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Cranwell: Capitol Steps Satirists right on the mark

By **Richard Houdek, Special to the Eagle**
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LENOX -- Remember how, not too long ago, those who savor political satire, who live by the laugh, were deeply worried that, after George W. Bush was succeeded in the White House by Barak Obama, our sources, and perhaps our senses, of humor would dry up.

Well now, don't we know better?

We have upon us a Golden Age of political satirical opportunity, mined on a daily basis by Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, Jay Leno and David Letterman. And, then, of course, we have the Capitol Steps, that sextet of merry makers that has been holding court throughout the summer at the Cranwell Resort. They call themselves the people "who put the mock in democracy."

The current troupe in residence, celebrating Capitol Steps' latest CD - the 30th to be exact -- "Liberal Shop of Horrors," has discovered an embarrassment of riches -- and well it should be extremely embarrassing - spilling out of Washington into their nimble minds, and they manage to take advantage of almost every possibility.

Among the most hilarious are what they call the Democrats' plan to conquer the deficit ("Return to Spender") intoned by a trio impersonating Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, and a solution for health care reform, "Cash for Codgers." Or, how about the Steppers' take on the world's most famous golfer as our newest bad boy, in "Fly of the Tiger."

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The topics are endless and inclusive -- homeland security, immigration, the BP oil spill and Tony Haywood, the

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2010 census form, Al Gore and single dating services, Scott Brown and John McCain, Toyota, television commercials for medications, "Don't ask, don't tell," Guantanamo, revisionist textbooks in Texas, cutting costs for suicide bombing and the dangers of imported food from China.

Only the tea party was missing from this curious collection. But to disclose more details would spoil the fun. You must see and hear it for yourself.

This year's group seems unusually talented, the members' ambidexterity especially pronounced, with the gifted Tracey Stephens managing Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sarah Palin. Brad VanGrack similarly ambles on both sides of the street, as Bill Clinton, as well as John Ensign and other characters to the right.

As Michelle Obama, Felicia Curry is a knockout, and she makes a stunning Kim Jong-il and a cunning Arizona border arrestee.

Morgan Duncan doesn't look exactly like Barack Obama, but he's tall and lanky and has mastered the staccato delivery and many of the gestures; he's a great Pirate King shepherding Bob Dylan, Susan Boyle and Michael Jackson through a songfest, and as the quintessential environmentalist, Duncan joins Curry in a plaintive duet, "Being Green."

Jamie Zermal impersonates various Republicans, Democrats and independents and displays his nice high baritone several times, notably, in two pointed parodies, as Tony Bennett in a different take on "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," and Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, in a deft text alteration for "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina."

Howard Breitbart, no relation to the infamous blogger, ties the proceedings together handily on his electronic piano, while seeming to enjoy the jokes as though hearing them for the first time.

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The finale was the usual exercise in spoonerisms, a practice of exchanging initial or secondary consonants between words in a sentence or phrase. In oldspeak, we would know this routine as "Dirty Lies," but VanGrack delivered it as "Lirty Dies," tendering a compendium of some of the year's most outlandish deeds, from such as Rod Blagojevich (Blod Ragojevich), Michael Phelps (Phichael Melps), and Senator John Edwards, identified as Enator Sedweards who in Van Grascspeak was "head-bopping."

Indeed, GranVack has a toast mexible flung, and is a merry vunny fan.

Incidental intelligence: Cranwell offers a reasonable three-course, pre-show dinner in its Wyndhurst Restaurant, and a complementary tram lift to the show and back afterward.



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