



AIMEE!

Book and Lyrics by
PATRICK YOUNG

Music by
BOB ASHLEY

A Critical Smash

"Young and Ashley might well become another Gilbert and Sullivan, or Rogers and Hammerstein, or Lerner and Loewe. The words of one fit into the music of the other as neatly as a key in its lock."

-- Toronto Sun

"A new musical sympathetically but candidly describing the life of Aimee Semple McPherson is drawing enthusiastic audiences in the famed evangelist's native Canada...."

-- United Press International

"Sparkling, fresh, uptempo ... given a rousing ovation by the opening night audience ..."

-- Canadian Press

"Powerful... ripe with big, brassy production numbers.... Author Patrick Young has painted an engaging portrait of 'Sister' Aimee.... Bob Ashley's score contains some of the best music the Festival has ever produced. There are several numbers capable of blowing you right out of the theatre...."

-- Charlottetown Evening Patriot

"Dazzling array of theatrics ... Away from the adoring crowds, we often see the evangelist as a confused and lonely woman struggling to keep up with her own success.... touching ... wryly amusing ... 'Brand New Day', set at one of Aimee's early revival meetings, raises the roof, as does 'Put Out The Fire'.... Ashley and Young also produced some fine, lyrical ballads, the best of which is 'I Go On'...."

-- Toronto Globe and Mail

"Theatrical razzmatazz, energy, and glitter... A flashing dynamic musical to depict a flashy dynamic life.... poignant, sensitive ... We see that she is driven to her love affair because she has found an oasis away from a church which has become big business and a life in which everybody wants something from her...."

-- London Free Press

"A blockbuster ... this colorful spectacle stands a better chance of reaching Broadway than any earlier Charlottetown musical.... brilliant libretto and lyrics ... haunting melodies and urgent rhythms ... Every line Young writes gives the actors of large parts and small opportunities to project vivid character studies. Ashley, who hangs music about a character as aptly as designer Francis Dafoe mantles them in a costume, intensifies the realism of the story with his melodies...."

-- Toronto Sun

AIMEE!

*A new musical comedy-drama
inspired by the life of Aimee Semple McPherson*

book and lyrics by
PATRICK YOUNG

music by
BOB ASHLEY

Winner of the 1980 Eric Harvie Musical Theatre Award

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AIMEE! was first produced by the Charlottetown Festival on the main stage at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown, P.E.I. It was staged and directed by Alan Lund, with sets by Lawrence Schafer, costumes by Frances Dafoe, lighting by Ronald Montgomery, musical direction by Fen Watkin, and musical arrangements and orchestrations by James Dale. The production was stage managed by Pat Thomas, and opened July 3rd, 1981, with the following cast:

Aimee Semple McPherson MAIDA ROGERSON
 Minnie Kennedy.....MARILYN PEPIATT
 Kenneth Ormiston..... WILLIAM G. HOSIE
 Emma Schaffer..... ELIZABETH MAWSON
 Roberta SempleTHEA MACNEIL
 Wallace Moore JAMES HOBSON
 Mae Waldron JANELLE HUTCHISON
 Kotowski HANK STINSON
 Dooley TERRY D0Y1E

Brother Burke, Reporter for the *Times* of London,
 District Attorney Keyes KENNETH WICKES
 Man in the Wheelchair, Brother Arthur GERRY GILBERT-GRAY
 Cleaning Lady..... ANGELA ANTONELLI
 Reporter for the L.A. *Times*, Judge KELLY ROBINSON
 Reporter for the L.A. *Times*, Sheriff..... MICHAEL RAINBIRD
 Isabel JOY THOMPSON
 Nelly..... MARY-LYNN SCOTT
 Miss Sturgess, Mrs. Benedict..... KAY TURNER
 Mrs. PeabodyCLEONE DUNCAN
 Reporter for the *New York Times*, Newsgirl, Cow.....BONNIE MONAGHAN-MARTIN
 Newsgirl, Cow CAROLINE SMITH
 Reporter for the Toronto *Telegram*.....LARRY HERBERT
 Street Vendor JEAN-AIME LALONDE
 Harold, Burke's Assistant, Senior Gonzales BRIAN HARRIS-LUND
 Other Newsgirls, Bible School Students,
 Flappers, Groupies, Townspeople, etc. VALERIE LEE, JULIE LACHOW
 DON BURNETT, KEVIN ETHERINGTON, JEFFERY PRENTICE
 Choir, Followers, Crowds, etc. THE COMPANY

Assistant Stage Manager..... SHIRLEY THIRD
 Apprentice Stage Manager.....ANNE PUTNAM

AUTHORS' NOTE:

What follows, except for the restoration of some cut material, is essentially the version of the show which played at the Charlottetown Festival.

SCENES AND MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE Overture Orchestra

Scene 1

London, Ontario; 1920

"Thank God for That!" Aimee, Emma, Roberta

Scene 2

On the road, Montreal to Los Angeles; 1920-23

"Simple Answers" Minnie and Company

"Brand New Day" Company

"Credo (He Needs Me)" Aimee

Scene 3

City Desk of the Los Angeles Mirror; 1925

"Aimee!" Wallace, Mae, Dooley, Kotowski & Newsgirls

Scene 4

Backstage and onstage at the Temple, the same day

"That's My Girl!" Minnie

"Put Out the Fire" Aimee and the Choir

Scene 5

Onstage, moments later

"A Woman Who Might Care" Mae

Scene 6

Outside the Temple, immediately following

Scene 7

Radio Control Booth, three weeks later

"Spare Me the Saints!" Kenneth

Scene 8

The Santa Ana Branch, and the Temple during the next few months

"Happy Road to Heaven" Santa Ana Followers

"The Appointment Calendar Chant" Emma and Company

Scene 9

The Temple, immediately following

"Once There Was a Man" Aimee

ACT TWO Entr'acte Orchestra

Scene 10

The Temple, the next day

"Aimee!" (reprise)..... Newsgirls

Scene 11

Temple Office, several days later

"That's the Least He Could Do!" Minnie and Company

"I Go On" Mae, Roberta, Emma

Scene 12

A rented cottage at Carmel, next morning

"Bang the drum!" Kenneth and Aimee

Scene 13

The Los Angeles Train Station on Aimee's return

"Aimee!" (reprise)..... Kotowski, Dooley and Company

"Kidnapped!" Aimee and Company

Scene 14

The cottage at Carmel, that evening

Scene 15

A Los Angeles Courtroom at the Preliminary Hearings

"My People Believe!" Company

"Bang the Drum!" (reprise)..... Aimee

Scene 16

Temple Office, soon after the Hearings

"That's My Girl!" (reprise)..... Minnie

Scene 17

Temple Office, the next day

"Brand New Day" (reprise)..... Company

"Credo" (reprise)..... Aimee

NOTE:

All of the above musical numbers are available from the authors.

A section of production photographs follows the script on pages 88-93.

— ACT ONE —

Scene One

A field on the outskirts of London, Ontario; early evening, fall, 1920. Before an incredibly patched circus tent stands an ancient and battered automobile, with "JESUS IS COMING SOON — GET READY!" lettered along its visible side. It is piled high with bed-rolls, hymn-books, and home-painted signs reading things like "REVIVAL MEETING: SISTER AIMEE SEMPLE McPHERSON, EVANGELIST!" and "MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD!"

(Downstage, Roberta and Emma are finishing their supper by a small campstove. There is a burst of hammering from behind the tent)

EMMA: Sister, come and have some supper before you drop!

ROBERTA: Come on, Momma!

AIMEE: *(off)* In a minute!

(Another burst of hammering. Roberta and Emma shake their heads at each other hopelessly)

EMMA: I wish there was something besides beans for her to eat. Sooner or later she's going to wear herself out, your mother. She's just going to keel over and —

(One last hammer-blow.)

AIMEE: *(off)* Ow! Dagnabbit!

EMMA: *(leaping up)* There! You see?

ROBERTA: *(rising also)* Momma, are you alright?

(No answer)

Momma — !

*(Enter Aimee, sleeves rolled up and deep auburn hair piled high.
She is carrying a small sledge)*

AIMEE: I have just decided there is no doubt about it: tent pegs are the work of the devil!

EMMA: Sister! You nearly gave me a heart attack!

AIMEE: Oh, I'm fine, Emma. These shins are made of steel. *(she limps a little just the same as she comes downstage)*

(Roberta takes the sledge)

Just pray those darn pegs stay in: there's supposed to be a frost tonight.

ROBERTA: One of the farmers who helped us put it up said that tent wouldn't be much protection against a frost. He said it had more holes in it than a duck's ass in hunting season!

EMMA: Roberta!

ROBERTA: Well, that's what he said!

AIMEE: Don't you worry about colourful expressions, Emma. I grew up in a barnyard in this part of the country too, you know.

EMMA: I know!

ROBERTA: Why aren't we going there, Momma? To Ingersoll?

(Aimee, caught off guard, doesn't answer immediately)

EMMA: It does seem strange, Sister, to come all the way up into Canada this trip and then pass right by your home.

AIMEE: Oh, you know. "A prophet in his own land ... "

ROBERTA: Is that all?

AIMEE: *(after a moment)* No. When Robert died of fever — it was just before you were born, Roberta — and I was penniless and had to send for money to get the two of us home from China, everyone in Ingersoll said: "We told you so! We told you not to run off with him! We told you you were never in the centre of God's will! We told you you were a headstrong, selfish —"

No. I never went back there, and I never will. ... Anyway, London's a bigger town!

EMMA: They wouldn't let us inside London.

ROBERTA: We're out here in a cow patch like always — with our "holy" tent!

AIMEE: Now, Roberta! I like to think those holes are the Lord's way of reminding us that the best roof over our heads —

EMMA & ROBERTA: — is the one He built Himself!

AIMEE: Yes. Just pray those darn tent pegs stay in.

ROBERTA: Pray the pegs stay in, pray the frost won't get us, pray it doesn't blow down on us in the middle of the night — What is there about that tent we don't have to pray for?

AIMEE: The mosquito season's over.

EMMA & ROBERTA: Thank God for that!

AIMEE: There! You see? There's always something!

(She sings 'Thank God for That!')

**If there's one bite left of the apple,
Thank God for that!
If you still hear prayer in a chapel,
Thank God for that!
It's your turn, and you're really hopeless at
Playing base-ball,
Hate to chase ball —**

ROBERTA: **They break the bat!**

AIMEE: **Thank God for that!**

EMMA: **If there's still a sip in the flagon,
Thank God for that!**

RBEERTA: **If there's one wheel left on your wagon —**

ALL: **Thank God for that!
When your partner throws a rope to you
Down a precipice —**

AIMEE: **If he doesn't miss —**

ALL: **Thank God for that!**

AIMEE: **Many times, in a hostile world,
You feel you're out there
Lost, all alone, in the middle of the night.
If it's all looking black,
Then you should be more aware:
Look hard enough, and you'll find a ray of light!**

EMMA & ROBERTA: **Or se-ver-al!**

ALL: **If there's one egg left in your basket,
Thank God for that!
Every day this side of your casket,
Thank God for that!**

AIMEE: **When your ship goes to the bottom,
You're swimming in the dark —**

EMMA: **Floating solitaire —**

ROBERTA: **In your underwear!**

EMMA: **With your derriere
Miles from anywhere —**

AIMEE: **Haven't seen a shark!**

EMMA: **Thank God for that!**

(The melody continues as underscoring)

AIMEE: Now what have you got in that pot, Emma? I could eat a horse!

ROBERTA: We should be so lucky!

EMMA: *(filling a bowl)* I hope it's alright.

AIMEE: *(eyes closed)* The-Lord-bless-this-food-to-our-use-and-us-to-his-service-in-Jesus'-name-Amen!

(Emma hands her the bowl)

Beans again?!?

EMMA: *(beginning to weep)* There wasn't even money for bacon to have with them! And the butcher said ... the butcher said "No discounts for Holy Rollers" — !

AIMEE: There, there; beans are very nutritious. And at the meeting, we'll put in a special prayer for the greater understanding of the butcher!

(She sings)

**Long as there's a scrape in the saucepan,
Thank God for that!
If you're strong, and eat like a "hoss" can —**

AIMEE & ROBERTA: **Thank God for that!
Even if you find the wolf is there
Howling at your door —**

AIMEE: **Strapped for revenue,**

ROBERTA: **Rent long overdue,**

EMMA: **Lining up for stew
On the avenue!**

ROBERTA: **Turning slightly blue,**

EMMA: **Paper in your shoe,**

EMMA & ROBERTA: **And your life is a
Great big I. O. U.! —**

AIMEE: **Broke in London or
Lost in Labrador —**

ALL: **But you've not yet
Been hit by a meteor! —**

EMMA: **You know who to thank:**

ROBERTA: *(spoken)* My mother!
You know who to thank:

EMMA: *(spoken)* The butcher!

AIMEE: **You know who to thank:**

ALL: **Thank God for that — !!**

(Aimee takes a huge mouthful of beans)

AIMEE: Mmmmmmm! Now! You two were in town all afternoon. Tell me what you managed to round up for the meeting.

EMMA: Well ... Sister (*she bursts into tears*)

AIMEE: (*undaunted*) Roberta?

ROBERTA: Well, the Methodists wouldn't lend us their pump organ.

AIMEE: Very well. We have strong voices, and our tambourines to keep the beat. And we'll put in a special prayer for the greater understanding of the Methodists.

ROBERTA: And the Presbyterians wouldn't lend us their Sunday School chairs.

AIMEE: Fine. We'll ask everyone to bring blankets. And we'll put in a special prayer for the greater understanding of the Presbyterians!

ROBERTA: Don't you think the service will be getting a little long?

AIMEE: Listen to me now, both of you. We must never, ever, give up hope. Somewhere, there are millions of people who want us and need us — we just have to keep banging the drum!

ROBERTA: Tell us about the Temple, Momma.

EMMA: Yes, Sister, tell us about the Temple.

(They both settle down on the running board of the car, as if to hear a bed-time story, and Aimee sits between them)

AIMEE: The Temple.... It will be a great centre of World Evangelism, open to all creeds: a place to go out from when we're courageous and retreat to when we're tired — a home. And it will stand by the shores of the ocean, in the land of the sun — California, maybe. When we live there, Roberta will never have another of those awful colds, and she will go to school, like any normal child. And Emma will have a whole office of her very own, with legions of other people to do all the typing. And it will have great bronze doors, and stained-glass windows, and a dome — painted like the sky!

ROBERTA: And swings!

AIMEE: And swings. ... Now. What about flowers? Please, God, let there be flowers.

ROBERTA: The Pentecostal lady in the farmhouse said to check back with her this evening. She didn't sound any too hopeful.

AIMEE: Well, why don't the two of you go and do that right now, before it gets

pitch dark. Go on.

ROBERTA: Come on, Emma.

EMMA: Sister — ?

AIMEE: Yes, Emma?

EMMA: *(unable to ask the question, and knowing what the answer will be anyway)*
Bang the drum! Bang the drum!

(She catches up with Roberta and they exit. Aimee drops the sunny demeanour and glares heavenward)

AIMEE: Lord, give me strength! It's your work. Sometimes I wonder if you really want me. *(she picks up a bed-roll to take into the tent)* Are you sure you wouldn't rather I ran a tea-room?

(Exit Aimee into the tent. A musical bridge, and then Minnie's voice is heard offstage)

MINNIE: Aimee? Aimee, Angel!

(Enter Minnie Kennedy. She surveys the whole set-up at a single glance, and sets down her suitcase with a bump. Aimee re-enters, sees her and stops dead)

AIMEE: Momma?

MINNIE: Is that a tent you just came out of? — or did the sewing circle try to make Goliath a patchwork quilt?

AIMEE: Momma, you've come!

(She runs to her and they hug)

MINNIE: Wild horses couldn't keep me away! As soon as I got your letter, I packed up a bag, stuck a "for sale" sign on the mailbox, and headed for town.

AIMEE: You sold the farm?

MINNIE: A widow my age with time lying heavy on her hands? Of course I sold the farm! You know how much I hated giving up the Salvation Army all those years ago. So I said to myself, Minnie, your baby girl needs you! Strike while the iron is hot and catch her while she's down — you could die waiting before she asks again!

AIMEE: Have I been that stubborn?

MINNIE: Stubborn? You were always that stubborn! Little Aimee Kennedy could be up against a mountain, but if she decided to call it a molehill, nobody better dare say different, not even her Ma.

AIMEE: Well now I'm calling it a mountain.

MINNIE: (*opening her arms to her daughter*) I know.

(*Another hug. Re-enter Roberta and Emma*)

ROBERTA: Granny!! (*she runs to her*)

MINNIE: Darling baby! Emma! (*to Roberta*) You're too thin, child, but we'll soon fix that.

AIMEE: Mother's going to help us build the Temple.

EMMA: Praise the Lord!

ROBERTA: You planning a miracle? We couldn't even get flowers!

MINNIE: Miracles are your mother's department — just leave the rest to me! Now sit right down and listen up: this is a council of war. If I'm taking over the business end of this operation, the first thing I'm gonna do is fire your advance man. There wasn't a word in the *Free Press* — I had to traipse all over London just to find out where you were!

AIMEE: Newspaper advertisements cost money, Mother.

EMMA: And we've never had an "advance man."

ROBERTA: Before each meeting we drive through town with our megaphones and our tambourines —

MINNIE: Tambourines — !

AIMEE: They come. They do come.

MINNIE: To that tent?

AIMEE: "That tent" has a very distinguished history — with Barnum and Bailey!

MINNIE: On a rainy day you might as well hold meetings in the middle of Lake Ontario!

(*Aimee is silent*)

And as for this car — well! — driving this you could end up in Kingdom Come sooner than you think!

ROBERTA: Momma can change tires. Even patch them!

AIMEE: And did you know a silk stocking makes an excellent fan-belt?

MINNIE: My daughter the grease-monkey! Is that what God called you to do — fix his fan-belt? I thought it was something else!

(Again, Aimee has no answer)

What am I going to do with you people? This is 1920, not 1890! There was never a nobler cause than selling salvation, God knows — but it's time you started running it like a business because that's the only way it works! Everyone in his proper place: you behind the counter dispensing your potions, Emma stocking the shelves, Roberta as window-dressing —

AIMEE: — And you with the keys to the till?

MINNIE: I knew it! We're going to get along just fine!

(She sings 'Simple Answers!')

**The modern age has people's brains a-tumhling;
Confusion hits a man from every side!
As the pillars of society keep crumbling,
People seek the very thing we can provide: ...**

**Simple Answers!
That's what they need to hear.
They want those Simple Answers back again!
So give them Simple Answers
To the questions they all fear —
They want a yes or no for maybe now and then!**

(The vamp continues under dialogue)

There's only one thing you gotta remember, and it's right there in the Good Book in the words of the Greatest Salesman of all time: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you!"

ROBERTA: And if at first you don't succeed — ?

MINNIE: Try brass knuckles! *(she sings)*

Give them:

ALL: **Simple Answers!
O1' black 'n white will do —**

**You'll find it's Simple Answers that'll pay!
So give them Simple Answers!
Grey might as well be blue!
They'll take a yes or no for maybe any day!**

*As they sing, they load the camping gear
and themselves into the car, and, holding
high the signs that advertise the revival
meeting, drive off. But the song continues
into the next scene ...*

Scene Two

Now we are inside the tent, and an assortment of townspeople is gathering for a service, continuing the number.

TOWNSPEOPLE: **Simple Answers!**
That's what we need to hear!
We want those Simple Answers back again!
So give us Simple Answers
To the questions we all fear —
We'd like a yes or no for maybe now and then!

MAN ONE: **They tell me I'm a blip upon a very minor planet**
In a galaxy that's spinning into space;
I only hate my boss because I'm anally fixated,
And a chimpanzee begat the human race;
It isn't really love I feel, it's only my libido
And the pressure of secretions in my glands!
Tell me — Darwin, Pavlov, Einstein, Freud —
Why can't I understand?!?

SOLO: **Simple Answers!**

DUET: **Simple Answers!**

WOMAN: **My baby says she's late because the car ran out of gas,**
And the petting party lasted until three;
The cigarette between her lips appears a little crass;
She's only dressed between the nipple and the knee!
Her currant beau's a parlor snake, a drip with patent hair —
She'll have another dozen like him before long!
And all I ask is, tell me, someone —
Where did I go wrong?!?

SOLO: **Simple Answers!**

DUET: **Simple Answers!**

MAN TWO: **The man who runs for office knows for sure he's gonna win,**
'Cause the mob has paid the voters for the day;
And the only crook who's richer than the crook who makes the gin

**Is the crook he pays to look the other way;
And the biggest prize of all is still the White House,
'Cause it's where you get to take the people's taxes out on loan!
Tell me why my only heroes now
Are guys like Al Capone?!?**

TOWNSPEOPLE: **Give us Simple Answers!
O!' black'n white will do —
You'll find it's Simple Answers that'll pay!
So give us Simple Answers!
Grey might as well be blue! —
We'll take a yes or no for maybe any day!**

(By now a man being pushed in a wheelchair has joined them. The crowd gathers round the platform, still singing, as Aimee enters and mounts it. She wears a little white dress — rather like a nurse — and a navy-blue cape)

MEN: **We want a yes or a no!**

WOMEN : **SimpleAnswers !**

MEN: **Yes or a no!**

WOMEN : **SimpleAnswers! !**

MEN: **Yes or a no!**

WOMEN: **Simple Answers!**

ALL: **We'd like a yes or no for maybe now and thennnnnn**

(They hold the changing cord under Aimee's altar call)

AIMEE: Come unto him all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and he will give you rest. Come, and lay your burdens at his feet, and he will lift you up into everlasting joy. It was for you he died, for you! Come!

TOWNSPEOPLE: Alleluia — !!!

(They have finished the number in a tableau, some on their knees, around her. Now they pour out their hearts to her, and one by one, she touches them, prays over them, comforts them. Some are in tears. They remain praying quietly when she has passed)

NOTE: the actors must ad lib here. It is very important that what they say not be heard. It is even more important that it be meant.

The scene is quietly underscored.

(Now Aimee has reached the man in the wheelchair, and has his hand in hers. We begin to be able to hear what she is saying)

AIMEE: *(shutting her eyes)* I feel your need. I feel your need.

(One hand moves to his head) I feel the need!... (The other hand is groping heavenwards, as if to a magnet)

I feel the power.... I feel the Power! Lord, see this man and feel his need. Feel his need! ... *(Something has electrified her whole body)* I feel the Power! I feel the Power! I feel the Power! —

(Suddenly a murmur goes through the crowd. The man in the wheelchair is straining forward)

TOWNSPEOPLE: Look! Look! Look at him! He's trying to get up!

(Aimee opens her eyes as if wakened from a trance. She stares at what is happening)

He's going to get up! He's trying to walk! He is! Oh my God! Praise the Lord!

THE MAN: *(now on his feet)* Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!

(The crowd turns and surges towards Aimee, touching, reaching, pulling her. She is frightened)

TOWNSPEOPLE: My leg hurts too, Sister! Heal my baby, Sister! Sister! Sister! Touch me! Touch me!

AIMEE: But it wasn't me! I don't know how it happened! — It wasn't me!!!

(Minnie, Roberta, and Emma have been drawn on by the commotion. Now a chord strikes, the tableau freezes, and Minnie begins to sing 'Gonna Build a Temple')

MINNIE: **Gonna build a Temple....**

ADD EMMA & ROBERTA: **A Temple to the**

ADD TOWNSPEOPLE: **Sky — !**

(A woman rises from her knees to put the first donation in Roberta's basket)

WOMAN: **Temple for Aimee Semple,
One for you and I — !**

WOMAN TWO: *(rising and donating too)* TOWNSPEOPLE: **Oooooooo —**
**Gonna move a mountain California way;
Then we're gonna show the world ...**

ALL: **A Brand New Day!**

(The number hits tempo as they lift Aimee onto their shoulders, still singing)

**Gonna give it lovin'
Deeper than the sea —
Just like God above is Lovin' you and me!
City of the Angels,
There we're gonna stay;
Then we're gonna show the world
A Brand New Day!**

(They carry a startled Aimee off, but the vamp continues as Minnie, Emma and Roberta cross the stage with a circus-style vendor's cart, painted with slogans and loaded with souvenirs: little gold bags, miniature chairs, and bits of stained glass)

MINNIE: Step right up, Ladies and Gentlemen! Get your souvenirs of Angelus Temple right here! Only five dollars will get you a bag of the same cement that will build this world-famous centre of Evangelism in sunny Los Angeles! Only twenty-five dollars will guarantee you a seat in the House of the Lord! And for one hundred dollars, you too can have your name inscribed on one of our great stained-glass windows, where it will shine everlastingly in the light of Jesus!
So step right up and don't delay —
Jesus needs your buck today!

(A crowd — the townspeople plus several new faces — has been gathering to listen to this pitch. Now they swamp the cart with purchases)

EMMA: Hallelujah!

(The crowd sings)

WOMEN: **Gonna Build! To the sky! For you and I!
Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

ALL: **Aimee!**

Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city!
Shout!
For his pow'r is all around!
Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city
And the walls come a-tumblin'
Down! Down! Down! Down!

(A dance bridge in which Emma and Roberta collect donations from Charleston-dancers, crap-shooters, and bathtub gin party-goers. Each group then follows in their wake. Meanwhile, headlines are flashing on the screen(s) above:

"CROWDS SWAMP FAITH HEALER IN MONTREAL!"

"16,000 MOB WASHINGTON REVIVAL!"

"HOLY ROLLERS NET \$40,000 IN PHILADELPHIA!"

"EVANGELIST RICHER BY \$60,000 IN SEATTLE!"

"SAN DIEGO PLEDGES TOTAL \$100,000!"

The crowd re-enters, singing, and Aimee passes through them, warming to the acclaim now, glad-handing, beaming, and even posing for news photographers)

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

ALL: **Aimee!**

 Shout!
 For the Lord hath given you the city!
 Shout!
 For his pow'r is all around!
 Shout!
 For the Lord hath given you the city
 And the walls come a-tumblin'
 Down! Down! Down! Down!

MEN:
Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city!
Shout!
For his pow'r is all around!
Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city,
And the walls come a-tumblin'
Down ——— !

WOMEN:
Gonna build a Temple,
A Temple to the sky;
Temple for Aimee Semple,
One for you and I!
Gonna move a mountain,
California way;
Then we're gonna show the world
A Brand New Day!

(And the Temple set sweeps in on the conclusion of the number)

ALL: **Then we're gonna show the world**
 A Brand New Day ——— !!!

(The company fades into the wings chanting, as Aimee enters, looking in wonder at the new Temple)

COMPANY: Ai-Mee! Ai-mee! Ai-mee! Ai-mee! *(etc. to fade-out)*

(A long silence as she reaches centre, turns slowly front, and is isolated in a special. Minnie is in another down right, Roberta in a third down left)

AIMEE: Thank you, Momma.

MINNIE: You deserved it, Angel. You earned it. The Lord owed it to you.

AIMEE: And you, Roberta. Roberta Star Semple: the "Star" is for hope! Some day all this will be yours.

ROBERTA: It scares me, Momma.

AIMEE: It scares me too, Honey; but we must be brave for Christ! Look at us now, the three of us: the same blood in all our veins, the same hope in all our

hearts. Nothing can part us; not all of Satan's forces — nothing! Pray that it will always be so. Pray that we are in the centre of God's will. Pray for me.

(She sings 'Credo')

**I know he needs me.
I feel his hand.
Ten thousand voices
I understand.
Their tongues are his to speak,
Their eyes to see;
Their hearts reach out to say
How deeply he needs me.**

**I know he needs me.
He needs my will;
He needs my voice saying
He loves them still;
He needs my hands to touch,
My back to bear,
My arms to clasp them with,
My fervent heart to dare.**

**I'll tear down any wall,
Burst any dam —
For if he needs me,
Then I know who I am — !**

Blackout.

Scene Three

Something over two years since the opening of the Temple. The city desk of the Los Angeles Mirror, a second-string newspaper. Desks, typewriters, phones. As lights come up a phone is ringing, and Dooley answers it. He seems unaware that behind what is clearly the boss's desk, a rumpled man is sound asleep on the floor.

DOOLEY: *(answering)* Los Angeles *Mirror*, City Desk. Oh, it's you again, Chief. No, I can't find the boss anywhere — I been tryin', honest: I called his home, I even tried the Turkish Bath! *(he winces)* Right, Chief, right, soon as he gets in, OK! *(he hangs up)* Sheesh!

(Enter Kotowski, very agitated)

KOTOWSKI: Dooley! Dooley, you Irish hog, you seen this morning's *Times*? We been scooped again!

DOOLEY: What?!?

KOTOWSKI: They've got another story on that preacher-lady! Two years in town, she's the hottest newsmaker of 1925, and we've never even printed a word on her! I'm tellin' ya, Dooley, if this keeps up, this two-bit rag of ours is gonna go under!

DOOLEY: So that's it! The Chief has been callin' every five minutes ready to murder Wallace Moore — if we could find the lush. You ain't seen him, have ya Kotowski?

KOTOWSKI: At eight o'clock in the morning? The bloodshot wonder? Don't worry, Dooley: he's just found someplace new to sleep it off.

(The sleeping man stirs and yawns)

DOOLEY: Sounds like you could use some yourself.

KOTOWSKI: What?

DOOLEY: Sleep. Yawning like that.

KOTOWSKI: I didn't yawn.

DOOLEY: Sure ya did — I heard ya.

KOTOWSKI: You're the one that needs the sleep — you're hearin' things!

(Enter Mae)

MAE: Hey, you lousy baboons, Sister Whatsername has done it again — the newsboys are screamin' loud enough to give themselves hernias!

KOTOWSKI: What'd I tell ya?

DOOLEY: So what has she pulled off this time — the Second Coming?

MAE: Uh-uh. She's bein' sued for divorce!

DOOLEY: Divorce? What's news about that?

MAE: Meathead. She's the head of a church that doesn't believe in divorce.

(Dooley is still blank)

It's sick.

(The light hasn't dawned yet)

The public will love it.

DOOLEY: Ohhhhhhh.

(Enter an Italian cleaning lady with mop and pail)

LADY: You mind if I'ma clean?

KOTOWSKI: 'Bout time, y'old tart. Start on Dooley here — he ain't seen soap in a while!

DOOLEY: Yeah, start on me — I ain't seen lovin' in a while, either!

LADY: *(pushing him back with the mop)* You shoota be so locky! *(she starts to mop up, heading for the back desk)*

MAE: Where is our dear Mr. Moore marinating himself this morning, by the way?

DOOLEY: That's what we'd like to know. The second he shows up, the Chief is gonna have him boiled in oil!

(The sleeping man yawns again)

MAE: God, Kotowski, what'd you do last night instead of sleep?

KOTOWSKI: (*who thought it was Dooley again*) Me?!?

MAE: Yeah, you. You're yawning fit to beat the band!

KOTOWSKI: I did not yawn! You guys are —

(The cleaning lady has just rounded the corner of the boss's desk)

LADY: Aaaaaaaaaaagh!

(The man scrambles to his knees)

Oh, Mr. Moore! You giva my hardt soch a schock! I tinka for sure maybe another one gangaland massacre!

WALLACE: Shhhhhh!

(The cleaning lady exits in disgust, muttering curses in Italian)

Oooooooh. Who do I hafta do to getta cuppa coffee in here?

(Mae plunks her thermos on his desk)

I had to ask.

MAE: Another crack like that, Wally, and that swollen skull of yours'll be ringin' like a Chinese gong.

(Now the phone on Wallace's desk rings, but his only response is to cringe from the noise)

Oh, for God's sake. (*answering for him*) Los Angeles *Mirror*, City Desk. Yes, Chief, he just came in! (*covering the mouthpiece*) Watch it — he's got his teeth in!

WALLACE: (*as he takes it from her*) Thanks for nothin', puss-face! — No, no, not you, Chief! Well, I don't blame you for bein' upset! (*he glares at Mae*) The *Times*? Yeah, I seen it. ... You're right, the Temple is all the rage now, and I shoulda seen it comin'. No, I can't think of any reason at all why you shouldn't fire me, Chief —

(The others are glued to him now)

— Except one: I got a plan that'll hand you that Temple on a platter, and the *Times*'ll never know what hit 'em! (*sotto voce*) I'm sending in a spy. ... Well right now I'd prefer to get my staff movin' on it without losin' another

second —

(He conducts sounds of furious activity in the office, then gives the cut-off)

— that is, so long as I'm still workin' for you. If not, there are other papers ... Yeah. Yeah, right, Chief, later then. And uh, thanks! *(he hangs up)*

DOOLEY: Hell, Boss, I hafta admit: ya can still string a line with the best o' them.

KOTOWSKI: Best bluff I've seen in years!

WALLACE: Bluff?!? Kee-rist! I dunno what gets into me — I'll be hirin' animal acts next! *(he pulls out a newspaper — his own copy of the Times)* This issue was in my hands the minute it hit the streets — at three o'clock this mornin' — like it shoulda been in yours!

KOTOWSKI: That why you had to tie one on?

WALLACE: Tie one on?!? I was celebratin' — I had the ace in the hole!

DOOLEY & KOTOWSKI: Ace in the — ?

(Wallace circles an ad in his copy of the times and shows them. All three grin at Mae; then Wallace crosses to her)

WALLACE: This little lady right here: the Ace in the hole!

MAE: Take those slimy hands off me or I'll deck ya!

WALLACE: Mae — !

MAE: So who am I supposed to be this time?

(He hands it to her and she reads aloud)

"Help Wanted, Female: Secretary/Typist to start immediately. Must be ... believer?" — ! — "Apply in person, Mrs. Minnie Kennedy, Angelus Temple, Echo Park, L.A." — !! No! No,no, no, no, no, no, no: this time you're asking too much. No. "N" — "0" — and that's final!

WALLACE: Mae, baby, who else have I got that types seventy-five words a minute and wears a skirt?

DOOLEY: Well, only in the privacy of my own home!

(Wallace glares)

MAE: I just don't see myself as the Mata Hari of the ink set. And the last thing I

am is a believer!

KOTOWSKI: So practice a few Hail-Marys or somethin' — you'll pass!

DOOLEY: Come on, Mae!

WALLACE: (*taking her aside*) Mae, baby — for me? For old times' sake? It's my last chance in this city — you wanna take that away from me?

MAE: You bastard. I should tell ya to go take a flyin' leap off a tall building ...

WALLACE: But — ?

MAE: But ... I never was much good at telling you that.

WALLACE: There you go, you buncha bozos! God and Minnie Kennedy willing, you have before you the new secretary at Angelus Temple!

DOOLEY: Great, Mae! With you in there, there's hope for the old rag yet!

KOTOWSKI: You should catch the service this afternoon — it's better than vaudeville! Right, boys?

DOOLEY & WALLACE: Right!

ALL THREE: (*singing the title song, 'Aimee!'*)

**There's a preacher new in town
Who'll have a role to play;
From now on, it's easy street —
'Cause she is here to stay! ...**

**Aimee! Heard the latest?
It's Aimee! She's the greatest!
She'll never let you down when you need a show!
If you're drowning in bathtub gin**

WALLACE: — **Or big-time sin!** —

ALL THREE: **Then she'll have something to say!
If your trouble is ragtime blues**

KOTOWSKI: — **Or lack of news!** —

ALL THREE: **She'll put jazz in your day!**

DOOLEY: **Bet your lollipop!**

ALL THREE: **Aimee! She's the one to see!**

**Aimee! Be a star for me!
Let me have a scoop so I get my pay!**

WALLACE: **If the President's boring,
Teams aren't scoring,
Al Capone is taking a rest —**

DOOLEY & KOTOWSKI: **Never mind: we got Aimee Semple's Temple now!**

KOTOWSKI: *(spoken)* Christ, it's like bein' blest!

DOOLEY: Hallelujah!

ALL THREE: **It's Aimee! She's the one to know!
Aimee! She's a hit; it's so
Cats' meow, bees' knees, and hip-hip-hooray!**

(By this time they have dragged Mae into the number, too)

MAE: **If the flickers aren't sinful,
Take a bin-full,
Tie them up and throw them away;
Theda Bara and Lillian Gish,
You've had your wish! —**

ALL FOUR: **Now move — it's Aimee's big day!**

DOOLEY: **Bet your lollipop!**

ALL FOUR PLUS OFFSTAGE CHORUS: **Aimee! She's the one to see!
Aimee! Be a star for me!
Let me have a scoop so I get my pay!**

**Aimee! She's the one to know!
Aimee! She's a hit; it's so
Cats' meow, bees' knees, and hip-hip-hooray!**

(Freeze finish; then as they exit, girl dancers in glitter Newsboy costumes pick up the number)

NEWSGIRLS: **If the flickers aren't sinful,
Take a bin-full,
Tie them up and throw them away!
Theda Bara and Lillian Gish,
You've had your wish —
It's Aimee's big day!**

— Young & Ashley: *Aimee!* —

Aimee! —
Aimee! —

*They dance a Charleston, which segues into
scene four ...*

Scene Four

The vamp continues. A backstage corridor at the Temple. Minnie stage-managing, Emma at her side with a check-list. Four bible school boys in bright red choirgowns dash across the stage with huge bouquets.

MINNIE: Get a move on with those things — we're starting in two minutes!

EMMA: ... two, three, four. That's all of them.

MINNIE: Where is that boy with the roses? We're going to have to hold the curtain!

(Enter Roberta in full armour)

ROBERTA: How do I look?

MINNIE: Pretty as a picture, Honey. Now on you go — and make darned sure that Devil's in his place as well!

(Roberta exits)

Doesn't she make the prettiest darn Joan of Arc you ever saw?

EMMA: Indeed she does. *(calling after her)* Break a ... a ... a ... an ... arm!

(A girl Choir-member loaded with music folders has just flown past. Enter a boy in a devil costume. Minnie glares)

MINNIE: Harold! Didn't Roberta tell you where to go?!?

(The horrified devil runs back the way he came. Enter a boy with a presentation bouquet of roses and a bill)

There you are! You're fired! *(taking the roses and reading the bill)* Two dollars and thirty-seven cents!!!

(The boy runs)

What's the matter with you? You never heard of a religious discount?!?

(Enter Mae)

MAE: Excuse me, Mrs. Kennedy —

MINNIE : Who are you and what do you want?

MAE: My name is Mae Waldron; I heard there was a position —

MINNIE: Do you believe in God?

MAE: Well —

MINNIE: Can you type?

MAE: Seventy —

MINNIE: You're hired! (*passing Emma the roses*) Emma, show her where she can watch from the wings. Hurry!

MAE: (*as they run*) Thankyou!

(Exit Mae and Emma. Enter Aimee and the underscoring stops. Minnie stands back and admires her in complete delight)

NOTE: this is a radically different Aimee. Her hair, now a remarkable coppery gold, is exquisitely waved and marcelled close to her head, and she wears a full-length "angel gown" of shimmering white with huge sleeves and a gigantic cross of brilliants on its breast.

MINNIE: Ohhhhh. I knew that hair-colour would suit you!

AIMEE: Well? Do I pass inspection?

MINNIE: Have you ever failed it, Angel? Now go on — they're waiting for you.

(Aimee runs, and Minnie calls after her)

Make your Mother proud!

(She sings 'That's My Girl!')

**When I was young I had big ideals —
But I abandoned the life I planned
To marry her father, and cook his meals,
And to bend my back to his land.
Now the man
And the food and the farm are gone,
And what have I got to show?
Minnie, who are you? And what have you done?
Well! There's just one thing I know: —**

**That's my girl!
I'm gonna tell the world that she's got just what it takes!
That's my girl!
Dusk to dawning till eyed with pride the globe awakes!
From Town to town,
I'm gonna let 'em know it's time those flags should unfurl.
Come on down! Bring a crown!
Get out your Sunday best, 'cause that's my girl!**

**And when the last blast
Of the trumpet gives the call on Judgement Day,
And ol' Saint Pete — sweet! —
Takes his pen in hand, I will understand.
He's about to say:**

**"Is that your girl?
Well Minnie, Honey, you did great when you managed that!"
Clouds aswirl —
Flocks of seraphim with all six wings goin' pit-a-pat!
The Stars aglow —
Now Gabriel leads a cheer! The Heav'nly host's in a whirl!
They all know! Could I crow!
You bet your life, Saint Peter — That's my girl — !!!**

(With the last line of the song, lights open up or a drop flies out to reveal the Temple stage with the red-robed Choir already in place. Brother Arthur steps out with a megaphone)

ARTHUR: And now, the moment we've all been waiting for! Would you please welcome our beloved Pastor, and the new Honorary Fire Chief of Los Angeles, the one and only — Sister Aimee Semple McPherson!!

(Enter Aimee in a follow-spot through the cheering Choir. She has added a sweeping sky-blue cloak to her outfit, and is carrying the roses. She halts the applause)

AIMEE: Thank you! Thank you all so much! And a very special thank you to the anonymous admirer out there, whoever you are, who sent me these wonderful roses! *(she hands them to Brother Arthur)* You all know that Angelus Temple is the place to find the Joy of Jesus!

(The Choir cheers)

Our brave Los Angeles Firemen are discovering that power too; and so, in their honour, the title of today's sermon is: "Put Out the Fire!"

(Donning a glitter fire-helmet she has pulled from behind the pulpit, she begins 'Put Out the Fire!'. A back-up trio steps out to accompany her)

AIMEE:	When the problems Mount too high to oversee, There are lessons To learn from your history; For the heroes Who fill up each musty book, Not unlike you, were often ... Mistook!	TRIO: Oooooo To oversee! Ooooooo His-to-ry! Ooooooo Take a look! Ooooooo
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(As the number hits tempo, Roberta enters as Joan of Arc, and a pantomime ensues)

**Joan of Arc, well, she had hell to pay.
Fought for France and made the English pray!
Just one problem that she couldn't lick — Yeah!
She had the daring to win, and a great suit of tin,
But they thought she was a heretic!**

She coulda had the joy of Jesus!

CHOIR: **Get the joy!**

AIMEE: **Every puzzle in your life it eases!**

CHOIR: **Don't be coy!**

AIMEE: **When Inquisitors are all around you,
And the flames are leaping high — ,
If you prefer to pass on roastin'
Let your armour down and let the Holy Ghost in!**

(Exit Joan of Arc. Enter a two-person cow)

**Mrs. O'Leary had a Jersey cow.
Only God knows where that cow is now!
Gave a lighted lantern one good poke — then:
While she was chewin' her cud, and enjoyin' the mud,
All Chicago-town went up in smoke!**

She coulda had the Joy of Jesus!

CHOIR: **Get the Joy!**

AIMEE: **Every puzzle in your life it eases!**

CHOIR: **Don't be coy!**

AIMEE: **When the pleasure of the flesh could drown you,
And the flames are leaping high — ,
Your tail can't singe, you won't be mooing,
If your front end knows what your back end's doing!**

(Exit the cow. The choir takes over the bridge, doing slow choreographic patterns)

WOMEN: **Let the water come flowing down,
Let the light break through all around.**

ADD MEN: **Let his power flood like a river o'er the pyre,
And he will put an end to your fire — !**

(Back to tempo)

**Come an' get the Joy of Jesus!
Come an' get the Joy of Jesus!
Come an' get the joy of Jesus!
Coma an' get the Joy of Jesus!
Get the Joy! Don't be coy!
Come an' get the Joy of Jesus!**

(Enter the Devil)

AIMEE: **Lucifer was once an angel bright —
Led those Heavenly choirs through the night.
Only trouble was his jealousy — Said:
"Why's Jehovah the star, when he's not up to par?
The best god in this place is me!"**

He coulda had the joy of Jesus!

CHOIR: **Get the Joy!**

AIMEE: **Every puzzle in your life it eases!**

CHOIR: **Don't be coy!**

AIMEE: **Remember when conceit has found you,
And the flames are leaping high — ,
The last is first, and the first is you —
If you wanna be first on the barbecue!**

CHOIR: **Come an' get the Joy of Jesus!
Come an' get the Joy of Jesus!
Get the Joy! Don't be coy!
Sink or swim lovin' him!**

AIMEE: **You can always have the Joy of Jesus!**

CHOIR: **Get the Joy!**

AIMEE: **Every puzzle in your life it eases!**

CHOIR: **Don't be coy!**

AIMEE: **When the hills are lookin' more like mountains,
And the flames are leaping high — ,**

CHOIR: **Leaping high!
Leaping high!
Leaping high!
Leaping high — !**

ALL: **The water's here, you know what to do —
And the hose is ready:**

AIMEE: **It depends on you! (*and she ad libs in the finale*)**

CHOIR: **C'mon C'mon — get the Joy of Jesus!
Come'n come'n come'n get the Joy of Jesus!**

Blackout.

Scene Five

Onstage, immediately following. A lighting change lets us know that the curtain is down now, the show is over. The Choir has split up and is wandering off, chatting. People are removing props. Two sweaty girls have poked their heads out of the cow.

AIMEE: Good work, everyone!

GIRLS: Thank you, Sister!

(They exit)

AIMEE: *(to Bible School boys with props)* Thank you, boys. Don't be late for class now.

BOYS: We won't!

(They exit. Mae has wandered onstage and is hovering near Aimee, feeling very out of place. Aimee removes her helmet)

AIMEE: Whew! Mae, would you put this away for me?

MAE: *(taking it)* Quite a show! I mean ... you were great! I didn't expect it to be so much ... well ... fun! Nothing personal, now, I didn't mean — I mean — uh ... I guess that wasn't the right word.

AIMEE: *(laughing)* Why? What's wrong with it? Do you think we should all be dire and dour and dress in black and speak of nothing but doom?

MAE: No! Uh ...

AIMEE: When trying to budge a large mule, a carrot can be just as good as a stick, you know. It's just that some of my colleagues seem to get stuck on the stick! I think they forget that the Lord Jesus loved a good laugh. Did you know he was very popular at dinner parties? The way some people represent him, it would have been a miracle if the other guests had lasted past the h'ors d'oeuvres!

MAE: Yeah. I know a few people like that — who ... kinda make ya lose your appetite.

AIMEE: After all, his message is a message of joy. And it's a message of joy because it's a message of hope.

MAE: Yeah. "Hope."

AIMEE: *(after a harder look at her)* Are you a believer, Mae?

MAE: *(too quickly)* Sure!

AIMEE: *(smiling)* Well, that's a first step. Say it often enough, and it will soon be true. *(pause)* Why are you so angry?

MAE: Angry?

AIMEE: There is a great rage in you. Rage that the world is not the place it should be — could be. Rage that ... *(looking at her very intently now)* ... that human beings are ninety percent dirty rats and ten percent fools.

(Mae is startled, as if her mind has been read)

That rage is a wonderful thing. Angry people want to change things. So do we. So does He.

MAE: Then why aren't they different?

AIMEE: Yes. Wouldn't it be lovely if he had left us in the Garden? But then there wouldn't be anything left for us to do, would there? What he has left us with is a wonderful privilege: the privilege to act. To choose. To work.

MAE: What's the use? You can break your heart tryin' — it's still only a drop in the bucket.

AIMEE: Never say that! Never think that! Oh, I know — it's so easy to feel defeated when you're alone. But you're not alone anymore. Join ten thousand drops together and you've got pretty darn near a pailful! ... I'm glad you've come, Mae. *(embracing her)* Welcome!

(Exit Aimee. Mae is clearly struggling with herself. Suddenly she flings the helmet aside)

MAE: No! ... No!

(She sings 'A Woman Who Might Care')

**Anyone who'd think that she was right
Would probably believe that pigs can fly!
Anyone who'd judge her brain was bright**

**Could credibly concede the life we hafta lead a picnic,
Humankind is good and love is true!
Meet a girl who's more than been around —
Can't cheat a girl who's firmly on the ground!
She's the one who's got to learn a lot!
I'm not about to yearn for anything I spurn so.
Still, I burn so!**

**Why did she look at me as if she knew me
From the rouge upon my knees up to my hair?
I guess she finds it easy
To confuse a working girl.
Did she really think that she was being fair?**

No!

**Anyone who'd deem a dime of sense
In her would postulate the moon is cheese!
Anyone who'd leap to her defence
Infer the cost you pay to live another day is worth it,
Prayer is always heard and love is sweet!
Fortunately, I have lived a bit —
Importunately, maybe, I'll admit;
I'm a little old to fly again
So consequently I am not about to try to.
Hell, I'd die to!**

**Why did she send those eyes tingling right through me —
Leave me dancing on a wire here in mid-air?
If I was suicidal,
Fool enough to spread my wings,
Would there really be a woman who might ... care?**

And cross-fade to ...

Scene Six

Outside the Temple, Dooley, Kotowski, and two other reporters (from the Times) are gathering to catch Aimee on her way out. Wallace saunters in to watch from a distance.

REPORTER 1: There she is!

REPORTER 2: Here she comes!

KOTOWSKI: Come on, Dooley!

(Enter Aimee, dressed glamorously for the street in fur coat, etc. Emma is behind her. Aimee poses obligingly for photographs, and then the men hit her with a barrage of questions all at once ad lib)

AIMEE: Gentlemen, please! One at a time! Mr. Kotowski?

KOTOWSKI: Mrs. McPherson, when your divorce comes through, do you plan to remarry?

AIMEE: I am the pastor of a church that believes that marriage is for life, Mr. Kotowski. Though I may become a divorced woman, I will still have a living husband; I will not be free to remarry unless he suddenly kicks the bucket — and he's a very healthy man! THE REPORTERS LAUGH. Besides, I'm much too busy to leave room for a man in my life.

MEN: Awwww — !

AIMEE: *(laughing herself)* Well, being surrounded by handsome men like yourselves does make it difficult!

(They laugh again)

REPORTER 1: Why did you leave him, Sister?

AIMEE: It was many years ago, now. Mr. McPherson was a man of the world; he did not understand the ways of the spirit.

DOOLEY: Will he be claiming custody of Roberta?

KOTOWSKI: Dooley — !

(The others glare at Dooley, too)

AIMEE: *(frostily)* Roberta Star Semple is named for her father, my first husband Robert Semple, who gave his life as a missionary to China. *(making a move to leave)*

DOOLEY: I'm sorry, Ma'am, I —

|REPORTERS: Sister — !

|KOTOWSKI: Mrs. McPherson, how big is the Temple now?

AIMEE: Over ten thousand members and still growing, Praise the Lord! We are now the world's largest single congregation — not to mention the seven Foursquare Gospel branch churches, and a new one just being built in Santa Ana!

|REPORTERS: Mrs. McPherson —

|WALLACE: *(crossing in)* Who owns all that, Mrs. McPherson?

AIMEE: It belongs to the Echo Park Evangelistic Association.

WALLACE: Whose officers are — ?

AIMEE: I am the President, Mother Kennedy is the Vice President, and my hard-working secretary Emma Schaffer, here, is the Treasurer.

WALLACE: Which all adds up to total control. Thank you!

AIMEE: Would you like someone else to run it, Mr. — ? No, we haven't met, have we?

WALLACE: Moore, Wallace Moore. City Editor at the *Mirror*.

AIMEE: Of course. How lovely to meet you. *(turning to the others)* Gentlemen, I want you all to hear some very special news, and then I must run. Three weeks from today — God willing, and he certainly seems to be! —

(The Reporters chuckle)

— Angelus Temple is to open its own radio station! Isn't that wonderful?

(The Reporters definitely think so)

When countless thousands can hear God's Holy Word without so much as stirring from the front parlour, the Age of Miracles is not yet over!

EMMA: Sister —

— Young & Ashley: *Aimee!* —

AIMEE: Yes, Emma. Now, you absolutely incorrigible men have kept me late again. But it's so much fun talking to you all, I'm sure it must be a sin! (*she starts to leave*)

REPORTERS: One more shot, Sister! Give us those pearly whites!

Aimee poses quickly. Flash! She and Emma exit, and the Reporters straggle after, laughing and chatting — isn't she wonderful? — etc. The play-off is from "Aimee!" Wallace is the last to go, as the lights cross-fade to the radio booth and scene seven ...

Scene Seven

The control booth of the Temple's new radio station. In it are Nelly and Isabel, two young female staffers in Temple uniform. Nelly is playing with knobs, etc., and Isabel is trying to prevent her.

ISABEL: Stop it, Nelly — Mr. Ormiston'll catch you!

NELLY: Oh, shush!

ISABEL: Go ahead, then. Get yourself electrocuted!

(Enter Kenneth Ormiston)

KENNETH: Well, well. Having fun, ladies?

NELLY: Oh! *(she giggles)*

ISABEL: I told you — !

KENNETH: So what do you two think of the science of the future?

NELLY: *(delightedly)* Ooooooh! Spooky! *(picking up the microphone)* What does this thing do?

KENNETH: *(rescuing it)* This ... is a microphone. Talk into one of those and people can hear you for a thousand miles or more.

NELLY: A thousand miles — !

ISABEL: Praise the Lord — it's a miracle!

KENNETH: A man-made miracle, maybe.

ISABEL: You'll love working for Sister. Isn't she wonderful?

KENNETH: I haven't met her yet, but she's coming to test the equipment for me in a minute or two, so —

ISABEL: Well, she's a saint.

KENNETH: I hope not.

BOTH GIRLS: What — ?!?

KENNETH: When it comes to choosing female company, my first choice would not be saints!

(Nelly giggles, but Isabel is not amused)

ISABEL: What are you doing here, then?

KENNETH: I'm doing my job — what I love doing. They wanted the best, and here I am. But I never said I'd take part in the hocus-pocus. If you'll pardon the expression, God forbid,

GIRLS: Mr. Ormiston — !

KENNETH: *(sings 'Spare Me the Saints!')*

**I confess I'm a man who has lived a bit —
I've been through the war,
I've been through a wife, —
But regardless of what I have made of it,
The thing I believe in is ... life!**

**Tingle in the air at dawn by the side of the ocean;
Dazzle as the glare goes on out as far as you can see.
Doesn't that ol' sun keep each of the planets in motion?
Isn't that a light enough for you?
Maybe it's not bright enough for you?**

**Conjugate the rain and thunder in dozens of tenses;
Calculate the shades of wonder from high upon a hill.
You don't get too much avoiding the sense of your senses:
We were meant to touch, so touch just as much as you will!**

**And you can spare me the saints —
The poor ascetics, hermetic'lly sealed up.
They're so apologetic that life hasn't been genteeled up!
They say that God has made the world, but you will find,
Though they're forced to stay there,
They're too scared to play there!**

(spoken) You see what I mean?

Tingle in the air at dawn by the side of the ocean,

GIRLS: **Tingle in the air at dawn by the side of the ocean,**

KENNETH: **Dazzle as the glare goes on out as far as you can see,**
GIRLS: **Dazzle as the glare goes on out as far as you can see,**
KENNETH: **Doesn't that ol' sun keep each of the planets in motion?**
GIRIS: **In motion!**
KENNETH: **Two will get you one that's plenty of Heaven for me!
'Cause whether win, place, or show,
It is this world I know —
And it's this world I'll live in,
Till it's time for me to go — !**

(Kenneth seizes the microphone, flips a switch, and a ghostly voice emanates from the big trumpet on top of his control panel)

KENNETH: P-r-a-i-s-e the L-o-r-d — !

ISABEL: Oh! What was that?

NELLY: It was that thing! Isabel, look — it came out of there!

(Both girls are bobbing excitedly up and down trying to see into the trumpet when Aimee walks in)

AIMEE: Good morning, girls.

GIRIS: Good morning, Sister!

AIMEE: Learning all about the miracle of Radio?

GIRLS: Yes, Sister! Goodbye, Sister!

(They bounce off giggling and grinning)

AIMEE: *(holding out a hand)* You must be Mr. Ormiston.

KENNETH: Kenneth. And you must be Mrs. McPherson.

AIMEE: *(she is lost in looking at him)* Yes ... Most people just call me "Sister."

KENNETH: If that's the choice, I think I'll stick with "Mrs." if you don't mind. Did I ... leave something undone?

AIMEE: What?

KENNETH: You were staring.

AIMEE: Oh! Was I? Please forgive me. It's just that you ... remind me of someone.

KENNETH: Someone you like, I hope.

AIMEE: Liked. Yes. Very much.

KENNETH: *(grinning)* You're not a saint at all!

AIMEE: Pardon me?

KENNETH: The way people talk about you around here, I half expected you to float in the door on a cloud! You know: long white night-shirt, golden harp — the works!

AIMEE: I'm sorry. I must have left my cloud behind the pulpit!

KENNETH: That's OK — I won't miss it!

(Something in his grin makes her break the moment)

AIMEE: Well! Tonight we embark on a new adventure in spreading God's word!

KENNETH: So I'm told. *(shows her a chair and turns to the control panel)* I predict you're going to be a hit, though: you've got a rich, sensual voice.

AIMEE: Sensual! I hope not! That's hardly a characteristic for a lady preacher.

KENNETH: Why not? You want to win them over, don't you?

AIMEE: Of course!

KENNETH: *(with a shrug)* You'll be the Siren of the Air-Waves.

AIMEE: Really, Mr. Ormiston, you're teasing me! Do you want me to sound like a — Salomé?

KENNETH: That's exactly what you will be. Whole legions of men would happily consign themselves to Hellfire at your bidding.

AIMEE: Then it's a good thing I'll be pointing them in the opposite direction!

(Kenneth has been scored on. He turns back to the controls)

KENNETH: I have to get a voice level before tonight. *(signaling)* This means "standby", this means "go". When you get the "go", just talk naturally into the microphone.

(Aimee looks around blankly)

That thing there.

AIMEE: Oh. What should I say?

KENNETH: Say whatever comes into your head. Most people just say, "Testing: one, two, three, four, five."

AIMEE: *(the most peculiar thing she has ever heard)* "Testing: one, two, three, four, five" — !?!

KENNETH: Right. *(he puts on the headset)* Ready? *(signals "standby", and starts to signal "go")*

AIMEE: Oh! I'm a little nervous!

KENNETH: Nothing to worry about — just relax. Ready? *(starts to signal again)*

AIMEE: *(turning to him and away from the microphone)* You know, it's amazing to think people will be listening hundreds of miles — *(she sees his look)* Yes. Ready.

(Kenneth signals "standby", then "go". Aimee lunges at the microphone)

Testing! One! Two! Three! Four! Five!

KENNETH: Aaagh!!! *(he rips off the headset)* It's not necessary to shout. And you don't have to take a bite out of the microphone, either.

AIMEE: I'm sorry!

KENNETH: Just sit back, about here —

(He pulls her back gently, and she stiffens under his hand)

Relax! — *(he is no hurry to take his hand away)* — and speak exactly as you would in normal conversation. *(he replaces the headset and signals "standby" and "go")*

AIMEE: *(passionately)* The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him and I am helped. Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him!

KENNETH: That's "normal conversation" for you?

AIMEE: *(stiffly)* Yes it is, Mr. Ormiston.

KENNETH: Twenty-four hours a day?

AIMEE: Twenty-four hours a day.

KENNETH: And you never cut loose at all?

AIMEE: Never.

KENNETH: Looks like all those men out there might as well jump off a cliff!

AIMEE: *(rising, her fury barely controlled)* Is it your habit, Mr. Ormiston, to flirt so outrageously with all Ministers of the Gospel?

KENNETH: No. Just the women.

AIMEE: Then perhaps that's why you're so eager for practice — there aren't many of us.

KENNETH: I have to admit it's my first try. But I think I like it.

(A standoff. Enter Emma)

EMMA: I'm sorry to interrupt, Sister, but we'll have to hurry if you're to make your next appointment.

AIMEE: Thank you, Emma. *(to Kenneth)* Will that be all?

KENNETH: Not quite. You see this little telephone here? *(he lifts the handset from his control panel)* There's one just like it right beside the pulpit. You can use it to reach me if you want to check on how the service is coming across, or ... any time at all.

AIMEE: I see. Fine. Thank you, Mr. Ormiston.

KENNETH: Kenneth.

AIMEE: *(after a long moment)* Kenneth.

As the orchestra plays the last few bars of "Spare Me the Saints," Aimee sweeps out with Emma behind her. But Emma sneaks a look back over her shoulder, and is startled by Kenneth's grin.

Blackout.

Scene Eight

Part (A). To the steps up centre, representing the front stairs of the new Santa Ana branch, marches a little crowd singing a hymn. Brother Burke's Assistant and another man carry a banner reading "Dedication Service: Santa Ana Branch, Church of the Foursquare Gospel." Brother Arthur and Isabel stretch a ribbon across the platform. There are other Temple henchmen present as well.

(The last to arrive, in a position of honour, are Minnie Kennedy and Brother Burke. As they enter, everyone joins in 'Happy Road to Heaven')

CROWD: **Join me on the Happy Road to Heaven,
Bring your cares and see them drift Away,
Day by day.
Watch your woes and worries all unleaven;
Shed seven or more by matinée.
Amen.**

MINNIE: By the power invested in me by God and the Echo Park Evangelistic Association, I now declare officially open the Santa Ana Branch of the Church of the Foursquare Gospel. The scissors, Brother Burke?

(He hands them to her, she cuts the ribbon, and everyone cheers and applauds. Brother Burke steps forward)

BURKE: We now call on our beloved Mother Kennedy, as Second in Command of our Parent-Organization-in-the-Lord, to present to us the deed to this, our wonderful new building.

MINNIE: To do what — !?!

BURKE: To ... to present to us the deed, the ... title.

MINNIE: That's what I thought you said. Are you out of your mind? The Association legally owns this building and everything that's in it.

BURKE: But, but, but, that's outrageous! We're the ones who did the legwork, who canvassed the pledges, who collected the payments, who —

MINNIE: Brother Arthur — ! *(she signals him off)*

(Exit Brother Arthur and the other Temple henchmen into the church in a very purposeful fashion. Burke doesn't notice this, but his Assistant does, and slips out after them curiously, as Minnie continues)

And who was it, pray tell, who inspired you to do all that?

BURKE: Well ...

MINNIE: My daughter! And who was it who inspired those who gave?

BURKE: Well ...

MINNIE: My daughter! And who was it whose name and reputation gave the project credibility in the first place?

HERE: Well ...

MINNIE: My daughter! It belongs to us.

BURKE: But, Mother Kennedy —

(By now a strenuous argument can be heard in the wings. Re-enter Burke's Assistant, desperately)

ASSISTANT: Brother Burke! Help! They're repossessing the furniture!

(Back he goes to the fray)

BURKE: Aaaaagh! *To minnie:* What is the explanation for this!?!?

MINNIE: It's called "protecting your investment." May I see your membership card, please?

BURKE: Certainly. *(he hands it over)*

(Minnie tears it up on the spot: rip! Rip! Rip! Rip! She and her cohorts exit on an ironic play-off of 'Happy road to Heaven.' The dumfounded Burke glares after them)

Jezebel!!!

Part (B): (With that, the vamp of 'The Appointment-Calendar Chant' begins; Burke exits as we transition to the Temple. Aimee

and Emma enter busily)

EMMA: The way things are piling up, I think you'll be skipping supper tonight: the mayor suggested tea at five, the board would like a speech at six, and then at seven you have another service —

(Enter Roberta on the run)

ROBERTA: Momma, Granny says I can have a new dress for the Bible School opening! It's to be white with a blue bow, the hem just ever so slightly above the knee —

AIMER: Darling, —

ROBERTA: You're busy.

AIMEE: I'm sorry, Honey, I just can't —

(Roberta runs away)

— Roberta!

EMMA: *(speaking still)* The lawyers called again at nine.
Will Hymn 100 do just fine?
We're late again — it's after three.
The architects will wait and see.
The broadcast now is set for two.
Would Matthew be alright with you? —

(Enter Brother Burke, fuming)

BURKE: Sister, your mother is refusing to give us title to our own branch! She's cleaned us out — right down to the communion set!

AIMEE: Bother Burke! I don't know what to say ...

BURKE : Well, stop her!

AIMEE: I'm sorry, there's really nothing I can do. My mother doesn't explain her actions to me.

BURKE : But — !!

AIMEE: Talk to my mother.

(Exit Burke, enter Nelly and Isabel to join Emma. Now all three are singing the Chant at Aimee)

EMMA: **They promised they'd be through by one.**

ISABEL: **The staff Assembly's just begun.**

NELLY: **The choir needs you right at twelve.**

EMMA: **And one more thing we cannot shelve:**

ISAEEL: **Committee meeting at elev'n.**

NELLY: **A message says call Mr. Kev'n —**

(Enter Miss Sturgess, also very excited. At the same moment, the Choir in their red robes begin slowly to close in on Aimee from all sides, chanting under their breath)

STURGESS: Sister! Your mother is on a penny-pinching rampage! Now She's forcing us secretaries to make all the business calls on the pay-phones!

CHOIR: One o'clock.
Two o'clock.
Three o'clock.
Four o'clock.
Five o'clock.
Six o'clock.

AIMEE: My mother is in charge of all management decisions, Miss Sturgess.

Seven o'clock.
Eight o'clock.
Nine o'clock.

STURGESS: Even if we have to use our own nickels?!?

Ten o'clock.

AIMEE: I'm sorry, talk to my mother!

(A sting from the orchestra. Enter Kenneth and passes jauntily on his way to the radio booth)

KENNETH: Morning, Mrs. McPherson!

AIMEE: Good morning — *(she breaks off and turns away from him)*

(Kenneth grins to himself as he settles down to work in the booth. The light on him fades, and the chant plunges on)

EMMA, **The meeting doesn't start—**
NELLY, **Would you prefer to dine—**
ISABEL, **The service happens at —**
ARTHUR: **The board would like a speech—**
Just one more thing!
The Bible School!
What colour shall!
Reporters want!

CHOIR: One o'clock!
Two o'clock!
Three o'clock!
Four o'clock!
Five!
Six!
Seven!
Eight!

(The orchestra hits a new and urgent motif as Mrs. Peabody rushes in)

PEABODY: Sister, your mother is conducting a purge. She's kicking out the ex-bookies, the ex-dope-dealers, the ex-ladies- of-the-night —

AIMEE: My mother has control of the membership, Mrs. Peabody.

PEABODY: But those are the very people who need the Lord the most!

AIMEE: Talk to my mother!

(A second sting from the orchestra. Aimee focusses on Kenneth, whose light comes on briefly; then the chant moves on even more urgently)

EMMA ETC.: **The service happens after sev'n.**

What colour shall we paint the heav'n?

The morning prayers are set— ROBERTA: Momma, now?

The mayor suggested tea— PEABODY: Those people need
the Lord the most!

Afraid you'll skip!

Miss Havergal!

BURKE: Right down to the
communion set!

We're late again!

Again again

CHOIR: **Do it now, Sister!**

again again

Do it now, Sister!

again again

Sister, do it now!

again again ...

Now. Sister, now!

STURGESS: We even had to use our own nickels!

(A third sting. This time the light is on the pulpit, where the little intercom phone is clearly visible. Aimee looks from that to Kenneth in the booth, and then again the chant tears her away)

ALL: **Do it now. Sister!**

Do it now. Sister!

Do it now!

EMMA ETC: **The Board would like a speech at six!**

Reporters want an hour for pix!

COMPANY: **The lawyers called again —**

The architects will wait —

The broadcast now is set —

They promised they'd be through —

BURKE: Well, stop her!

COMPANY: **Do it now, Sister!**

PEABODY &

STURGESS: Stop her!

Do it now. Sister!

Sister, do it now!

Now, Sister, now!

ALL THREE: Stop her!!

(The rebels have trapped Aimee near the pulpit)

BURKE: She thinks she's Napoleon!

STURGESS: Genghis Khan!

PEABODY: She's unjust, unfair, pernicious, hurtful, antagonistic, severe —

ALL THREE: Positively unchristian!

STURGESS: We would follow you anywhere, Sister; you could not be more loving and Christ-like —

ALL THREE: But something has to be done about your mother!

AIMEE: What do you want me to do?

BURKE: We, the Committee, beg you to take complete charge of the Temple yourself.

PEABODY: Pension her off, buy her out —

ALL THREE: Get rid of her somehow!

AIMEE: *(in a fury)* This Temple would not exist without my mother! Never, under any circumstances, could I consider doing what you ask, and that is my final word!

PEABODY: Very well. Then we have no alternative but to go to the Press.

(With a crash from the orchestra, the stage clears, and headlines flash on the screens above, while newsboys scream extras.)

"SCANDAL AT ANGELUS TEMPLE!"

"MA KENNEDY RULES WITH IRON FIST!"

"REBELS EXCOMMUNICATED IN TEMPLE REIGN OF TERROR!"

"AIMEE FIDDLES WHILE FOLLOWERS BURN!"

Part (C). A lighting change, and on stalks Aimee like a thundercloud, a newspaper in one hand, with her anxious mother trying to keep up behind her)

MINNIE: Aimee, Angel, you're upset, — You hardly know what you're saying!

AIMEE: Don't baby me, Mother! I'm not your little girl anymore! (*she wheels on the older woman*) Well? What'll it be, Mother? Step down or get out?

MINNIE: Why don't you take a holiday? Five years of day in and day out and never a break for the poor little thing. You love swimming so much — how about a month in Acapulco, or Hawaii maybe? I can hold the fort.

AIMEE: You've been holding the fort too long, Mother! I want you out! I want to be mistress in my own house, and this is my house!

(Pause. Minnie is speechless)

Five years ago, we set out to build something together. Now I find you've been acting like a cross between Simon Legree and Attila the Hun! — You're jeopardizing the very work we set out to achieve!

MINNIE: It's because of the newspapers, isn't it?

AIMEE: Newspapers be damned! It's because of you!

MINNIE: Oh. Fine words from a daughter to a mother. You think running this place is a Sunday School Picnic, maybe? Well let me tell you something, Honey: The cow-pies come with the cows! — You can't raise one without steppin' in the other!

All these years I made sure that no matter what happened, you could still float six inches above the barnyard without getting a spot on your frock. Well, now I'm telling you: if I've been a hatchet man, it was your hatchet-man; if I've been a thug, it was your thug; and if I've been ruthless, I was being ruthless for you!

Are you really so sure you want to take it all on yourself?

Exit Minnie to some sombre chords, leaving Aimee alone and stunned. A lighting change to scene nine ...

Scene Nine

Aimee is still standing near the pulpit. Enter Roberta.

ROBERTA: Momma, now?

AIMEE: Oh, Honey ... *(she sees Roberta's stricken look)* Of course. Why not? Now.

(They move to sit on the steps up centre, arms around each other)

I'm sorry that there never seems to be time. It's terrible, it really is.

ROBERTA: In the old days we were always together.

AIMEE: Yes. No matter how poor we were, we were always together. And no matter how badly things seemed to be going, we always believed in what we ... *(that thought is too painful to continue; she hugs Roberta to herself impulsively)* Sometimes I dream about running away somewhere — hiding away with someone I love, where no-one would know who we were and we could be just — people — with each other for a while.

ROBERTA: When do we pack?

AIMEE: Oh, I can't dear, you know that. It's just a dream.

ROBERTA: I know.

AIMEE: Now. What do you want to talk about?

ROBERTA: How old were you when you married my father?

AIMEE: Goodness! I was seventeen.

ROBERTA: The same age as I am!

AIMEE: Well, a few months older than you.

ROBERTA: You loved him very much, didn't you?

(Aimee hesitates)

You never talk about him. I want to know. Please?

AIMEE: Alright. Yes. I did love him very much. He struck the fear of the Lord deep into the bottom of my soul, and I promptly fell in love with him —

and he with me. And he whisked me away, straight out of the Ingersoll Academy and around the world to China. The whole town was scandalized, But I didn't care. I didn't care....

ROBERTA: I wish I'd known him. I have a picture of him in my mind: like a prince.

AIMEE: A preacher-prince. A penniless preacher-prince.

ROBERTA: Dark and handsome — like Mr. Ormiston.

AIMEE: Yes! Yes, remarkably like Mr. Ormiston! — You saw it, too! Of course, they're not at all alike, really, and yet, there's something ... perhaps something in the eyes....

(She sings 'Once There Was a Man')

**The way that he ran a hand through dark wavy hair;
The trace of a grin he left behind in the air —
I still hear, through all the mists of memory,
Suddenly, awakening me....**

**"Aimee, oh Aimee,
Daughter of the flame,
Let me make you beloved as your name.
Aimee, oh Aimee,
Spirit, take my hand.
Follow me to some bright exotic land."**

**And the way of him, cachet of him,
Will burn in my eye till it hurts me,
And I know he is standing there,
Through shimmering prisms in the air —**

**"Oh Aimee, my Aimee,
If we have to part,
Take my fire and hold it to light your chart
Through the years, past all tears,
My little lion-heart."**

**And when achingly, dream-breakingly,
He slipped from my side in a moment —
In a strange land, a far by-way —
Amazed, I heard my own voice say....**

**"Oh Aimee, my Aimee,
Bear it if you can:
You may love but once —
Once, there was a man!"**

(During this, Aimee has moved downstage as Roberta disappeared. Now she deliberately picks up the pulpit phone. It rings in the radio booth. Music out)

KENNETH: *(picking it up)* Hello?

AIMEE: Kenneth! Oh, Kenneth —

KENNETH: *(not catching her tone)* Yes, Mrs. McPherson?

AIMEE: *(freezing)* Never mind, I ... I'm sorry to have disturbed you ... Mr. Ormiston. I don't know why I called.

(She hangs up quickly, and, very upset, turns to leave. But behind her the pulpit phone rings. She turns and stares at it. It keeps ringing. At last she picks it up)

Yes?

KENNETH: Aimee, it's Kenneth. I know why you called....

Both of them are glowing, as the music swells and the lights fall.

- INTERMISSION -

- ACT TWO -

Scene Ten

The entr'acte finishes on the tune to "Aimee!", and in come the glitter Newsgirls, who dance and sing:

NEWSGIRLS: **Aimee! Heard the latest? It's
Aimee! She's the greatest!
She'll never let you down when you need a show!
If the flickers aren't sinful,
Take a bin-full,
Tie them up, and throw them away;
Theda Bara and Lillian Gish,
You've had your wish —
It's Aimee's big day!**

Aimee! ———

Aimee! ———

(The newsgirls exit, revealing the backstage corridor at the Temple. The same four boys in choir gowns cross with the same big bouquets, as Minnie and Emma enter from the other side)

MINNIE: Get a move-on with those things — we're starting in two minutes!

EMMA: ... two, three, four: that's all of them.

MINNIE: Where is Aimee? We're going to have to hold the curtain!

(Enter Roberta in a Bo-Peep costume)

ROBERTA: How do I look?

MINNIE: Fine, dear, fine. Now go on — and make darned sure that sheep is in his place as well!

(Exit Roberta)

Emma, I'm getting worried. It's not like her to be this late.

EMMA: No, it's not.

(Enter the same Devil we saw the last time)

MINNIE: Harold!

(The Devil freezes)

Wrong sermon!

(Harold dashes back the way he came. Enter a Choir-boy)

Have you seen Sister?

CHOIR-BOY: Isn't she onstage?

MINNIE: No, she is not onstage.

(Exit the Choir-boy and enter Brother Arthur)

Have you seen Sister?

ARTHUR: Isn't she with you?

MINNIE: No, she is not with me!

(Exit Arthur)

Oh, God, I knew I shouldn't have been so hard on her! Emma ... you don't think she could have done something rash, do you?

EMMA: Well ... she hasn't been herself, lately.... And she's never missed a service....

(Minnie and Emma share a horrified look. Enter Isabel)

BOTH: Have you seen Sister?

ISABEL: Hasn't she come back from swimming?

MINNIE: No, she has not come ba — !!! — Swimming?!? *(to Emma)* I knew it! She's done something terrible to herself!

ISABEL: Do you think so? But she looked so happy — !

MINNIE: *(not listening)* Where did she say she was going swimming?

ISABEL: She said she was going to Ocean Park. *(innocently)* You know — where Mr. Ormiston lives.

EMMA: Ocean Park! There's a terrible undertow at Ocean Park!

MINNIE: Undertow?!? Oh my God. Call the Police, call the Fire Department, call the newspapers — she's drowned!! !

(They dash off as the orchestra crashes in and headlines flash on the screens:

"EVANGELIST MISSING — PRESUMED DROWNED!"

"THOUSANDS HUNT BODY ON BEACHES!"

"DAYS PASS — STILL NO AIMEE!"

And, after a moment:

"DISTRAUGHT MOTHER KENNEDY GIVES UP SEARCH!")

Cross-fade to ...

Scene Eleven

Lights up on a news conference in Minnie's office at the Temple. The beleaguered woman is backed up by Emma, Arthur, Mae and Roberta, while Nelly, Isabel, and other Temple supporters look on. Dooley, Kotowski, and Wallace are there, and so are reporters from the New York Times, Times of London, and Toronto Telegram.

(The chain of questions is merciless and rapid-fire)

REPORTER 3: *Times of London, Ma'am; what are your plans now, Mother Kennedy?*

REPORTER 2: Have you talked to the medium that contacted your daughter, Mother Kennedy?

REPORTER 1: What about the ransom demand from Havana?

OTHERS: What about —

MINNIE: Cranks! Nothing but cranks! I wish to God you people would stop spreading these outlandish rumours: blackmail, ransom, sightings — ! It's us at the Temple that loved her and have lost her; there's no need for the rest of the world to go mad!

REPORTERS: Mother Kennedy —

MAE: Have a heart!

ARTHUR: One at a time, please! *(He points to the next questioner)*

REPORTER 1: New York *Times*; you still believe your daughter was drowned, then?

MINNIE: *(glaring)* Well whaddayou call it when someone goes into the water and doesn't come out?!? No, I'm afraid our little Sister is gone for good. *She dabs at a tear.* But as I keep telling Roberta here — cm'ere, Roberta — we know her mother is with the Lord shouting Victory! *(A dramatic pose, one arm around Roberta)*

DOOLEY: *(with a camera)* Hold that!

(She does. Flash!)

REPORTER 2: Toronto *Telegram*; then who's going to carry on the work?

MINNIE: Well, they haven't killed me off yet! It's what she would have wanted — until Roberta here is ready to take over, of course.

(The Temple-members applaud)

REPORTER 2: Then the commissary, the job service, the broadcasts will all continue?

MINNIE: Well, we have to find a new radio operator. Mr. Ormiston has resigned.

WALLACE: Do you see any connection between that resignation and your daughter's disappearance, Mrs. Kennedy?

MINNIE: *(turning to face him, in a tone that means "how dare you?")* What — ? ! ?

WALLACE: Well, they're both attractive, they're both divorced ...

(Minor uproar from all present. Minnie cuts through it)

MINNIE: My daughter was a saint, Mr. Moore! A saint with a living husband — and what you're suggesting is a mortal sin! There's only one thing that could keep our Sister from her work, and that's that she's left this world!

REPORTER 3: Then where's the bloody corpse?!?

|REPORTERS: Yeah, where?

|KOTOWSKI: Yeah, Mother: how do you explain that?

MINNIE: Explain it? We don't explain it. That's what faith is.

FOLLOWERS: A-men!

MINNIE: *(continuing)* Her precious little body will never be found, gentlemen — because the Lord has taken it into His Hall of Fame!

FOLLOWERS: Praise the Lord! Bless his holy name!

REPORTER 3: *(cutting through)* Oh, come on, Mother! You don't believe that mumbo-jumbo!

MINNIE: Well what else can I believe, for crissake! — Don't print that. — He's done it before, and he'll do it again! Isn't that true, Saints?

FOLLOWERS: A-men! Hallelujah! You tell'em, Mother! *(etc.)*

MINNIE: The Age of Miracles is not yet over!

(She sings 'That's the Least He Could Do!')

**Read your Bibles, gentlemen!
Of Holy Print drink deep.
Our good Jehovah has some methods of transport
You have never seen,
Even in your sleep!**

(The Temple followers sing back-up as she goes on)

**Elijah was a hairy prophet who lived on a hill.
Folks in Israel can't get off it, they speak of him still:
How the Lord came down one mornin' an'
Told Elijah "Sound the warnin' an'
Cause upheaval —
Topple evil
Ahab and his Je-ezebel!"
God was just as pleased as punch with all 'Lijah had done;
Asked him "Won't you come to lunch with the angels, my son?
Two o'clock? — Fine! I'll arrange that a chauffeur drop by" —**

**FOLLOWERS: He flew his prophet on a
Fiery chariot into the sky!**

**MINNIE & FOLLOWERS: Earthquakes churning,
Whirlwinds turning,
Chariots burning —
Merciful Heavens! For
One returning
Girl who's earning,
That's the least he could do!**

ARTHUR: Noah's flood was really drastic — he floated to flee;

ROBERTA: Moses tripped the light fantastic right through the Red Sea!

**MAE: Jacob had his golden ladder, E-
Zekiel's wheel was even madder,**

**EMMA: And
Jesus never,
Hardly ever,
Walked on land when water was free.**

**MINNIE: God told Jonah, "Got a mission down Nineveh way."
Jo said "Sorry, busy fishin' — it's my holiday!"**

**Lord said "Hey boy! Don't get uppity! I'm in a spot —
A whale will be around to
Pick you up at three on the dot!"**

FOLLOWERS: (*chanting and hand-clapping and working up a fervour*)

Noah's flood was really drastic!
Moses tripped the light fantastic!
Jacob had his golden ladder, E-
Zekiel's wheel was even madder!
Cause upheaval!
Topple evil!
**For one returning
Girl who's earning,
That's the least he could do!**

MINNIE: **God was just as pleased as punch with all 'Lijah had done;
Asked him "Won't you come to lunch with the angels, my son?
Two o'clock? — Fine! I'll arrange that a chauffeur drop by" —
He flew his prophet on a
Fiery chariot into the sky!**

(The Temple followers, "under the power" by now, launch into a holy-rollers-at-a-revival-meeting dance, and their energy is so contagious that the reporters cannot bear to be left out. Everyone (except Wallace) joins in the final halftime chorus)

ALL: **Earthquakes churning!
Whirlwinds turning!
Chariots burning!
Merciful Heavens! For
One returning
Girl who's earning ...**

(Back to tempo)

**That's the least he could,
That's the least he could —
That's the least he could do!!!**

(A musical exit. But Wallace has caught Mae's eye, and the two of them remain behind. They look awkwardly at each other for a moment before Wallace speaks)

WALLACE: Mae, baby. What's with the monkey suit? Even the secretaries wear those now? (*he means her Temple uniform*)

MAE: I'm not a secretary any more. I'm staff.

WALLACE: Yeah? A little above and beyond the call of duty, ain't it?

MAE: What do you want, Wally?

WALLACE: Want? I want you to do your job. I got the story of the century by the tail and I need your eyes and ears. —

MAE: Wallace —

WALLACE: — The lady ain't dead.

MAE: *(after a moment)* What — !!?

WALLACE: I was comin' back from a meeting in Monterey this morning and I seen her lined up at the gas-pumps near Carmel-by-the-Sea — in a car with Kenneth Ormiston!

MAE: Of all the slimy — ! Sure ya did: right behind the pink elephants!

WALLACE: I ain't drinkin' these days, Mae!

MAE: You'd tear this Temple down brick by brick if it would make good copy, though, wouldn't ya? Don't you ever lose sight of the dollar sign?

WALLACE: Does anybody else? It's 'the American Dream'.

MAE: Dream? What do you know about dreams!

(She stalks away from him, struggling with her feelings. Wallace stares after her)

WALLACE: What the hell is the matter with you, Mae? I hardly know you anymore.

MAE: You know something? Neither do I. But I do know that if you print that story — if what you say is true — then people would find out she's human. They might never forgive her for that.

WALLACE: So?

MAE: Wally, this is the only place in town that's actually doing something for people! Don't you have any idea of the harm a story like this —

WALLACE : Are you outa your mind, Waldron? I gave you a job to do, and so far your record ain't so hot. If you forget why you're in here, I might just forget why I hired ya!

MAE: You did that years ago, Wallace Moore. What I forget is why I ever

wanted the job! ... You're not gonna change your mind, are ya?

WALLACE: Might as well ask for the moon.

MAE: Then stick it! I don't ever want to see you again!

WALLACE: You don't mean that.

MAE: I never meant anything more in my life.

WALLACE: Mae — !

MAE: Go!

WALLACE: *(after a moment)* Alright. Then I'll do it on my own!

(Exit Wallace. Lights dwindle to a single special on Mae in the darkness as the music strikes up, and she begins singing 'I Go On')

MAE: **Fleeting down my hallway, a figure goes hasting —
Leaving me to ponder the love I've been wasting:
Woman with the welcome mat constantly at my door,
Calling as I have before,
"Just once more ... "
Whether Sister knew love, or passed by unheeding,
Hers was more the caring than ever the needing:
Laughter in her eyes, open arms, and a face that shone.
Puzzling phenomenon:
Though she's gone,
I go on.**

(A second special reveals Roberta)

ROBERTA: **Watching in the starlight the lovers sachaying,
Wishing I might dance to the music they're playing —
Princess who must wait for a partner whose blood is blue.
Can you give me my debut?
Oh. Not you.
Mother had the courage to face what I'm facing,
Strength to play the role that toward me is racing.
She knew how to cope all alone with the lot she'd drawn.
Puzzling phenomenon:
Though she's gone,
I go on.**

DUET: **Her eyes were open;**

**She chose the lonely way,
Her life a lesson
For me to see.
And if I won't betray love,
If I will repay love,
Now is the time to say —
Dawn of the Brand New Day —
Now that she's gone ...
Now that she's gone ...**

(A third special reveals Emma)

EMMA: **Passing by my window, the young men went walking.
I knew it was never of me they were talking —
Girl who sat alone with her needlepoint on her knees.
"Do I suffer some disease?
See me, please."
Sister gave me joy every second of living,
Richer every day for the gifts I was giving.
Manless, I could love! And the duckling became a swan.
Glorious phenomenon:
Though she's gone,
I'll go on!**

TRIO: **Her eyes were open;
She chose the lonely way,
Her life a lesson
For me to see.
And if I won't betray love,
If I will repay love,
Now is the time to say —
Dawn of the Brand New Day —
Now that she's gone ...
Now that she's gone ...
Now that she's gone ...**

Take me.

*The lights on them fade to black. Lights up
on ...*

Scene Twelve

The bedroom of a pleasant holiday cottage at Carmel-by-the-Sea. The night table sports a telephone and a primitive portable radio. It is mid-morning, and there is a figure asleep in the bed.

(Enter Kenneth Ormiston with two cups of coffee)

KENNETH: Darling! Time to rise and shine! This coffee is starting to look like sludge from the bottom of the Zambesi River!

(Aimee sits up and glares at him once through screwed-up eyes, turns away emphatically, and pulls the pillow over her head)

Tsk, tsk, tsk — I'm surprised at you! Sloth is one of the Seven Deadlies, you know.

AIMEE: *(stretching)* Ooooooooooh, Kenneth — ! It's so cosy in here.

KENNETH: *(proffering the coffee)* Here!

AIMEE: Spoilsport. *(she sits up and accepts it from him)*

(He sits beside her on the bed)

It's just that it's such a treat: no meetings, no emergencies, —

KENNETH: No mother — !

AIMEE: *(laughing)* It's not her fault; she does what she thinks is best.... You know, my mother always swore up and down that she prayed me into existence?

KENNETH: Prayed you into existence?

AIMEE: Mm-hm. A "little baby girl" to be given to God. I never heard lullabies when I was little, but I could sing you twenty revival hymns by the time I was three!

KENNETH: I knew there was something perverse about your childhood!

AIMEE: *(after hitting him with a pillow, or something like that)* I remember my very first day of school in the country near Ingersoll. —

KENNETH: Ingersoll?

AIMEE: Back in Canada. I was the only child in the place from a Salvation Army background. The others taunted me without mercy!

KENNETH: How?

AIMEE: Oh, they called me "Sally Annie" and "Bible Betty" and "The Little Missionary." Children can be so cruel. They were all in a bunch on one side of the schoolyard chanting names at me, and I was all alone on the other. But I didn't cry. I didn't cry — I found myself a big, rusty biscuit tin and a stick, and I made a drum out of it. And right then and there I started marching up and down, pounding my drum and belting out hymns for all I was worth! And do you know what happened? Do you know what they did?

KENNETH: What?

AIMEE: In no time at all, every darned one of them was marching behind me — singing his little head off! I wasn't even six years old. And it's been that way ever since.

KENNETH: Until now.

AIMEE: Until now.

(A small, tender kiss; then Kenneth springs up)

KENNETH: I know what you need: some nice, gentle, morning-music!

AIMEE: You and your wonderful gadget; that sounds heavenly!

KENNETH: *(presenting his radio with flash)* No sooner said than done!

AIMEE: This can wait. *(with that, she has plopped the coffee onto the side table and snuggled into the covers)*

(Kenneth does an "oh yeah?" reaction and flips on the radio: out comes raucous jazz at top volume!)

Aaaaaaagh! (she dives under the pillow again)

KENNETH: *(bellowing over the din)* Serves you right!

(She throws the pillow at him, he throws it back at her, and a pillow fight ensues that leaves them laughing and breathless)

Well! If at first we don't succeed ... *(he turns the dial to find a new*

station)

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE: ... as the stricken mother Minnie Kennedy, all in black, moves away from the pulpit, where she has just delivered a moving eulogy from the set of sermon-notes Sister left before she died. —

KENNETH: My God.

ANNOUNCER: — And now I think it's — yes, it is!

(The murmur of a large crowd can be heard in the background)

Roberta Semple, daughter of the late Mrs. McPherson, is coming forward to give the altar call!

(The murmur swells into applause, and fades)

ROBERTA'S VOICE: Heavenly Father, we pray on this morning of all mornings that every last person within the sound of my voice will give his heart to Jesus. If my mother is looking down from Heaven right now, and I'm sure she is, —

(Kenneth turns it off. A prolonged silence, in which they do not look at each other)

AIMEE: I have to go back.

KENNETH: Why?

AIMEE: How can you ask that? My whole life, I've been working to —

KENNETH: You've already broken that pattern.

AIMEE: Kenneth, they love me; and I ... I've ... betrayed —

KENNETH: You haven't! (*urgently*) How could we know that the very first time we tried to slip away together, the whole world was going to blow up behind us?

AIMEE: (*as she bounds out of bed and turns to confront him*) I didn't "slip away", I ran! And then I hid! It doesn't make me very proud.

KENNETH: And what about us?

AIMEE: They need me!

KENNETH: They're using you, Aimee! — using you now like they always have! (*he advances on her*) The world is full of boring little people who cling to

someone like you because it's the only way they know they're alive — and the more hot air they blow in your direction, the bigger they feel! If you go back now, you'll spoil the fun: they'll turn on you as easily as they loved you in the first place!

AIMEE: No, that's not true, they are not "little" people, they are my people!

KENNETH: They don't even know who you are!!! ... Stay with me.

AIMEE: I can't.

(A moment's tense silence)

KENNETH: And how the hell do you think you're going to get back? You can't tell them the truth now — they'd stone you in the streets! And what about your mother? You really think you can invent a story good enough to fool her?

AIMEE: *(breaking at last)* Oh, God, help me! Don't fight me, Kenneth, help me, please!

(Three beats of silence. Then the music comes in, he goes to her quickly, and they cling)

AIMEE: I'm frightened.

KENNETH: We'll think of something to tell them. I've never seen a situation yet you couldn't bluff your way through.

AIMEE: There's always a first time!

KENNETH: Not for you: the woman who turns mountains into molehills? The little girl from that schoolyard so long ago? You can do anything!

(He sings 'Bang the Drum!')

**Bang the drum. Bang the drum.
Bang the drum and the music keeps playing.
Bang the drum. Bang the drum.
They can't hear that you fear what you're saying.
Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Make them come! Let the noise fill the air!
Bang the drum! Bang the drum — !

Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Bang the drum till you drown what you're feeling.
Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Marching proud, they won't see that you're reeling....**

**You're not all on your own:
There are thousands who'll build you a throne,
Thousands more who'll keep worshipping you —
Chatter no matter,
You're still the woman they're day-dreaming of!
And there's one,
One alone,
|Who will love....**

AIMEE:

|
|1 will love.

**Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Bang the drum and the music keeps playing.
Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
They can't hear that you fear what you're saying!**

BOTH:

**Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Make them come! Let the noise fill the air!
Bang the drum!
Bang the drum, bang the drum, bang the drum!
Bang the drum ——— !!**

*With the last line, Aimee has made
her exit, leaving Kenneth alone
onstage as the lights cross-fade to ...*

Scene Thirteen

The Los Angeles Train Station, festively decorated. Banners read "WELCOME HOME SISTER!" and "THANK GOD FOR AIMEE!" crowds mill in a carnival mood. A vendor plies his wares.

VENDOR: Get your American flags right here! Flags, ice cream, Holy Bibles! Flags, ice cream, Holy Bibles!

(As a woman buys from him, Dooley and Kotowski stroll on)

Thank you, Ma'am.

DOOLEY: Well, here we are: the whole front section handed to us on a platter — again!

KOTOWSKI: Can't you see the headline? In "Second Coming" type: "Aimee Returns From The Dead!"

DOOLEY: To think she was out there in the Mexican Desert being held prisoner the whole time!

(Enter the Temple group: Minnie, Emma, Roberta, Arthur, and Mae)

ROBERTA: *(as they enter)* It must have been awful for her, Granny. I can hardly believe that any minute now, she'll be home!

KOTOWSKI: Ahem! Good morning, ladies! I suppose it was quite a shock to you all to discover that Sister was kidnapped.

MINNIE: Not since Lazarus stepped out of his grave has there been such a shock! The poor, brave, baby — I'm so proud of the way she escaped from those thugs!

EMMA: I'm so happy! *(she bursts into tears)*

(Dooley is trying to get Mae's attention)

DOOLEY: *(sotto voce)* Mae! Mae! The Boss had a message for ya. He says —

MAE: Tell him I'm not interested!

(She turns and loses herself in the crowd, leaving Dooley to stare after her. But at that moment a train whistle is heard offstage. A Boy dashes on from the same direction)

BOY: She's coming!

DOOLEY & KOTOWSKI: Here she comes!

CROWD: Praise the Lord! Thank you Jesus! *(etc.)*

(They sing 'Aimee! Reprise')

DOOLEY & KOTOWSKI: **Aimee! Heard the latest?**

CROWD: **It's Aimee! She's the greatest!
She'll never let you down when you need a show!**

KOTOWSKI: **If the President's boring —**

DOOLEY: **Teams aren't scoring —**

BOTH: **Al Capone is taking a rest —**

CROWD: **Never mind! We got Aimee Semple's Temple now!**

KOTOWSKI: *(spoken)* Christ! — it's like bein' blest!

DOOLEY: Hallelujah!

ALL: **It's Aimee! She's the one to know!
Aimee! She's a hit, it's so
Cats' meow, bees' knees, and hip-hip-hooray — !**

(Aimee has arrived up centre at the top of the steps. Everyone bursts into cheers and applause, which continues as Roberta hurls herself at her mother and Dooley photographs Aimee hugging Emma and Minnie as well. There are other reporters crowding, too. Then Aimee holds up her hands for silence)

AIMEE: I can't tell you how wonderful it is to be back in Los Angeles!

(Prolonged cheers)

There were times when I truly feared that I would never see you all again; and I am glad, I am grateful, I am filled with joy — that the Lord has brought me back to you!

A WOMAN: Tell us the story, Sister!

ANOTHER: Yes, Sister: tell us the story!

AIMER: Oh! But it's been in all the newspapers dozens of times. And the radio, too
— you don't want to hear that old thing again.

CROWD: We do! We do! Please, Sister! Tell us! (*etc.*)

AIMEE: Well ... if you insist ...

(She sings 'Kidnapped!')

**As I was swimming out to sea
And around the end of the pier,
I heard a woman calling to me:
"Oh, Mrs. McPherson, come here!
My baby is dying — Please pray!" she cried,
And I couldn't resist her demand.
So I swam into shore in a second or more
And came dripping out onto the sand.**

**Her husband was a burly man;
He stood by his automobile.
As I leaned in to see the babe,
He gave me a shove with his heel!
I jumped —**

WOMEN: Of course!

AIMEE: — and tumbled in,
And straightaway started to yell;
But with them on my back and a rag in my mouth
I was certain that no-one could tell!

CHORUS: **Because she was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!**

A MAN: **She couldn't predict —**

A WOMAN: **How could she depict? —**

2ND WOMAN: **What they would inflict:**

2ND MAN: **That she would be nicked!**

CHORUS: **That's right! She was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!**

CHORUS: **Then straight out the window before they came back:
She ran and she ran and she ran —**

(They hand it to Aimee, who wasn't expecting that)

AIMEE: **And I ran and I ran and I ran and I ran
And I ran and I ran and I ran!**

(Suddenly the music is 'Perils of Pauline' silent movie stuff. The crowd pantomimes as they chant)

CHORUS: Her heart is beating!
Her feet are fleeting!
They may be chasing —
So she keeps racing!

(Back to the melody)

**Because she was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!
Escaping her cell,
And speeding pell-mell,
She stumbled and fell —**

AIMEE: The desert was hell!

TEMPLE: **That's right! She was kidnapped!**

GROUP: **The lady was kidnapped!
She's starting to bake,
Beginning to ache —**

EMMA: **Lord, give her a break:
Don't send her a snake!**

CHORUS: **Because she was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!
Then over a hill,
And Oh! What a thrill:**

KOTOWSKI: **Saved by the bell!**

AIMEE: **Night came down. I could see a town!
It looked like paradise!**

(Arthur interrupts her)

ARTHUR: **For about that time she was starting to think
That some lemonade would be nice!**

AIMEE: **What — !?**

MINNIE: **She limped to a house, she knocked at the door,
She called though her cry was hoarse;**

AIMEE: **Yes, hoarse!**

EMMA: **A man came out in his underwear!
Well she fainted at once, of course!**

DOOLEY: **So Senior Gonzales ran to the mayor,
Half naked and scared as hell.
He only spoke Spanish, but as he explained,
He could tell the poor dear wasn't well!**

ANOTHER: **One look and the may-or said "Didn't you guess?"**

REPORTER: **That's Aimee who's lying there prone!"**

BOTH: **So over the border they drove her to Douglas,
A city in old Arizone —**

KOTOWSKI: **The Sheriff said "Kidnapped!
I'll bet she was kidnapped!"**

ALL THREE: **He didn't waste time
On reason or rhyme —
He sent for the Press
By Western Express!**

CHORUS: **That's right! She was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!**

WOMEN: **But Aimee was brave!
She made a great save!**

CHORUS: **And now that she's home,
We won't let her roam!
Because she was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped — !
Our Hero was Kidnapped ——! !**

*(They hold for the applause, then lift Aimee onto their
shoulders and set off to parade through the streets to the*

Temple, singing as-they go)

**That's right! She was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!**

WOMEN: **But Aimee was brave!
She made a great save!**

CHORUS: **And now that she's home,
We won't let her roam!
That's right! She was kidnapped!
The lady was kidnapped!**

WOMEN: **But Aimee was brave!
She made a great save!**

CHORUS: **And now that she's home,
We won't let her roam! (*etc. to fade-out*)**

*As the crowd makes its exit with Aimee, the
Carmel bedroom is coming on again from
the opposite side, and the lights cross-fade
to darkness for scene fourteen ...*

Scene Fourteen

Night. Two figures cross the stage with a flashlight and enter the cottage bedroom in Carmel.

WALLACE: You'll never know how much I appreciate this, Mrs. Benedict.

MRS.BENEDICT: No trouble at all, Mr. Moore. Any friend of the McIntyres is fine with me. They paid in advance!

(She turns on the bedside light. The radio is gone)

Here we are. Nice, isn't it?

WALLACE: Very cosy.

BENEDICT: One hundred a month — you just let me know.

(Wallace is checking everything in the room much more carefully than her usual customers, so she rambles on, making conversation)

You know I don't think Mrs. McIntyre was too well. Stayed indoors all the time, or else bundled up real good, you know — dark glasses and all that. No, I don't think she was too well at all... Beautiful hair, though. Don't see hair like that too often.

WALLACE: *(disappointed; he has found nothing)* Well, thanks anyway, but —

BENEDICT: Say! If you're a friend of theirs, maybe you'd have a forwarding address for them.

WALLACE: I might know where to find them. Why?

BENEDICT: They packed up in such a hurry, they left some things behind, you see — *(she opens a drawer)* — one of them religious books she was always passin' out — *(she hands a book to Wallace and continues digging)*

WALLACE: *(reading the inside cover)* "Angelus Temple Bible School."

BENEDICT: *(not hearing)* What's that?

WALLACE: Nothin'. Nothin' at all!

BENEDICT: Here they are! — and some of his funny-lookin' radio tubes. *(she hands*

them over)

WALLACE: *(after a good look, heading straight for the phone)* I'll pay you the long distance.

BENEDICT: What? Oh. Fine, fine.

(Wallace makes it clear she's not welcome to stay)

Fine.

(Exit Mrs. Benedict)

WALLACE: Operator, get me Los Angeles. Yeah, that's right, Los Angeles: the office of the District Attorney. ... I want to report a crime.

The down beat of sinister music leads to the next scene as the Carmel bedroom disappears ...

Scene Fifteen

The Courtroom for the Preliminary Hearings. With the music comes the flash of headlines overhead —

"LOVE-NEST EXPOSED!"

"EVANGELIST CHARGED WITH CORRUPTING PUBLIC MORALS, MANUFACTURING EVIDENCE!"

"PRELIMINARY HEARINGS BEGIN TODAY!"

(Meanwhile a crowd of vultures descends on the Courtroom, attempting to get in. A policeman prevents them from entering; the group includes Dooley and Kotowski, another Reporter and several "groupies" we recognize from the train station, and Mrs. Peabody. As they wait for the courtroom to be set up, they sing the verse to 'My People Believe')

KOTOWSKI: I hope she knocks out that D.A.!

**DOOLEY: Do you think
That she'll win?**

KOTOWSKI: Are you ready to bet?

GROUPIE 1: Will it be just as good as the movies?

**GROUPIE 2: I'm praying
It will, 'cause she hasn't failed yet!**

HOLY ROLLER: I'll die if I touch her! Be slain by the power!

REPORTER: Religion like that is a sin!

GROUPIE 1: I'd kill to see someone break down on the stand!

GROUPIE 2: Do you know a back way to get in?

HOLY ROLLER & 3 WOMEN: She's a saint!

REPORTER: Well she may need a miracle now.

KOTOWSKI & MEN: She's got luck!

DOOLEY: **But she's used up a lot.**

GROUPIES & 2 WOMEN: **She's a star!**

HOLY ROLLER: **No, a healer!**

REPORTER: **A charlatan!**

MRS. PEABODY: *(spoken)* Pooh!
She's a tart, and she ought to be shot!

ALL: **All we want is a seat — front and centre will do for us!
Come, let us in! Open up the new zoo for us!**

(The policeman permits them to enter. They swarm to their places behind the chairs for Minnie and Aimee facing the Judge. Three witnesses take their places in a row up centre at the top of the steps. At the sound of an orchestra sting, Mrs. Benedict steps forward to be grilled by the District Attorney. An ominous pulse-beat continues under all testimony)

D.A.: Mrs. Benedict, can you identify the woman in this photograph?

BENEDICT: Well ... it looks like Mrs. McIntyre. I can't rightly say, Mr. Keyes, because I never seen her without her dark glasses, you know. But that is her hair, alright — I'd know her hair anyplace. And her nose ... and her chin ...

D.A.: Your Honour, the witness is referring to a certified photograph of Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson.

(Orchestra sting. Gonzales steps forward)

D.A.: Senior Gonzales, was there anything strange about this woman who supposedly walked in from the desert that night?

GONZALES: Strange, si! — I say to my wife, I say: "Madré de Dios, Maria, eet ees a meeracle!" Her dress eet ees clean and fresh, she does not ask us for even wan glass of water, and on thee bottom of her shoes there are thee stains of grass. Grass in thee desert! Eet ees a meeracle!

(Orchestra sting. The Sheriff steps forward)

D.A. : And you say, Sheriff, that you were unable to locate the shack that Mrs. McPherson described?

SHERIFF: That's right, Mr. Keyes. I had three different posses out there, and the Mexicans sent a whole mess of cavalry; between us we covered every

square foot of country within thirty miles. But we couldn't find anything like it. Now, mind you, that didn't surprise me any.

D.A.: Why's that?

SHERIFF: Well, everybody knows adobe huts have dirt floors. The lady described an adobe hut with wooden floors. Heh! There's no such thing!

(A new and plaintive motif from the orchestra; everyone looks at Aimee, but she looks away. Minnie springs up to confront the judge — no pulse-beat)

MINNIE: I tell you, it's a crime! — seventeen years of work, all blown up in her face because of some scummy underworld plot!

D.A.: So you still believe your daughter was kidnapped?

MINNIE: I most certainly do! Then the poor little thing comes back from the dead, practically; but instead of looking under every rock to find the thugs that did it, you put her on trial! Oh, the underworld is in on this, alright. Just look at the chief detective they put in charge of the investigation!

D.A.: You mean Mr. Ryan? What about him?

MINNIE: Well! — he's a Catholic!

JUDGE: Order in the Court!

(Gavel! — which is the down beat for the chorus. The outraged Temple followers protest in song)

FOLLOWERS: What about the work?

What about the time and tears?

What about the love?

What about the prayers and fears?

What about the lives she has changed and the debts she's paid?

Doesn't all the good she has done in this town persuade?

Can you all ignore what her true Judge has made of her talents,

While Satan adds weight to his side of the balance?

(Aimee at last leaps to her feet to join the protest)

AIMEE: **My story is true! My people believe in me!!**

JUDGE: *(gavel! — the musical cut-off)* I said order!

(Aimee retreats; there is a courtroom buzz which quickly fades as

the Judge assembles his papers, preparing to deliver his decision)

After a full examination of the evidence, this Court has determined that there is sufficient cause to believe the defendant guilty as charged. District Attorney Keyes is therefore instructed to proceed with a full trial!

(Gavel! Exit the Judge. The orchestra hits a climactic chord and fades, as the courtroom clears, buzzing. Minnie touches her daughter gently before she goes. Wallace hangs back a moment to reflect on what he has accomplished, and, for a moment longer than anyone else, Mae lingers, looking at Aimee. Then she, too, goes, and Aimee is alone.

A moment of silence. Then, very delicately, the orchestra plays a single phrase: 'Bang the Drum.'

Aimee looks up. A pause. The phrase repeats. Then, slowly, tentatively, and unaccompanied, she begins to sing)

AIMEE: **Bang the drum till you drown what you're ... feeling!**

(With the last word, the orchestra comes in at tempo for 'Drum Reprise')

**Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Marching proud, they can't see that you're reeling!
Bang the drum! Bang the drum!
Make them come! Let the noise fill the air!
Bang the drum!
Bang the drum, bang the drum, bang the drum!
Bang the drum —— !**

By the end of the music we are back in the Temple, and Minnie has rolled on, seated at her office desk ...

Scene Sixteen

Aimee turns to her mother.

AIMEE: Mother, I need money. *(she crosses in)*

MINNIE: *(pulling out a chequebook)* Sure, Angel. How much?

AIMEE: Thirty thousand dollars.

MINNIE: Thirty thou — ! — What?!?

AIMEE: You heard right.

MINNIE: Why? What for?

AIMEE: I can't tell you that, but I have to have it.

MINNIE: But who do I make the cheque out to?

AIMEE: Never mind that, Mother.

MINNIE: *(rising)* Aimee, I cannot give you that kind of money without explanation! Thirty thousand dollars? We need every penny we can scrounge — lose that trial and we could lose the Temple!

AIMER: If you'll just give it to me, we won't have to worry about that!

MINNIE: *(after a stunned moment)* Aimee — ! You can't mean —

AIMEE: Don't!

MINNIE: I am not going to stand by and watch you pay somebody off! Angel, Angel, there's no need to: just keep telling them the truth!

AIMEE: The truth is the one thing I can never tell them!!

(Minnie gapes at her)

(quietly) Now do you understand?

MINNIE: Then it's all ... it's all been ... lies? Everything?

(Aimee does not refute this)

You've been lying. To me.

AIMEE: I loved him, Momma.

(Minnie crumbles slowly into her chair)

If our work is to go on, that trial must not take place. Please don't stand in my way.

(Wordlessly, Minnie signs. Exit Aimee with the cheque)

MINNIE: Oh my God.... My God.

(Enter Emma)

EMMA: Mother Kennedy, there's a man out there who —

MINNIE: For Pete's sake can't you see I'm busy?!? A woman could go crazy around here!

EMMA: *(astonished)* I'm sorry.

(She exits in confusion. After a moment ...)

MINNIE: *(sings, slowly and softly, 'That's My Girl Reprise')*

That's my girl.

I'm gonna tell the world that she's got just what it takes.

That's my girl —

Dusk to dawning, till eyed with pride ...

She breaks down momentarily as the music continues. Then, with great determination, she begins to pack up her desk as ...

Scene Seventeen

The music turns jubilant. Over Minnie's head, headlines flash:

"KEYES DROPS CHARGES!"

"D.A. LETS AIMEE OFF THE HOOK!"

"D.A. REFUSES COMMENT ON SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART!"

(At the same time, the Choir and other Temple Followers enter singing 'Temple Reprise' on their way to a big celebration, as if passing in the corridor)

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

WOMEN: **Aimee!**

MEN: **Oh Aimee!**

ALL: **Aimee!**

MEN:
Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city!
Shout!
For his pow'r is all around!
Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city,
And the walls come a-tumblin'
Down ——— !

WOMEN:
Gonna build a Temple,
A Temple to the sky;
Temple for Aimee Semple,
One for you and I!
Gonna move a mountain,
California way;
Then we're gonna show the world
A Brand New Day!

(Minnie is oblivious to this. They exit up centre and off, still singing)

Shout!
For the Lord hath given you the city!

Gonna build a Temple,
A Temple to the sky;

Shout!	Gonna build a Temple,
For the Lord hath given you the city!	A Temple to the sky;
Shout!	Gonna build a Temple,
For the Lord hath given you the city!	A Temple to the sky ...

(Etc. to fade-out. Enter Aimee, breathless and excited, in her white angel-gown. Emma is just behind her, carrying the blue cloak.)

AIMEE: Momma, what's keeping you? There are ten thousand people out there celebrating! They've rigged loudspeakers in the streets —

(Minnie turns to face her, grim-faced, hat and gloves on, brief-case packed. Aimee stops dead)

MINNIE: You should have fought it through, Aimee. Without that trial, you'll never get away from the doubt. And sooner or later, my girl, the pigeons are going to come home to roost.

AIMEE: You're not coming to the celebration?

MINNIE: My resignation is on your desk. I'm going back to the Salvation Army, where people are what they say they are.

(Enter Roberta, suitcase in hand)

And Roberta's coming with me.

AIMEE: Roberta, no! No, Honey, you can't go!

ROBERTA: I'm eighteen now, Mother. Old enough to know I could never inherit this place. I just ... don't have the courage.

MINNIE: My lawyers will contact you about my share of the Temple. Goodbye, Aimee. And God help you. *(they start to go)*

AIMEE: Roberta — !

(Minnie keeps going. Roberta hesitates, but doesn't look back. Then she goes quickly. A few bars of music; Aimee is close to breaking. Then Emma, who has watched all this in stunned silence from just inside the door, bursts into tears)

EMMA: Oh! — Sister.

(Aimee turns and sees that Emma's world is falling apart. Suddenly she holds out her arms for the robe. There is a moment when Emma cannot believe she means to go through with it; then, still

weeping, she helps her mistress put it on)

AIMEE: Thank you, Emma. Now please go and tell them all I'm on my way.

(Exit Emma.

Music begins. On another part of the stage, a special rises, revealing Kenneth. He sings a reprise of 'Once There Was a Man')

KENNETH: **Aimee, oh Aimee,
Daughter of the flame,
Let me make you beloved as your name.
Aimee, oh Aimee:
Woman, take my hand —
Follow me to some bright, exotic land....**

(The melody continues as he speaks)

Now will you come?

AIMEE: Please don't ask me that, Kenneth. I have to keep fighting.

KENNETH: Still? When everything is coming down around your ears?

AIMEE: It isn't! I know what you think, but I'm not alone: there are ten thousand people waiting out there who believe in me!

KENNETH: But for how long?

AIMEE: They have to. They will. My story is true!

KENNETH: What —_?!?

(Aimee sings 'Credo Reprise'. Eventually Kenneth's protests are drowned out)

AIMEE:	I know he needs me: I feel his hand. Ten thousand voices I understand! I'll tear down any wall, Burst any dam ... For if he needs me, Then I know who I am — !	KENNETH:	Aimee, you didn't mean that! Aimee? Aimee, listen to me! Aimee! ...
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Kenneth is gone. With the last line of

— Young & Ashley: Aimee! —

*her song, a giant cross has lit up
behind Aimee. She turns and sees it,
and, as the curtain falls, she is walking
slowly up the steps, towards the cross
— and to face her people.*

- THE END -

POST SCRIPT:

The next few years brought constant headlines and scandal: numerous law-suits between Aimee and her mother and daughter, a third marriage and divorce, and a series of nervous breakdowns.

But eventually she faded from the headlines. For ten more years, Aimee carried on her work, and both Angelus Temple and the entire Foursquare Gospel denomination grew and prospered.

Then, without warning, in 1944, Aimee Semple McPherson died of an overdose of sleeping pills. She was fifty-four.

* * *



ABOVE: Aimee (Maida Rogerson) on the running board of the Gospel car. I like to think that tent is the Lord's way of reminding us that the best roof over our heads ...”

RIGHT: Aimee with the man in the wheelchair (Gerry Gilbert-Gray): “I feel the Power! I feel the Power!”



RIGHT: Minnie with Roberta and Emma (Marilyn Peppiatt, Thea Macneil, Elizabeth Mawson): “So step right up and don’t delay ...”

BELOW: In the Newsroom, Wallace, Mae, Kotowski and Dooley (James Hobson, Janelle Hutchison, Hank Stinson, Terry Doyle) in the title song, “Aimee!”





ABOVE: Aimee and the Temple Choir in “Put Out the Fire!” BELOW: An impromptu news conference for a Times reporter (Kelly Robinson), Kotowski and Dooley.

RIGHT: Kenneth (William G. Hosie) and Aimee meet for the first time in the new radio booth.

BELOW: In the cottage at Carmel, they listen to Roberta on a Temple broadcast: “If my mother is looking down from heaven right now, and I’m sure she is — “





LEFT:
Aimee clings
to Kenneth:
“I’m
frightened!”

BELOW:
Aimee (at
centre in the
picture hat)
is welcomed
back by a
crowd of
followers at
the Los
Angeles Train
Station: “Our
hero was
kidnapped!”



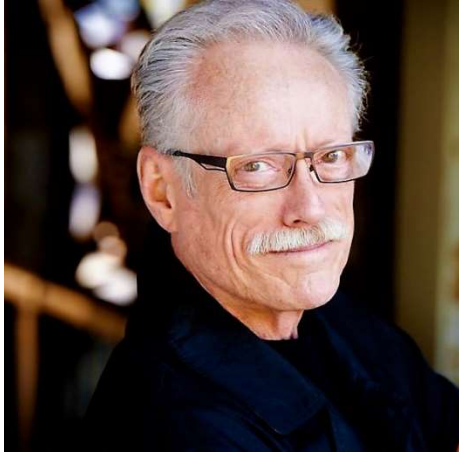


RIGHT: Aimee and Minnie listen stony-faced as the Sheriff (Michael Rainbird) gives his evidence to District Attorney Keyes (Kenneth Wickes): “There’s no such thing!”

BELOW: The penny drops for Minnie at last: “Then it’s all ... it’s all been ... lies? Everything?”



Patrick Young (Book & Lyrics)



Patrick has written four award-winning biographical plays (three of them with music by Bob Ashley), several adaptations of classics, and numerous industrial shows. *"Winnie"*, written for the late George Merner, premièred at the Charlottetown Festival in 1979 and was later filmed for television. *Aimee!* followed in 1981, *The Class* for The Group of Several in 1988, and *Abigail or The Gold Medal* for the Lighthouse Festival Theatre in 1990. His adaptations of *The Maid's Tragedy* by Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Taming of the Tamer* by Fletcher alone, *Witches & Bitches* by Shakespeare and Friends, and *The Wiltings* by Frances Burney, were all created for Theatre Erindale. There he was

founding Artistic Director, and led the joint Sheridan-University of Toronto Mississauga actor-training company for its first twenty-five years, personally directing (and often designing) twenty-two shows from Wycherly to Wertenbaker and from Shakespeare to French. Previously a well-known actor and director across Canada, he has also held the posts of Artistic Director of Dalhousie Theatre Productions in Halifax, Director/Dramaturg of the Musical Theatre Writers' Colony at the Muskoka Festival, and Associate Director/Playwright in Residence at the Lighthouse Festival Theatre.

Bob Ashley (Music)



As a composer, Bob has several professional productions to his credit. They include *Aimee!* (book and lyrics by Patrick Young), *Lies and Other Lyrics* (with Nancy Phillips) and *The Family Way* (with Janelle Hutchison), all for the Charlottetown Festival, plus *The Class* for the Group of Several and *Abigail or The Gold Medal* for the Lighthouse Festival Theatre (both with book and lyrics by Patrick Young). Bob has been Musical Director and Pianist for well over 50 professional musical theatre productions for most of the major theatres and producers in Canada. He is a Dora Mavor Moore Award recipient for his musical direction of *Piaf - Her Songs, Her Loves*. Bob has extensive experience

as a Ballet Pianist for The National Ballet of Canada, Dance Teq, Ryerson University, and The Banff Centre, and is currently a member of the Artistic Staff at Canada's National Ballet School. In addition, he enjoys playing for **Dancing with Parkinson's**, **Singing with Parkinson's** and, for the last two years, **Dance for Baycrest Residents**. (He was also a founding member of the legendary band The Guess Who!)

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