose General Lee doesn't have to surrender to Grant? Suppose something happens to Grant *before* Lee surrenders?

BAINES. What're you talkin' about?

YUMA. Wouldn't that make some history?

BAINES. What could happen to Grant?

YUMA. He could be dead.

BAINES. How?

YUMA. He could be killed.

BAINES. By who?

YUMA. By me! (*Lifts the gun.*) With this! One shot! That's all it takes!

BAINES. That's all it takes except for something else. There's a whole Yankee army between you and him.

General Ulysses Simpson Grant is the most important thing those Yankees have got. Right now maybe even more important than Lincoln himself. You think that Yankee army's gonna let some Southern scrub with a gun get close enough to General Grant to take that shot?

YUMA. Yeah, well suppose I know something that you don't know—that the whole Yankee army doesn't know—including General U.S. Grant? Something that'll let me take that shot. Would you like to hear what that something is?!

BAINES. I'm listening.

YUMA. I've been in McLean's house this morning.

BAINES. So?

YUMA. So right now General Lee's sitting in the parlor. I'm climbing around back to a room right over that parlor. A room with a vent. It's there all right. I've laid it all out, and when Grant walks in, he's going to run straight into a headful of lead...from this. (*YUMA aims the gun.*)

BAINES. If you think...

YUMA. Doug, at Falls Church you saved my life. That Billy Yank's bayonet was right against my throat when you pulled the trigger.

BAINES. I see his face every time I close my eyes.

YUMA. Maybe there was a reason. Maybe it was fate. Destiny. Maybe I wasn't meant to die *then* because of what I've got to do *now*.

BAINES. You're fevered.

YUMA. I sure am. If a Southerner kills Grant, there'll be no surrender. No peace. I thought it all out—and it'll work.

BAINES. No it won't.

YUMA. Why not?

BAINES. Because you already made one mistake.

YUMA. What mistake?

BAINES. You told *me* about it.

(A pause—YUMA is puzzled—there is a sense of betrayal by his comrade.)

YUMA. Doug, we're both on the same side.

BAINES. Not anymore.

YUMA. Why not?

BAINES. Because you're crazy—the whole idea is crazy.

YUMA. Why? Because I've got enough guts to change the course of history with one shot? And I can do it! You'll see!

BAINES. No I won't—and neither will you because you're not steppin' out of this barn—not till it's over.

YUMA. What's going to stop me?

BAINES. I am.

YUMA (*YUMA's voice is not loud—but it is determined and deadly*). After what we've been through I wouldn't want to kill you, Doug, but kill you I will, if it means killing Grant too.

BAINES. That shows how addled you are, Johnny. You're not thinkin' straight.

YUMA. I'm not?

BAINES. One shot from in here and this place'll be swarmin' with soldiers.

(YUMA realizes BAINES is right.)

YUMA. Look, Doug, I'm not asking you to do anything except stay here and keep quiet. I'll do the rest. And with Grant dead we'll have to keep fighting and you'll see, we'll win.

BAINES. No, I won't see, you young owl head. (*BAINES leaps at YUMA, grabs him—and tries to get the gun away.*) Give me that...

(YUMA smashes his fist into BAINES' jaw—and as BAINES starts to fall, YUMA lifts the gun to hit him with the barrel but realizes that that will not be necessary. BAINES is unconscious as he hits the floor. YUMA looks around. He spots a length of rope across a stall. He walks over, holsters the gun, takes the rope. He starts to tie up the unconscious soldier lying on the floor.)

YUMA. I'm sorry, ol' Doug. But now you know, and I got to make sure you don't spoil it. Four years is nothing. We'll fight forty. And we'll win without them having Grant.

(Light cue: As YUMA ties up BAINES, lights fade. An area on stage left is being illuminated. We can see part of a tent, a couple of camp chairs and a small table. Standing in front is GENERAL U.S. GRANT. He strikes a match on his belt buckle and relights a half-smoked cigar.)

NARRATOR'S VOICE OVER. General U.S. Grant. There never was a more tenacious, aggressive, defiant, and determined officer in the history of warfare. He never shied from personal danger. Never hesitated. Never fal-

tered, no matter the cost—and the cost was terrible to the North—but worse to the enemy.

(GRANT's face and uniform are used up and dirty. His eyes tell of tired victory and inconsolable sadness. He puffs—sees something or someone—drops the match—then raises an arm.)

GRANT. Sheridan!

(GENERAL PHILIP HENRY SHERIDAN approaches, nods and smiles faintly. SHERIDAN's uniform is not in much better shape than GRANT's. The two generals salute.)

GRANT. Phil, you made good time. But then you have right along. How are you?

SHERIDAN. First rate, sir. Been waiting long?

GRANT. Not too long...not for this. I wanted you to be with me.

SHERIDAN. Thank you.

GRANT. Phil, you've been with me since I took command. My right hand...the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Richmond...the Shenandoah.

SHERIDAN *(with sadness but not regret)*. The Shenandoah.

GRANT. I still remember your report...“even a crow flying over the Shenandoah Valley will have to bring his own rations.” Phil, we laid waste to half the nation.

SHERIDAN. But it's still a nation, sir. Thanks mostly to you.

GRANT (*shakes his head*). Thanks to a man in the White House named Lincoln and to those boys who fell at Fort Henry, Shiloh, Richmond and...so many other places. (*GRANT starts to reach inside his coat toward a vest pocket.*) Would you like a cigar, Phil?

SHERIDAN (*softly*). No thank you, sir.

GRANT. You know, since the word spread that I smoke cigars, people have been sending me boxes of 'em from all points of the compass (*smiles*) except the South. Every size, shape and strength you can imagine. I couldn't smoke half of them if I lived to be a hundred.

SHERIDAN (*smiles*). It's their way of showing their gratitude. And if I may say, sir, I think the time will come when they show it in another way.