The Chicago Humanities Festival’s presentation of “The American Revolution” by Theatre Unspeakable is one of the most interesting, creative, and innovative shows I’ve seen in a long time. This tongue-in-cheek history lesson will definitely tickle your funny bone. I loved this little show, and I think you will too. I give it 3 ½ Spotlights.

I’m not sure what I expected when I went to see the Chicago Humanities Festival’s presentation of “The American Revolution”. I’d never heard of Theatre Unspeakable – and who names a theater company unspeakable, anyway. Were they mimes? I knew the show was only supposed to last an hour – and how is it possible to compress something that lasted years and covered several states into an hour.

After I took my seat, I had to wonder who/how they could do the whole thing on a 3’ x 8’ platform? During a little Q and A after the performance, Theatre Unspeakable’s founder, Marc Frost said they specialize in taking big events and putting them into small spaces – hence the platform.

Seven actors, Brittany Anderson, Jeffery Frrlon, Jr., Trey Hobbs, Kathleen Hoil, Quenna Lené, Aaron Rustebakke and Vanessa S. Valliere, dressed in identical red, knee length ‘unitanks’ decorated with a double row of big blue buttons and a white bandolier crossed across the front. They actually looked a lot like British soldiers marching in place.

Incorporating key events and real people – famous and obscure – who participated in America’s struggle for independence, including of course, icons like George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, but also bringing in Willie, Washington’s slave who begs for his freedom.

Of course, the revolution wouldn’t have happened without the King of England. The colonists thought the king was totally unreasonable as he imposed taxes, so the actors decided to portray him as a spoiled brat. Using one actor’s torso and another’s short legs, the king stomped his feet, pulled his legs over his shoulders, tried a little swimming – all while thinking up new ideas for more taxes, all to the applause of his subjects.

The French king came in for his share, too. By way of introduction the cast would hum the Marseilles in very French nasal tones. Surrounded by ladies holding invisible après-sex cigarettes, the king – who had very short arms – after demanding to know what was in it for the French, kept sending Benjamin Franklin away empty handed.

One of my favorite parts – the group brain-storming with Thomas Jefferson as he wrote the Declaration of Independence, bickering over almost every word.

Another favorite – which turned out to be an actual turning point of the war – General Howe reading an imaginary map. He was supposed to march to Saratoga and meet up with two armies marching south from Canada. As fingers were tracing the route to Saratoga on that imaginary map, General Howe kept moving that one finger back to Philadelphia.

Theatre Unspeakable is taking “The American Revolution” on tour for the next two years, beginning sometime in July.

Chicago Humanities Festival continues through May 20th at the Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, 2433 N Lincoln, Chicago. Remaining public performances of “The American Revolution” are on May 16th and 17th at 4:00 pm. Running time is just over 50 minutes. Tickets are $14 for adults and $7 for children. Valet parking is available. There is free parking in the old Children’s Memorial garage about two blocks south of Victory Gardens. FYI (312) 494-9509 or [www.chicagohumanities.org](http://www.chicagohumanities.org).