

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Mississippi Panorama

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Music by
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Mississippi Panorama was originally produced by the Children's Theatre Company for the 2000-01 season.

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Mississippi Panorama is based on the life of John Banvard, a painter from the mid 1800's. Banvard painted the "Largest Painting in the World", a scenic display of the Mississippi River stretching over three miles of canvass. The painting was called the first moving picture as it was rolled past the audience on two large dowels or "Crankys". It took over two hours for the painting to roll by and was seen by Presidents, commoners, Farmers, River rats, Charles Dickens and Queen Victoria herself.

CHARACTERS

Old Banvard

Professor Leaky

John Banvard

Para Nunzio

Cap'n Thibideaux

Sneaky Pete

Tinkles

Mom

Old Timer

Winter

Spring

Shadow

Lady Bones Johnson

Philistrate

Big Daddy Catfish

Ensemble includes: River Chorus, Rat Townies, Puppeteers

ACT ONE
SCENE 1

Professor Leaky enters, bows. The choir sings the overture.

Banvard, as an old man, stands before a large cranky, a device made with two dowels, designed to make a painting travel. The device is old and much used, obviously it's time has come and gone. Banvard is in a place of memory.

OLD BANVARD: Ah. Here we are.

He starts the machine and the cranky turns. Music. A painting of a river flows by. Voices are heard, sounds from his past. He recites along with some of the passage.

VOICE : "Ladies and Gentlemen, John Banvard s "Mississippi Panorama",
The largest painting executed by human hand, three miles of
moving canvass portraying 3000 miles of the mighty Mississippi.
Breathtaking beauty. flowers of every size and hue, grassy hills,
majestic bluffs, see the village of the dead, and the city of St. Louis,
fire eating frogs, the Treasure of the Devils Punchbowl, Desoto's
casket, the Zombie of Bayou Teche.

OLD BANVARD: If it Ain't real you can keep the wagon.

VOICE: If it ain' t real you can keep the wagon. As seen by Queen Victoria
and court of England at Windsor castle. Ladies and Gentlemen,
John Banvard ..."

OLD BANVARD : Oh me. . yes, I remember now this went here. And this turned.
That's not right it should ... oh there it goes ... Ladies and
Gentleman, boys and girls, your Majesties it is a great honor to
present to you, my friend, "The Mighty Mississippi River" (We hear
a drip) Like each and every river the Mississippi starts with a drip...

SCENE 2: A RIVER IS FORMED

The Chorus, led by Professor Leaky sings the river into existence. It starts with a drip, drip drop
drip and then a trickle, more trickles, a basin empties, and then a river. The song builds until

they are singing Miss-Iss-Ippi. Over a section of the river we see feet crossing. First animal feet then human feet, barefoot, moccasins, Spanish boots, Many feet, Soldiers feet, Settlers, slowly a pair of white Bucks (Para Nunzio) and white pants approach. A plank is placed over the stream. Para Nunzio walks across the board. More feet, a rush of feet, a pair of child's feet stop at the river's edge. The lights reveal John Banvard. He sees the river. They sing to him. His parents take him away by the hand.

Song "Born of the River"

Born of the river
Born of the river

We're born of the river
Born of the ever changing never changing muddy waters

River runs deep river runs wide
Born of the river on his back we ride

Current take me up Current take me down
Wash my sins to the next town down

Too thick to drink too thin to plow
Gonna build me a raft and sell my cow

Born of the river
Born of the ever changing never changing muddy waters

SCENE 3

Young John Banvard Enters.

BANVARD: Dusty. Stay close boy.

He draws the river, puts the drawing in a bottle and sets it in the current.

BANVARD: Goodbye bottle.

VOICE: John Banvard

BANVARD: Who is that?

VOICE: John Banvard.

BANVARD: You want something of me?

CHILDREN sing

CHILDREN: John Banvard
sink or swim,
loves the river
but it don't love him.
John Banvard
Full of lard
Mommy's boy
Get back in your yard

BANVARD: Get out of here you ...you... children. A plague on your house. . .

They scamper off, laughing, "A plague on your house." "No, no a plague on your house." One child coughs. Banvard threatens them with a stone, he throws the rock into the river.

CHORUS: John ... Ban ... Vard

BANVARD: Ah! See that Dusty ... it skipped three times.

CHORUS: Skip a rock three times three
On a River, ocean, lake, or sea
Skip a rock three times three
and any wish is granted thee

He skips another rock, the river sings.

CHORUS: John .. Ban ... Vard

BANVARD: Two. That's Two. One more. Aha. Perfect. A flat one.

CHORUS: Skip a rock
Three times three

Make a wish and it will BE.

He kisses the stone.

CHORUS: John ... Ban ... Vard

BANVARD: I did it!!!! I get a wish!!!! I get a.... (*Professor Leaky makes an appearance.*) Uh Oh.

PROFFESSOR: Who dares ripple my glassy sleep?

BANVARD: John Banvard and this here is my dog Dusty Springfed. Who might you be?

PROFFESSOR: Who AM I ? Who Am I ?

CHORUS : SS

PROFFESSOR: I

CHORUS: SS

PROFFESSOR: I

CHORUS: PP

PROFFESSOR: I ?

Repeat.

BANVARD: Well?

PROFFESSOR: Little man, I am too thin to drink too thick to plow.

BANVARD: Ummmmm. No, I'm not ...

PROFFESSOR: I have four eyes but cannot see.

BANVARD: A potato?

PROFFESOR: Boy you are about two gallons short of a pint. Pay attention.
I can grasp a ton steel in my clammy hand
Yet not- pick up a grain of sand
Treat me cold I freeze right through
Make me hot I steam up on you
Storm cloud grey, sea blue sea
I'm as fair as the fairest to look on me
I glow lip when lovers swoon
I make flowers grow
I play tug a war with the moon
I roar, I coo, I Bubble, I burst
I wash away sins, I quench the thirst
Of Paupers or kings, I don't care the name
Dump 'em in, all sink or swim the same
Never fear
Need a tear
A dash of salt
And All is clear
I Go with the flow
So don't try to hold
When I gotta go I got to go.
(He springs a leak)
Who am I?

BANVARD: I know! Water.

PROFFESSOR: You're a smart one, "Water" yes, good, some know me by that name. *(the river hushes other names for water Agua, H2O, Sippi etc..)*.
But you may call me Professor Leaky.

BANVARD: It is an honor.

PROFFESSOR: Now Up as steam down as rain
I go up and around and back to the ground.
Give a dinosaur a drink
go up and around come back to the ground
Come out a kitchen sink
Up and around come back to the ground
To fill the deep blue sea
Up and around and back to the ground

And grant the wish a mortal made on me.

BANVARD: My wish.

PROFFESSOR: Watch and listen it will come to you.

BANVARD: I already know. I want me a nice big hunka hunka burnin

PROFFESSOR: Did you do this? (*Holds up Banvard's drawing*)

BANVARD: No.

PROFFESSOR: It's good.

BANVARD: Yes, Yes I did.

PROFFESSOR: You have a gift.

BANVARD: It's the river ...you.

PROFFESSOR: I know. But soft, who comes near?

MOM: John. (*BANVARD hides.*)

THE MAN IN WHITE, PARA NUNZIO appears with two lackeys pulling a raft. They are CAP'N THIBIDEAUX and SNEAKY PETE. The chorus moves freely about them, when one brushes by they may swat at it like a bug. PARA NUNZIO makes some notations and calculations.

THIBIDEAUX: Easy there Pete, mind the rocks.

SNEAKY PETE: I got 'er Cap'n.

PARA NUNZIO: Stop.

THIBIDEAUX: Hold it.

PARA NUNZIO: I have arrived. Paradise, Eden, Land of milk and honey.

SNEAKY PETE: I don't feel so good.

THIBIDEAUX: Me neither.

PARA NUNZIO: Please, I am speaking. yes ... Gold, Fortune, Fame. All mine. I Para Nunzio del ...

SNEAKY PETE: Ow. Something bit me. That's not good.

PARA NUNZIO: I Para Nunzio del

SNEAKY PETE: Does that look infected to you?

PARA NUNZIO: I Para. ..

THIBIDEAUX: Yes. Yes it does.

PARA NUNZIO: ENOUGH!!! I Para Nunzio del Fuego Espisito ea A la 'otel Von Hammerschmidt do claim this river ...

PROFFESSOR: Claim this River?

PARA NUNZIO: In the Name of ...

PROFFESSOR: I will not be Claimed.

PARA NUNZIO: Do Claim this River.

PROFFESSOR: I. will. not. be. claimed. Churn, churl, spiral, spin

PROFFESSOR Creates a tempest and spins NUNZIOS boat into a whirlpool.

PARA NUNZIO: In the name of ... of

PROFFESSOR: Whirlpool, swirl pool, bumpkin, swim

THIBIDEAUX: Man the poles Pete.

SNEAKY PETE: Aye Aye Cap'n..

PROFFESSOR: Tempest roar, tempest fright

And speed this wretch from my sight.

THIBIDEAUX

& PETE: Ahhhh.

PARA NUNZIO: You will pay for this, river. I will make you mine. You haven't heard the last of Para Nunzio del Fuego Eau a la lotel Von Hammerschmidt. *(Exit)*

TINKLES, DRIBBLES, CASCADE, PLOP rejoice and re-enact the event. LEAKY laughs along, proudly.

PROFFESSOR: That will do. Alright, I know. Come on shows over. Let's not flood the valley over this. CORK IT. Silence..Someone calls for you.

BANVARD: Those abusive children. MAY YOU FEEL THE LASH FROM THE ETERNAL FIRES OF

PROFFESSOR: No, it's your mother.

VOICE: JOHN BANVARD!!!

BANVARD: AHH! My Mother. Oh No!

BANVARD: I can't go yet.

PROFFESSOR: Everything has it's reason.

VOICE: John Banvard..

They stop. BANVARD still rejoices him.

BANVARD: I'll be back for that wish. *(BANVARD exits)*

PROFFESSOR: A potato? John Banvard you are a good use of water.

SONG: BORN OF THE RIVER

SCENE 4

John Banvard and his mom are at the supper table, eating loudly. A clock ticks.

MOTHER: John Banvard, where you been, like to bring on the heart failure .

BANVARD: Mom, I had a vision ...

MOTHER: A what?

BANVARD: A VISION.

MOTHER: No, No you didn't. See Lord, his mind ain't right.

BANVARD: My mind is right. I've got a gift.

MOM: No You don't.

BANVARD: He said so.

MOM: Who? Who said so.

BANVARD: Professor Leaky. Down at the river.

MOM: The River. Ain't nothing down at that river but no good, good for nothings ...

BANVARD: Brother

MOM: Snakes as big as cows. Spiders like horses Skeeters like ... and poison and and and worse, Shape shifters.

BANVARD: Shoplifters?

MOTHER: Shape shifter. You ever seen a man standing there plain as day then turn back and he's gone.

BANVARD: Yeah.

MOTHER: That there was a shape shifter. Probly turned hissself into a fly or a worm.

BANVARD: Ahhhhh no.

MOM: True. Ever seen a dog with his hind legs higher than his front ones?

BANVARD: All the time.

MOTHER: Shape shifter again walking in the daytime. Look out for that one. Evil.

BANVARD: Mom.

MOM: Ever seen a gapped tooth man with one big eyebrow.

BANVARD: Shape shifter?

MOM: Nope that's your father. Lord I miss that man some days.

BANVARD: Mom, why won't you trust me?

MOM: No. I got you a good job at that nice drug store.

BANVARD: The drug store?

MOM: I'll hear no more of it.

BANVARD: *(He sees TINKLES beaconing)* Mom, I've got to go. Now.

MOM: Where?

BANVARD: To the river.

MOM: No. Oh John, Johnny, John boy, John, Johnny, John. No.

BANVARD: I'll be alright.

MOM: It's so big.

BANVARD: I know

MOM: And wild.

BANVARD: I know.

MOM: And relentless.

BANVARD: I know

MOM: You're not ready.

BANVARD: Mom. I'm going.

MOM: You're My baby.

BANVARD: It's my time. But I'll be alright. I promise. *(He Exits)*

MOM: You hear me? Don't forget your coat. John, Johnny, John boy, John
Johnny John John.

Old BANVARD watches his MOTHER cry.

SCENE 5

Night on the river.

BANVARD: Look at them stars Dusty. Look there the way that moon is painted
on the water. I'll bet you that painting goes from the head to mouth.
Canvas of water painted with light. I wish I could paint like that
moon...

LEAKY: Up and around and back to the ground
In dust and bones, earth and stone
Your wish is planted like a seed
Add water, H2O
Watch it grow

LEAKY: Spread and cover
Rise and flow
flood the body, mind and soul
Grow wish Grow
When you wake as the moon sees so shall you see
Let pewter pock mark ladle douse
darkness with light and you her vessel be
And paint my picture, capture me
captivate my moment for all to see.

The river sings a Lullaby.

CHORUS: Lay down your burden lightly, lay your burden down.
Lay down your burden lightly lay your burden down
The tears are falling on another town
The tears are falling on another town
Lay down your burden lightly let the current take you down
Lay down your burden lightly let the current take you down
Into deep deep sleep you drown
Into deep deep sleep you drown

BANVARD: Paint me a whole river. That's what I'll do too. I'll paint me the
biggest picture the world ever saw.

SCENE 6

Hot Summer Morning on the River.

BANVARD: Excuse me old timer. Can you tell me where I am.

OLD TIMER: Yes, yes I can.

BANVARD: Where?

OLD TIMER: You're right there. Plain as day.

BANVARD: Excuse me old timer, where does this river go.

OLD TIMER: Don't go nowhere, it's here ever mornin when I wake up.

BANVARD: Ahh. What's that smell?

OLD TIMER: He He He He. Why don't you -know? You're in Rat Town.

BANVARD: Rat Town.

OLD TIMER: Bad men evil and worse...

BARNVARD: Worse?

OLD TIMER: Shape shifters.

BANVARD: Oh no.

OLD TIMER: You ever seen a man standing there plain as day then suddenly turn back and he's gone.

BANVARD: Shape shifter?

OLD TIMER: Well that there was a shape shifter. Probly turned hissself into a fly or a worm. Ever seen a dog with his hind legs higher than his front ones?

BANVARD: Shape shifter?

OLD TIMER: Walking in the daytime. Look out for that one. Ever seen a gapped tooth man with one big eyebrow? Ahhhhhh Rat Town.

MOB: Never was a place like a hole in a rut
Never was a place if and or but
Never was a place like a boil on a bum
Never was a place you'd wanna be from
like Rat Town, Rat Town

PREACHER: Sinners mend your ways, the judgment day is coming. Fire will lick at your wounds and pestilence pull a chair up to your supper table. The reconin' is near.

MAN: Well I recon we heard enough outta you. *(The mob throws the preacher in the water)*

MOB: YEAH!!
Bite and kick and scratch and claw
Go ahead and cry, call for the law
Everyone here is ugly as sin
Look at your foot what'd you just step in
Rat Town Rat Town
(More "Rat Town Song)

THIBIDEAUX: Alrighty now Pete here we go, One for me, one for you, one for me.
Ok?

SNEAKY PETE: Okay.

THIBIDEAUX: Alright, One for me, one for you, one for me. Alright?

SNEAKY PETE: Yep.

THIBIDEAUX: One for you, woops I mean, One for me, one for you, one for me.
Okay?

SNEAKY PETE: Looks good. Cap'n Thibideaux, a when can we do this with real money instead of rocks?

THIBIDEAUX: When we get real money but till then we gotta keep you sharp.
Ready?

SNEAKY PETE: Oh yeah. Ready and sharp as a (Spits) ..., I'm hungry.

THIBIDEAUX: Me too, where was I?

SNEAKY PETE: One for you ...

THIBIDEAUX: Oh yeah, One for me...

SNEAKY PETE: A'whats he doing now. (spits)

THIBIDEAUX: Who?

SNEAKY PETE: That man in white.

THIBIDEAUX: I don't know. I hope he don't want us to pole him around no more.

SNEAKY PETE: Well I draw the line at lions and tigers.

THIBIDEAUX: There ain't no lions and tigers around here. A lot of rats though.

SNEAKY PETE: I'm just asaying I got a line I draw. I draw it, it's drawn and I've draw it. And I draw the line at large animals, they scare me. (spits)

THIBIDEAUX: Yeah, but that man in white, he's got big ideas. And that's what's gonna get us ahead.

SNEAKY PETE: Big ideas?

THIBIDEAUX: No, being around somebody that's got em. Listen up
 (SONG) When I was a boy my pappy said
 If you can't thunk it up have it thunk instead
 and foller a man with a big big head
 That's what my Pappy said

(Refrain) Just Foller the man with the big big head
 Sleep in a four post, feather bed;
 Eat chicken til you bust
 With Gravy and bread
 Just foller the man with the big big head

If you don't got yer own
 I been told
 Get a heart of someone else's gold
 Latch on to that man
 My Pappy said
 Foller the man with the big big head

(Refrain)

SNEAKY PETE: Stay up all night
 Never take a bath

Eat what I want
Get a "FN in math I
Kick the dog and wet the bed

Foller the man with the big big head

THIBIDEAUX: Now you got it.

SNEAKY PETE: And then will people love me?

THIBIDEAUX: No no they won't, but you'll be standing next to somebody they do.

SNEAKY PETE: I'll take it.

THIBIDEAUX: What's that commotion?

NUNZIO Arrives.

PARA NUNZIO: Who wants to get rich!!!! Anyone? Who wants to get I mean filthy stinkin rich!

MAN: I guess I do.

PARA NUNZIO: Good man.

ANOTHER MAN: Me too. I already got the filthy stinkin done.

PARA NUNZIO: Very Good.

MAN: Just how we gonna get rich.

PARA NUNZIO: Progress my friend. Pick up any newspaper.

EVERYONE: A what?

PARA NUNZIO: A newspaper. Gentlemen there is a wave sweeping this country.

MAN: Don't say.

PARA NUNZIO: I do say and it's called progress. Form it with me now.

MOB: PROGRESS.

PARA NUNZIO: That's right and there's a lot of money to be made and I'm looking for some men who want to make it.

PARA NUNZIO: (SONG) Some sit and sigh oh why oh why
Boo Hoo my my and cry and cry
Oh woe is me I'd rather die
Than live another day

Not me my friend Not me Mon frer
there's a fortune to be made out there

Nature is our servant to be taken by the hand
And bent and squeezed and pushed and bent and made to
understand

Behold this glass of water behold the beaver dam
We can harness natures elements that's water air and land

(Chorus of men: That's water air and land)

So listen to your pocket book Don't heed Dame nature's call
Let's start with that River there we'll dam it up we'll dam it all!

Ha Ha hee hee just listen to me
And you'll be rich as rich can be.

MOB: HOOOORAYYYYYYYY!

PARA NUNZIO: We start with the river!!!!

ONE MAN : HOOORRAAYYY!!

The mob peels away revealing BANVARD drawing. LEAKY watches proudly.

MAN: Lookee there Pete that looks just like you.

SNEAKY PETE: Why so it does.

MAN: And this here is me, with my teeth in, and lookit that.

SNEAKY PETE: Ooooooo that's a beauty.

MAN: How much you want for this one of the river.

BANVARD: How much?

MAN: I'll give you a nickel.

LEAKY: A nickel.

BANVARD: Really?

PARA NUNZIO: Who is that one?

LEAKY: A nickel ? For me? No

ANOTHER: Me too.

LEAKY: No. Say this one is nice.

MAN: Hey it's all wet.

PARA NUNZIO: Banvard?

SNEAKY PETE: Lookee here Cap'n Thibideaux. That boy draws faster than I can think.

THIBIDEAUX: I am Captain Thibideaux and this here is my partner Sneaky Pete.

PARA NUNZIO: And I'm Para Nunzio del fuego Espisito eau E la Hotel Von Hammerschmidt.

BANVARD: I'm John Banvard

THIBIDEAUX: Nonsense, you are among friends.

SNEAKY PETE: An artist.

NUNZIO: And what do you draw?

BANVARD: The river mostly.

NUNZIO: The river, why the river?

BANVARD: I love the river.

NUNZIO: I see. You have captured it very well.

BANVARD: You can't capture a river.

NUNZIO: Oh, simple boy I have. mapped, charted, captured. And now with the help of these men, I will tame it, harness it's power. Quite soon now on this river will do as I say. It is said "if money can solve a problem it is not a problem."

THIBIDEAUX: "Figures don't lie but a liar can figure"

SNERKY PETE: "If'n you can't stand the heat ... uh.. git off the pot."

BANVARD: Water doesn't seem to like to be told what to do.

NUNZIO: We shall see. Come, I will buy your sketches. How much.

BANVARD: All of them?

NUNZIO: Yes. And any more you draw.

BANVARD: That's easy .. I'm ...

THIBIDEAUX: Bursting?

BANVARD : Yes.

SNEAKY PETE: Big?

BANVARD: Exactly.

THIBIDEAUX: Abundant?

BANVARD: That's it.

SNEAKY PETE: Big, Big?

BANVARD: Yes.

THIBIDEAUX: Plentiful?

SNEAKY PETE: Big, Big, Big,. One for you one for me?

PETE &
THIBIDEAUX: Whooooooooo

PARA NUNZIO: Lookee here, why don't you take my raft, float out a bit and have a look around. My men will go with you.

BANVARD: "Water" is out there.

PARA NUNZIO: Of course water is out there, it Is a river. That's why you're taking the raft.

BANVARD: I never been on a boat.

THIBIDEAUX: Don't worry ,son, me an Pete know ever square inch of this here Mississippi.

BANVARD : Alright. Here. *(He hands them his drawing supplies)*

THIBIDEAUX: Heavy Ho, first mate Pete.

SNEAKY PETE: I love it when you call me that, I mean aye, aye Cap'n.

PARA NUNZIO: And when you return I will buy all your pretty pictures.

BANVARD: As many as I can draw?

PARA NUNZIO: That's right.

BANVARD: Thank you mister. Para Nunzio.

PARA NUNZIO: No, thank you John Banvard. Go now. Now who wants to get rich,
I mean filthy stinking rich.

CROWD: Hooray!!

PROFFESSOR: Tinkles, Drizzle, Dribble, plop?

TINKLES/DRIZZLE

DRIBBLE/PLOP : Yes, Father of Waters.

PROFFESSOR: There is a great change in the air.
That man brings a new current here.

Mind you, For him
I have neither pity, love or fear
Yet one day his servant will I be.
(They protest)

Move his wheat, power his wheels, quench his thirst
one day he will hold me captive
It's true.

So in these final days
While I am wild and free
and able choose my own course.

I will choose John Banvard.

Will lend myself to him.
He sees me for what I am
He captures me as I want to be seen
Like so See?
He captivates my moment No?
(They approve)

I will lay my banks at his feet.
and though our time be brief
better in service of my new friend

than to that Euro-peacock my power lend
Now to work. Tinkles.
TINKLES: Yes Father.
PROFFESSOR: This boy John Banvard,
TINKLES: I know him.
PROFFESSOR: Yes. Watch over him.
TINKLES: Yes, father of waters.
PROFFESSOR: Make certain no harm befalls him.
TINKLES: I will.
PROFFESSOR: Give him calm passage.
TINKLES: Got it.
PROFFESSOR: And clear skies. Show my best side always. Go.
TINKLES: I go, I go look how I go fast as a downspout of melting snow.
PROFFESSOR: Go. Let his dream rise like heat, Come down as rain, up and around
and again and again. Now John Banvard our adventure begins.

SCENE 7

THIBIDEAUX: Report Mr. Pete.
SNEAKY PETE: Half twain, mark three, mark four.
THIBIDEAUX: Feast yer eyeballs, boy.
BANVARD: It's beautiful.
THIBIDEAUX: Ain't no better shrink than a ride on the drink.

The trees spin over head. Banvard floats down the river. He spins with the falling leaves.

OLD BANVARD: We pushed off into the rapid current and I immediately began to fill my portfolio.

THIBIDEAUX: Mind the snags Pete.

SNEAKY PETE : Aye, Aye.

OLD BANVARD: I fast went to work to learn the shape of the river, holding my eyes on an object and go to laboriously sketch it's shape. Yet just as I was succeeding to my satisfaction the thing would melt away and fold into the bank. It was most disturbing, no prominent hill would stick to its shape but dissolve and change as if it was made of butter in the hottest corner of the tropics.

THIBIDEAUX: Easy there Pete.

OLD BANVARD: True to his word Cap'n Thibideaux was a master of his craft, reading the ripples and sandbars and eddies. , like an elegant dancer with his watery partner.

SNEAKY PETE: I got 'er

OLD BANVARD: And I have yet to meet another soul as skillful as Pete with the pole.

THIBIDEAUX: I know you do.

OLD BANVARD: As I progressed in learning the nature of the river, often our food ran scarce. It was then I would devise plays from histories I knew and the Cap'n and Pete assume the various roles. These we performed along the towns for potatoes and flour.

THIBIDEAUX and PETE perform.

SNEAKY PETE: Romeo Romeo ... Romeo where for art thou, Romeo.

THIBIDEAUX: I'm right here you knucklehead.

BANVARD: *(Prompting)* It is the east and Juliet is the sun.

SNEAKY: Are those yer legs?

THIBIDEAUX: O course they's my legs. What's so funny?

BANVARD: Stay on the text.

SNEAKY PETE: Nothin', I just never seen yer legs before. Yer knees look like yer smugplin walnuts.

THIBIDEAUX: On guard, villain most foul.

BANVARD: No.. they love each other ...

SNEAKY PETE: And Yer bum looks like two boiled eggs in a hanky.

THIBIDEAUX: My ...you... take that, and that and that, wretched dog. (*DUSTY barks*)

BANVARTD: Dusty no.

SNEAKY PETE: Now you offended the dog. No stop, please, lookit I'm slain. I'm slain.

OLD BANVARD: As the river people were as starved for entertainment as we were for nourishment we often were rewarded with a fine dinner.

THE Travelers are shown ravenously eating a meal.

ROBBER: Hold it right there Gimme yer cash er else.

OLD BANVARD: Suddenly we were under attack from the famous Muriel Gang. A band of killers and thieves.

SNEAKY PETE: All I got to my name is this tatter, I've been hungry for three days so if In you think I'm given it up you got another think coming.

OLD BANVARD: Miraculously the bandit took Pete at his word and disappeared into the shadows, saving us all a watery grave.

BANVARD: You be a hero Pete.

SNEAKY PETE: I don't mess around when it comes to tatters.

OLD BANVARD: All the while, around every bend the mighty river displayed yet another majestic scene.

FUNERAL SCENE.

OLD BANVARD: In August we came to a town where the Yellow Fever was in full height. Most of the populating had deserted the place, only the aged, the poor and the sick remained behind.. houses were closed and little lamps burned in front of many.. . a sign death had entered. Only physicians and hearses hurry through the streets ... fearful evil ... the Yellow Fever struck down and swept away even the most vigorous victim.

SCENE: Two lovers approach the bank. We hear dogs barking in the background.

WOMAN: Hurry. This way.

OLD BANVARD: We crouched low, afraid this be another band of robbers on the run.

MAN: I'm right with you.

WOMAN: Into the water.

MAN: What.

WOMAN: The river it's our only chance.

VOICES: They went this way. Louise? You git home. Walter, boy you're in for a whippin'.

WOMAN: Hurry.

MAN: I love you.

WOMAN: I love you too. Come on. *(They enter the river)*

VOICES: I don't see em. let's turn back.

OLD BANVARD: How many took this road to a better life, freedom, a new start.

BANVARD: Mississippi, river of the world
It's mighty flow, it's broad and blue expanse.
And island scenes, our earnest eye in trance.
Now beauteous curves, with new formed islands made,
Revealing valley, hill, or open glade.

OLD BANVARD: Now sweetly falls the twilight strain
And evening shadows travel on amain

BANVARD: The stilly night full on the senses comes
and a soft spell as sweet as even charms

OLD BANVARD: Hush! Artist, here thy graphic pencil speaks.
Wait till the morn the grey horizon streaks

BANVARD: Silent we float and dream of home and love
Beauty and bliss-the brilliant heavens above.

The raft stops against the bank. Two young men, about Banvard's age, work in a field.

YOUNG MAN 1: Hey there, boy. What you doing.

BANVARD: Drawing.

YOUNG MAN 1: Says he's drawing.

YOUNG MAN 2: Why?

YOUNG MAN 1: Why?

BANVARD: It's my job

YOUNG MAN 2: Your job? That ain't work.

YOUNG MAN 1: That ain't work. This is work.

BANVARD: It's my kind of work.

YOUNG MAN 1: That's my kind of job. I'm doing that someday.

YOUNG MAN 2: You're crazy.

YOUNG MAN 1: I will.

YOUNG MAN 2: Man, you don't know where you are.

YOUNG MAN 1: Yes I do. And I know I 'm doing that someday, or play a horn or dance a dance. Look at that.

YOUNG MAN: You're good.

YOUNG MAN 1: I know it.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Hey you two get back to work.

YOUNG MAN 2: Now look what you did.

YOUNG MAN 1: Hey, Draw me!

BANVARD: Alright.

YOUNG MAN 2: Draw me, too.

BANVARD: Hold still.

YOUNG MAN 1: Bye boy, I'll see you again someday on this river.

The wind howls. A chill is in the air. Banvard approaches a man beside a fire. Perhaps a place to paint. Every time he rounds a corner his papers are stacked higher. He frantically works. Leaky is very happy. Finally Banvard stops.

BANVARD: Why have we stopped? There is so much more.

THIBIDEAUX: What say we take us a little break.

SNEAKY PETE : I'm tired.

BANVARD: Tired? Sneaky Pete. Cap'n Thibideaux. We've got to work.

Leaky stops the boat and Banvard approaches a fire.

BANVARD: Mind if I sit by your fire?

WINTER: Please. *(The fire goes out)* There.

BANVARD: I'll get some wood.

WINTER': No.

PROFFESSOR: Boo-zhoo' Be-Boongl.

WINTER: Boo-zhoo' my friend.

PROFFESSOR: You're early this year.

WINTER: Yes. It is good.

PROFFESSOR: This is my friend John Banvard. Banvard this is Beboong.

WINTER: You would call me winter.

BANVARD: It's an honor. I'm cold.

WINTER: I'll give you a blanket. It will soften the world to ease your mind. *(It snows.)* Every year, Banvard, the world sleeps under my blanket, peaceful and quiet. In this time the world dreams. When the sun rides high, Spring will come and lock me in a flower. All summer I live trapped in that flower until the sun rides low again and the air cools the petals fall from that flower and I fly free to freeze the world and give it peace.

PROFFESSOR: Well, I'm turning solid. So if you'll excuse me.

WINTER: It is time to rest John Banvard. Time to grow strong. Ease your mind. Let go of your thoughts

BANVARD: No I have to ... I will rest.

WINTER: Good.

CAP'N THIBIDEAUX and Sneaky Pete are sleeping peacefully. Para Nunzio, almost invisible in these surroundings, watches Banvard.

WINTER unveils a sheet of ice. Underneath sleeps LEAKY and his Chorus. BANVARD SLEEPS.

END OF ACT ONE