

Smoke on the Mountain

by Connie Ray, Alan Bailey, Mike Craver, and Mark Hardwick

Directed by: Wesley H. Rorex

Assistant Director/Musical Director: April Duquette

PERFORMANCE DATES: February 12-21, 2027 (7 Shows)

AUDITION INFORMATION

AUDITION DATES

SEPTEMBER 10 & 11 @ 6:30 pm

SEPTEMBER 12 @ 10:00 am

SEPTEMBER 13 @ 2:00 pm

ABOUT THE SHOW

Smoke on the Mountain is a joyous, toe-tapping musical comedy set in a small North Carolina Baptist church in 1938. The Sanders Family has come to Mount Pleasant Baptist to share their music and their stories, bringing gospel classics, bluegrass charm, and heartfelt humor to the congregation. As they sing and testify, secrets slip out, laughter mingles with faith, and the family's imperfections shine as brightly as their love and devotion. Packed with over two dozen bluegrass and gospel favorites like "*I'll Fly Away*" and "*Rock of Ages*," the show is equal parts revival meeting and heartfelt family comedy, creating an unforgettable evening of laughter, music, and inspiration.

Since its premiere, *Smoke on the Mountain* has become one of the most frequently produced musicals in the United States, delighting audiences nationwide. It was originally staged at the McCarter Theatre in 1988 before transferring Off-Broadway, where it won critical acclaim and earned a Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Musical Revue.

CASTING

Smoke on the Mountain has 7 principal characters in the standard cast: 3 women and 4 men. However, we plan to cast congregation members and bluegrass musicians to join in the revival.

THE PRINCIPLE CHARACTERS ARE:

Pastor Mervin Oglethorpe

Gender: Male

Stage Age: Mid-20s to 60s

Vocal Part: Baritone/Tenor

Characteristics:

- Young, earnest Baptist minister.
- Well-meaning and enthusiastic.

- Trying to modernize and energize his small congregation.
- Acts as narrator, host, and comic straight man for the Sanders family's antics.
- Should be personable with strong comedic timing.

Burl Sanders

Gender: Male

Stage Age: 35-65

Vocal Part: Bass-Baritone

Characteristics:

- Patriarch and leader of the Sanders family Singers.
- Strong, dependable mountain man.
- Proud of his family's musical ministry.
- Warm-hearted, practical, and often unintentionally funny.
- Usually plays guitar or leads instrumental sections.

Vera Sanders

Gender: Female

Stage Age: 35-65

Vocal Part: Alto/Mezzo-Soprano

Characteristics:

- Family matriarch.
- Loving, steady, and deeply religious.
- Possesses gentle authority within the family.
- Capable of heartfelt testimony and humor.
- Often serves as the emotional center of the show.

Stanley Sanders

Gender: Male

Stage Age: 35-65

Vocal Part: Baritone

Characteristics:

- Burl's brother.
- Charming but somewhat eccentric.
- A source of much of the show's comedy.
- Childlike enthusiasm and storytelling ability.
- Usually portrayed as lovable and slightly awkward.

Dennis Sanders

Gender: Male

Stage Age: 18-35

Vocal Part: Tenor

Characteristics:

- Fraternal twin to Denise.
- Good-looking, energetic young man.

- Sometimes portrayed as naive or overly confident.
- Plays multiple instruments in many productions.
- Strong comic and musical role.

Denise Sanders

Gender: Female

Stage Age: 18-35

Vocal Part: Soprano

Characteristics:

- Fraternal twin to Dennis.
- Attractive, spirited, and expressive.
- Often delivers some of the show's funniest moments.
- Strong singer with personality and presence.
- Mixes youthful confidence with southern charm.

June Sanders

Gender: Female

Stage Age: 16-30

Vocal Part: Soprano (or light Mezzo)

Characteristics:

- Youngest Sanders family member.
- Sweet, innocent, and somewhat shy.
- Communicates through interpretive sign language during portions of the show.
- Possesses a gentle spirituality and sincerity.
- Provides some of the show's most touching moments.

BONUS POINTS IF YOU CAN PLAY THE FOLLOWING:

- Guitar
- Banjo
- Mandolin
- Bass
- Fiddle
- Dulcimer
- Autoharp
- Piano

WHAT TO PREPARE:

Please choose the following monologue for the principle character for which you are auditioning.

NOTE: Sides will be provided at the auditions.

MERVIN OGLETHORPE

God scratches where the world itches. (*Pause.*) The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about folks afflicted with itching ears, and I believe... (*He must confess.*) I do not know where they got off to. I purely do not. I directed that down to the Eat'n'Run over an hour ago, and they simply have not come back. They've been here, you see their things. They Eat'n'Run is usually true to its name. But I'm confident they'll be here any minute, so I'll press on and take this opportunity to welcome each and every one of you to the first-ever Saturday Night Sing at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. I recall Job 35:10 – But none saith, Where is God my maker, who gives song in the night. Amen.

A special greeting to all you folks from the Antioch, Free Will, and Fire-Baptized Holiness. The doors of Mount Pleasant swing on welcome hinges. And I am surprised and delighted to see Miss. Maude and Miss. Myrtle in the Amen Corner. These dear ladies had some strong reservations about guitars and fiddles in the church, but I see you've had a change of heart. (*They haven't.*) I have not been this excited since I received the conviction to preach. I think it's a true sign of the modern times when we can gather together on a Saturday night, and I can look out on all the menfolk and see nothing but shirtsleeves! Not a suit coat in sight.

BURL SANDERS

He's talking profits and revenues, and I'm seeing the bank take over my store, my family wasting to nothing. Now, I've never told this, not even to my family, but ... I was backed into a corner here. I thought, "That's it. I'm gonna have to do it. I'm gonna have to sell beer in my store."

And just as I'm about to say load it in, the beer man's car starts hissing. Hissing and moaning out the back, a-rocking on its tires like there's something alive back there.

Then Pow! Just like a rabbit gun going off. Pow. POW. The beer man's done hit the ground and crawled up under a bench. I am froze like a popsicle. BOOM! That trunk lid blows open and a bottle cap flies by my head so close it just about pins my ear to the clapboard. Well, I am de-frosted and down in the dirt with the beer man. And it hit me. The Devil!

This here beer man reminds me of old Satan himself. And I could be Job, only in the modern world. And I thought on Job. Now, there he was, robbed of every sign of God's favor, hunkered down in a sack, covered with festering sores and boils, and the miracle is, he NEVER lost faith. And here I am, put to the test one time, and I'm ready to roll over. Well, I strode over to that bench, I jerked that beer man up by his fancy lapels, I put my nose right up to his, and I said, "Bud, I suggest you crawl back in that stinking Mercury and haul it down the road." He jumps in the front seat a-sputtering and crying and takes off, beer dripping down through the cracks and dribbling on the tires. Shoo-ee. Now, for those of you who don't know it, that beer has staying power. I got the family down there. We set in to scrubbing and shoveling dirt onto the puddles of it. Psalms 62:8 says – Mother? Trust in Him at all times. I won't sell beer in my store. And I don't do near as well as I did. I finished the porch, though. (*To the Family:*) We're just going to have to wait a while for the screen wire.

VERA SANDERS

The other night I was sitting out on my back porch having a nice cold glass of delicious lemonade and contemplating hard this coming evening of song and worship and the great challenge the Lord has given to me to share his love and guidance with you, when whoop! Something plopped into my nice glass of lemonade. Now, can anybody guess what plopped into my glass? It being JUNE and all? (*Pause.*) Nobody? A june bug! That's right. And I turned to my husband Burl who was sitting out on the porch with me, and I said, "Burl, would you look at that, a June Bug just jumped into my lemonade." And Burl said, "Well, you can't have mine." And I said, "Burl!" (*Laughs.*) And he said, "Flick it out with your straw, there's nothing wrong with it." And I just had to sigh, 'cause there was wasted a whole big glass of refreshing lemonade. And I admit it, I was right mad with that June Bug. But while I was digging around for his little drowning body, the Lord was digging around for his little drowning body, the Lord in his wondrous way spoke to me, and He said, "Think on that June Bug." And I did. And God, in his wisdom, let me see that we, too, all of us, are June Bugs in this world. Flying aimlessly, hitting the screen doors of life, and drowning in the refreshments! And the Lord was speaking to me so loud and clear that I made Burl put on his shoes and go out and trap me a couple of June Bugs for our lesson tonight.

DENISE SANDERS

Mr. Selznick looks up and down the line, and he says, “You, little girl with the heart, you stay.”

I go, and I stand before him, and he asks me my name, and where I’m from, and how old I am, and have I ever been to Charlotte before, and was I planning on staying overnight. Friendly things like that. He says I am delightful. That if he didn’t know better, he’d swear I was a Rockette. I didn’t even know what a Rockette *was* back then. He says, “I’ll be in touch.” And I looked up from writing down my address – he winked at me. On the bus home, everybody’s crying. But me. “I’ll be in touch!” He’s gonna write me! I could be the new girl! I’d be perfect as Scarlett! I find a pack of violet candy in June’s purse, and I eat the whole thing in celebration.

But you see, yesterday marking four months. And Mr. Selznick hasn’t been in touch. I’m pretty sure I’m not gonna be Scarlett. The paper says they gave the part to Paulette Goddard. She’ll be good. (*Starts to cry.*) I know this has to do with Jesus and my soul in some way. My mama and daddy wanted me to say something and... I know I lapsed. My sins are many and easy to count.

I’m powerfully sorry for not honoring my Mother and Father. For snatching my sister’s hard-gotten belonging and eating what was in it. But as far as the sin to myself, I truly haven’t figured that out yet. I pray I will, and I know Jesus hears my prayers.

DENNIS SANDERS

The Lord has called me to preach, and I believe He'll fill my mouth. (*Dennis moves to the side of the pulpit and waits a moment for God's inspiration. He begins quietly.*)

When I was little bitty, I would kneel and pray through with the grown folks – the big sinners. And they'd say to me, Dennis, you're not a bad boy. But I felt I had the potential of all the evil that ya'll big folks have, I just hadn't done it yet. And right then, I committed my life to preaching. I'd turn up a five-gallon can and try preaching to my sisters. When they'd laugh at me, I'd take up my dog and pray for him. I'd say, (*Addressing his dog.*) Rufus, Jesus can save you. He can take up your soul and make it His own. Give Him your soul, boy. Give it to him today. (*Talking to Rufus begins to free Dennis up.*)

Fasten your eyes upon the cross and your heart will grow lighter, the sky will be brighter. Jesus can help you find the way. Shake hands with Jesus, give him your foot. (*Dennis starts to cook. The family urges him on.*) Walk side by side with our Savior, and you'll never be alone. Oh, they'll be things in the beginning the Devil will throw in our way. Oh, he'll throw things in our way! But we can smile at Satan's rage – said smile at Satan's rage, and move on. It won't hinder us, no sir. No sir! Praise Jesus, we will never suffer the sting of death. Praise Jesus, He has written our names in the Book of Life.

STANLEY SANDERS

I got an idea about sin. I think a lot of time bad things are slung at unsuspecting folks.

All those men out there with no job – their families are hungry, got no roof over their heads. The crew on the Yadkin was made up of the roughest bunch of men I've ever knowed. I was friendly with a fella name o' Leighton. Arms as big as my leg. Mean. One day, we're sitting under a shade tree waiting for our dinner. That sounds nice, don't it? There was a fellow with a shotgun twenty yards down the line. (*To Burl.*)

They didn't want us running off. The foreman's wife would bring us a plate. She had to feed the mess of us – and look after a little daughter, too.

Sweetest little girl. Reminded me of June when she was a baby. But this little girl had no fear. She's a-toddling along behind her Mama when she fixes her eyes on ole Leighton. Walks right over, crawls up in his lap, stretches out her little baby arms, and hugs Leighton's neck. Her little cheek up there next to his. Now, you don't even want to brush up against Leighton. You don't want to get near him. So, I turn easy-like to pull her off him, and I see a big old tear roll down his ugly face. Leighton turns to me and says "What you looking at?" And he squeezes that baby with those big ole ham hands of his and sends her back to her Mama. We eat our dinner. Leighton's chewing on an ole cold biscuit and says, "That's the first hug I've had since I was twelve." When the Lord looked out over the five thousand, he was moved to feed them. And that multitude included the likes of Leighton and me. I wanted to come home. And I'm gonna try to stick it out. (*To Burl.*) My brother here just said come home.

JUNE SANDERS

Well. (*June reluctantly rises. She had planned to speak. She thinks for a moment.*)

I've been sitting over here listening to these songs and them doing their parts, and it reminds me of hydroelectric plants. I took a tour once of the Fontana Dam. The tallest dam in the Tennessee Valley Authority. Fifteen hundred feet high. It took a million barrels of concrete to build it. Think what that would look like in pickles! Our guide took us all over the thing, even to the control room. Are there inside the room were rows and rows of switches and buttons. And there was this one big blue button that he said raised the control gate. By pushing that button, he said, the Fontana would make enough light for every house from there to Siler City. Well, I'm from Siler City, and that was a long way away.

Then, the guide looked square at me and said, 'Push it.' I tried to say 'No, thank you,' but it wouldn't come out. 'Go ahead, miss,' he says. 'Push it. It's time.' So I set my mouth, walked up to that button like one big blue eye staring out at me, put out my finger, and pushed.

And you could hear it! The gate started groaning up. And the water starts whooshing in – like a flood. You can't see it, you hear it. And the turbine starts rolling over, and the roar is nothing but power. Power of the water and the moving and the turning. And in my mind I can see little houses lighting up all the way home.