

**ESCAPE PLANS**

**LIBRETTO**



# Escape Plans

*A musical in three acts*

*Music and Libretto by Richard L. Rose*

Richmond, Virginia

2021

## Escape Plans

A musical in three acts, based on *Frameshifts* (2011)

**Summary:** *Frances Burns, a young graduate in cultural studies and social reform from Crawley University returns to her home town of Fairall, in Northridge, on a righteous cause. However, the self-serving intrigue of the town's leaders creates a natural disaster which interrupts her plans. The story takes place in a speculative present-time, following deterioration of the federal government, called the "defedding." States, cities, and small towns have become parts of regions, loosely linked to national institutions and media outlets. The Northern Region (Northridge) comprises parts of what was formerly Northern Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. The musical concerns two independent communities in Northridge, the town of Fairall, a theocracy, and the nearby Fellowship of the Attentive, a self-sufficient commune associated with Crawley University.<sup>1</sup>*

### Characters:

**Frances Lyons Burns**, graduate student in social sciences and Ambassador-Lead, *Mezzo*

**Zia Franklin**, graduate student in engineering, Ambassador-Support, *Mezzo*

**Matta Crawley**, Mentor in the Ambassador Program at CU, also the "Earth Witness," *Sop*

**Wilbur and Eva**, a couple of former Ambassadors, *Ten & Sop*

**Ricks**, an old airman, teacher, and aeronautics researcher, also the "Silver Frame," *Bar*

**The Reverend Hiram Rehoboam Still**, *Bar*

**Zachary Still**, Hiram's son, and the Chief of the Fairall Security Force, *Ten*

**Human Resource Officer (HRO)**, sung in unison by three unseen singers, *Bass (H), Bar (R), Sop (O)*.

**Aunt Rosemary Lyons**, a retired teacher; Frances's only surviving relative in Fairall, *Sop*

Congregants of the **Church of the Final Hour**, *SATB*

Members of the **Fellowship of the Attentive**, *SATB*

**Dissenters:** Former classmates of Frances and Zia (Aaron, Bela, Clelia, David) *TASB*

### Ensemble 1

#### Overture

*Zia and the pianist, bassist, guitarist, and drummer are on the half-lit stage. She is dressed in an unbuttoned academic gown and lays her flat hat on the piano as she begins to sing. The other members of the combo appear one at a time, informally look at the music, take their seats, and fill in.*

Here's a story that we know,  
but we need to hear again;  
let it settle in our minds,  
let it sink into our skin.

When Prometheus brought fire;  
when the serpent offered fruit,  
we were suddenly aware  
that we had to follow suit.

*Spotlight on Zia as she begins to button her gown, straighten her hair, and look in her compact mirror.*

Here's a story that we know,

*Zia walks to center stage.*

but we need to hear again;  
let it settle in our minds,  
let it sink into our skin.

And our expectations grew,  
and our aspirations too,  
And I think you know the rest  
But the ending's up to you.

*Zia quickly puts on her flat hat and exits stage right as the lights come up and the dancers come onstage. At the conclusion of the overture, the musicians take a break, some of them standing, others drinking sodas or checking their instruments, as dancers clear the stage and form the circle.*

## Ensemble 2

**Act 1 Scene 1: CAMPUS HALL, Crawley University in Northridge. A circle-dance song of the Fellowship of the Attentive:**

*The musicians continue with their break as the dancers push tables aside to clear the floor. A buffet awaits the dancers of the Fellowship of the Attentive, who come center stage as the bass begins and repeats the first measure ad. lib. Once the circles have formed and have gone around several times, the spot is on Frances and Zia in their graduation regalia, stage right, being led out by Matta, their mentor in the C.U. Ambassador Program. As they enter and stand in the middle of the circle and Matta opens a large green umbrella over their heads, the singing begins. Various singers stand in front of the circle, sing their lines, and rejoin the dance. Walking the grape-vine step, dancers in two concentric circles move counter to each other and exchange places as the inner circle, on the third line of each verse, drops hands and moves outward. The outer circle, raising their joined hands like a flower opening as they move inward, then drop hands. All then resume the counter-circling motions. If possible, a slanted mirror or*

*screen above the stage may show the view of the dance from above. When the dance is repeated, all dancers sing as they are dancing. (No one steps out to sing.) When the dance ends, the graduates are congratulated as the tables are put back. Several groups, including Matta and the graduates, bring food and drink from the buffet and sit down. During this interval, the combo plays the Intermezzo.*

**Chorus and soloists: *A circle dance song of the Fellowship of the Attentive.***

Come and join the circle dance.  
Come into the ring.  
Summon courage for your stance  
from our gathering.

Here in fellowship we rise  
linking arms and heart.  
Keep your eyes upon the prize,  
where our holy projects start.

Not wanting what you do not need,  
but turning in the dance,  
face off against a fearful creed  
of lies and ignorance.

Come and join the circle dance.  
Come into the ring  
encircling all in the advance  
of human flowering.

**Ensemble 3**

*An instrumental intermezzo.*

**Act 1 Scene 2:**

*Dancers disperse, pulling out tables and bringing their meals from the buffet. Matta, Zia and Frances sit together. Conversations are heard from three nearby tables. Professor Ricks, an elderly man wearing a camo flight jacket from his Air Force days in Vietnam, sits alone at one table, his artificial leg propped on a chair.*

**Ensemble 4**

**TABLE 1**

**Matta:** Now you girls are on your own  
you will turn the world around.

**Zia:** Maybe Fran will save the world  
I will only turn a lathe.

**Matta:** You know there's a position for you in the Department.

*Frances nods.*

**Zia:** Yeah, nod—you and your righteous cause.  
I'll stay in the machine shop.  
You won't see me & Mama going back to Fairall!

*When Zia turns to speak to Matta, Frances pours salt into Zia's coffee.*

**Matta:** It's worse there now. With Hiram Still—

**Zia:** —the Reverend Chairman Hiram *REHOBOAM* Still—

**Matta:** —elected to the Board by live vote—

**Zia:** —by any left alive.  
That toad is sweet Zachary's uncle—  
Fran was even personally involved!—  
Be still my heart!

*Zia sips her coffee and tastes the salt.*

**Frances:** Why Zia, are you feeling ill?

**Matta:** Shush, you two. Give it a rest.  
Fran, who will Zia needle if you go?  
And don't mention Zachary to HRO when you're in Out-take.

*Zia switches coffees with Fran.*

Zia: Isn't it romantic? An outing with HRO!  
I'll come along to fill them in on your personal life!  
We'll pack a lunch—

Frances: You'll pack off—ew!

*Fran sips her coffee, looks at Zia, and makes a face. Zia makes a face back at her.*

Matta: Nothing gained by making faces, ladies.

Zia: Lucky Fran! HRO will batter her—

*Zia acts pompous:*

And the REVEREND HIRAM REHOBOAM STILL will drop her into  
the deep-fry!

## TABLE 2

Donetta: So Fran is going after all.

Nick: If Out-take lets her go.  
She may think she's ready,

BOTH: with her thesis and her orals done—

Donetta: She may think, because she's certified  
and steady, she will win their minds  
like the scholarships she's won—

BOTH: But most of what you know is wrong.

## TABLE 3

Wilbur: She may even think her special therapy

*Eva nods in agreement.*

BOTH: can overcome a childish frame of mind,

Eva: | unhinge the frame, and open doors  
Wilbur | change frames of reference



Eva: | for all the old unsettled scores  
 Wilbur: | very simply

Eva: | and grievance unavenged  
 Wilbur: | very quickly

Eva: | will softly drift away  
 Wilbur: | very easily

Eva: | All the study, all the testing  
 Wilbur: | All the logic and all the hours spent discerning

BOTH: do not defeat confusion;  
 do not disarm delusion.

Eva: For most of what you know is wrong.

Wilbur: and she will argue every day

Eva: like a sad, repeating song.

Wilbur: She'll try to open just one door,

Eva: to find one mind she can restore.

BOTH: We were the team to save the world

Wilbur: with our advanced degrees

Eva: our expertise—  
 But somehow, clients didn't understand  
 that we knew it all  
 And that they should yield to reason and abandon fear.

BOTH: But everyone sees only what they want to see  
 finding just what they expect—  
 Everyone sees what they want  
 never picking clues,  
 never giving truth respect—

CHORUS (all tables):

But most of what we know is wrong  
yet we go from day to day  
(*Wilbur: "day to day to day"*)  
like a sad, repeating song  
that never goes away  
(*"that never goes away."*)  
seeing only what we want,  
finding just what we expect,  
seldom picking up a clue;  
seldom giving truth respect.

*Frances is agitated, walking from table to table, shaking her head in disagreement. When she begins to speak, she seems to be launching into a formal lecture.*

Frances: To me, you were only thinking in one way.  
No new thing is ever found  
by pounding on the same hard ground,  
the unforgiving ground of settled ideology,  
fear, and stubborn certainty.  
What I would do is shift the frame—

*A loud cracking sound interrupts Frances' lecture. Ricks has flopped his artificial leg down, knocking over the chair. He stands. Frances stands to his right, and Zia stands on her right.*

### Ensemble 5

**Act 1 Scene 3:** *Frances frowns as Ricks speaks. Zia is clearly pleased to have her favorite professor argue against Frances' leaving the university for reform work in Fairall as a Crawley University Ambassador. Clearly, Zia's flippancy masks genuine concern for Frances.*

Ricks: Well, Frances. You see. See—  
Layers and layers beneath the crust  
of what we know, or think we know,

Zia: Or think we know!

*Zia says this to Frances as if saying, "See there! Even my professor says you shouldn't go!"*

Ricks: are dust and bones.

*Ricks pauses to adjust his leg and sip his drink, which he spills down his front. He takes out a handkerchief to dab it. Zia, aside to the others:*

Zia: In class, whenever his lecture wanders away  
from airfoils and drag-coefficients, he wonders  
how the planes, so beautiful,  
darting and gliding,  
were simply used to kill.  
Shot down in his plane,  
then homeless on the streets—  
a one-legged black man, and therefore suspicious,  
until that day, that day so auspicious,

BOTH: the occasion of occasions  
when he (I) returned to his (my) equations.

Layers below of fear and degradation,  
layers above of hope and aspiration,  
flying between the Earth and the sky;  
flying between a laugh and a sigh,  
by dead reckoning and trust  
(through layers and layers . . . )  
we make what we can of bones and dust.

Zia: Bones and dust! There's a cheery send-off for you, Fran!

*Lights down. Stage is dark.*

### ***Ensemble 6***

#### **Act 1 Scene 4 :**

*Frances is seated in front of a desk. On the side of the desk is a clerk who silently moves the paper-work from one side to the other as the HRO speak. In the background, just visible behind a dark scrim, the HRO have a vague, unworldly appearance, shown only as the back-lit outline of one large Being with three voices who always speak together (the H, the R, and O voices). The Human Resources Office for the Fellowship of the Attentive, are a plural being, perhaps a virtual intelligence, who put scholarship candidates through a final ordeal, called the Out-take Procedure. They raise questions about Frances's project—including the Handbook that she enthusiastically (and unnecessarily) wrote in addition to her thesis—and warn her about the latest developments in Fairall, particularly the danger of another flood because the Fairall Board of Faith and Practice denied the risk from the new, but poorly designed, Fairall Independent Energy Dam, soon to open, which is intended to provide an independent source of*

*energy for Fairall. The clerk does not speak as s/he carries out administrative tasks but uses the laser pointer for screen displays and mimes the expression of what the HRO are saying—frowning or using mudras and other gestures, as appropriate, to provide emphasis*

*Frances is not cleared to use the Fellowship's chemical therapy for treatment of impaired thinking, an herbal tea remedy containing a patented virus, because Fairall's inhabitants are victims of mass hysteria. The tea is too strong for such victims because it would collapse their aspirations and identity—that is, like a bad acid-trip, it would undermine their "ground of being." She is to use the alternative, a therapeutic technique for shifting the subject's frame of reference, called "Unsettling," to loosen the ground gradually. The HRO quiz her about this technique. Frances, however, believes that she can speed the Unsettling process by using her own plan of therapy, E.S.C.A.P.E., as described in her doctoral thesis on social reform. The acronym stands for "Extensively Sourced Counter-Argumentation to Propaganda and Exploitation." The HRO are not convinced. On behalf of the Fellowship community, the HRO give Frances 3 Assists for her journey: a Silver Frame, an Earth Witness, and a Reporter Bird who will travel, listen, and report back to her. The Silver Frame speaks with Ricks' voice. The Earth-Witness is a cicada-earring who speaks with Matta's voice. The Reporter Bird turns out to be Zia, who wants no more to come along than Frances wants her to help. But Zia's request for a waiver is denied because she and Frances have already cross-trained as an Ambassador-team and are therefore subject to the community's rules. Zia had planned to start a job in the Research Park in the Energy Regeneration Division of the Rix-Wing Project, but she is first bound to keep her promise to the Fellowship of the Attentive. See end-note on source.<sup>ii)</sup>*

*The HRO shows images and slogans on a large screen above the desk. With a laser pointer, the clerk indicates what the HRO want Frances to see or read. The display begins with the document review and is followed by the steps of the Out-take outline and slogans and images of historical events about which HRO quizzes Frances. In stage directions, the images and titles shown onscreen are indicated by labels in bold-face.*

*First slide-image:*

**OUT-TAKE PROCEDURE FOR CRAWLEY UNIVERSITY AMBASSADORS IN THE SOCIAL THERAPY PROGRAM OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE ATTENTIVE .**

*Then this:*

**I.THE CERTIFICATION OF THE AMBASSADOR-CANDIDATE FOR CRAWLEY UNIVERSITY AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE ATTENTIVE**

HRO: We examine the certifications.

*Frances squirms in her chair.*

#### **I. A. THESIS COMMITTEE REPORT**

HRO:           The Thesis Committee Review . . . All twelve faculty recommendations . . .  
                  Good standing with the Provost . . . And Grant Committee . . .

#### **I.B. Personal Profile and Scholarship Application**

                  Personal Profile . . . Application for the Scholarship . . . and a waiver  
                  request from one Zia Franklin to be relieved of her Ambassador service . . .

#### **I.C. ESSAYS AND AFFIDAVITS**

                  Essays and affidavits . . .

#### **I.D. Personal Relations**

                  Assurances on personal relations . . .

#### **I.E. Limited clearance for use of chemical assists in social therapy**

                  Limited clearance for the chemical assist . . .

FRANCES:           The tea!

#### **I. F. PERSONAL ISSUES**

HRO:                There was one Zachary Still . . .

*Frances is surprised to hear his name.*

FRANCES:           No problem.

#### **I.G. RESIDENCE during sponsored Ambassadorship**

HRO:                You will reside with Rosemary Lyons.

FRANCES:           My aunt. My only relative. She's—

HRO:                in nursing care. It has been verified.

#### **H. INTERNSHIP PROPOSAL?**

HRO:                Your jacket is missing the revised internship proposal.

FRANCES:           I have it here.

*She hands the jacket to the Clerk.*

HRO: The extra handbook that you prepared is not needed.

*Clerk returns a thick manuscript to Fran, who clutches it to her chest, clearly frustrated.*

FRAN: What?

HRO: What your thesis calls “ESCAPE PLANS”—

Frances: “Extensively Sourced Counter-Argumentation  
to Propaganda and Exploitation”

HRO: WE KNOW!

*Both Fran and the clerk are startled by the HRO's indignant reply. The clerk drops a folder and Fran pushes her chair back from the desk.*

Such a plan may not be justified in a mass hysteria zone—

Frances: What?

HRO: and High Impact Zone.

FRANCES: Impact zone?

*The HRO do not like to be interrupted and growl somewhat.*

**INTERNSHIP SITE ASSESSMENT: Fairall is a HIGH IMPACT & MASS HYSTERIA ZONE**

HRO: The Fairall Dam and Power Plant.  
A deficient plant and earthen dam:  
The deficiencies were given in a report  
sent to the Board of Faith and Practice in Fairall.  
Returned. Unopened.  
Your partner was notified.

Frances: Zia?

HRO: The engineer.

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Frances: Zia!

HRO: To such an Impact Zone,  
we would not send an Ambassador in alone.

*Frances frowns at this and tries to ask a question.*

HRO: And now we turn to the Affirmations.

## **II. AFFIRMATIONS OF C.U. AND F.O.T.A. POLICIES AND OF THE PROTOCOLS ON UNSETTLEMENT**

*Then the next screen:*

**THE FIRST CHARGE FOR THERAPEUTIC SERVICE PROJECTS BY C.U.  
AMBASSADORS: AMBASSADORS NEVER CLOSE A CASE.**

HRO: At CU we never close a case.  
Not our business.  
Closing brings disgrace.

**IN SOCIAL THERAPY, NO CASE IS EVER SETTLED**

*Frances nods.*

**IN SOCIAL THERAPY, WE WORK BY EROSION, NOT BY LANDSLIDES.  
WHEN ALL SAVE FACE, YOU FIND SPACE:**

We unsettle things. We look for space—

*Frances nods impatiently.*

Frances: Always saving faces  
for the side-bar spaces  
where a telling word can land.

HRO: What is this?

## **II.C. QUIZ: FIRST IMAGE:**

*Image of faces of insurrectionists at Capitol on January 6, 2021.*

Frances: Faces flushing.

HRO: Meaning what?

Frances: Anger rushing.

HRO: Meaning?

Frances: Fear of losing faces.

HRO: So they push each other,  
clam up, run for cover.  
But you never what?

Frances: Leave it there?

HRO: Even with their minds screwed shut?

***Onscreen: Image of stacked law books.***

*Frances is clearly tired of hearing and repeating the slogans.*

Frances: At C.U., we never close a case.

HRO: Settlement is always out of place.  
We don't settle things.  
Too much is shut, finalized—

Frances: All wrapped up and—

HRO: —summarized.

**II.D. Second Quiz Image: *The signing of the WWI peace treaty in the train car.***

Frances: Treaties ending—

HRO: nothing.

***Onscreen: Image of Lee memorial in Richmond, VA in 2021, with graffiti.***

Frances: Reparations pending—

HRO: Empty resolutions lead to revolutions.  
So you never what?



Frances: Leave it there.

HRO: Matters resting?

Frances: |Don't let things lie!  
|Don't let things lie!

*Onscreen:* **UNSETTLE THINGS!**

*Frances rolls her eyes. She's irritated that she must sit through the elementary reiteration of the university's slogans for the Ambassador program. As Frances stands and waves her handbook at the HRO, the clerk is mortified by the breach of protocol. S/he flails about, picking up folders, putting them down again, straightening the desk, etc.*

*The next slide: 3. NO PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WHEN ON DUTY.*

Frances: I've finished training. I'm with the program.  
and you can count on me!  
When I'm embedded,  
I won't be wedded  
to any scam or guarantee.  
I've learned resistance  
to slick insistence  
And on the Personal Rule, I'm clear:  
I won't end my short career  
in a crazy game of chance  
Like a promise or romance.  
I know the rule:

*Onscreen:* **NO PROBLEM CAN BE SOLVED IF YOU BECOME INVOLVED.**

Frances: No Problem Can Be Solved If You Become Involved

HRO: Enough! Now to the Commission.

### III. COMMISSION OF THE AMBASSADOR TEAM

*On cue from the HRO, the clerk picks up a tray from a side table. On the tray is a tiny tea pot and three boxes. Then the clerk is again distressed when the HRO says not to bring the tea pot. S/he takes the tray back to the table, removes the pot, and brings the tray to the desk.*

HRO: Not the Wake-Up tea!

It is too strong for hysteria zones!  
Victims of mass hysteria would lose their ground of being!  
You are not authorized to serve the Wake-Up tea  
that brings reality.

*In preparation for the ritual of the gifts, the clerk puts on an apron decorated with the insignia of the University and Fellowship. The three boxes are taken from the tray and placed on the desk. The clerk is very attentive to his/her ceremonial role in this ritual. In fact, s/he seems pompous.*

HRO: Now for the Three Assists!

*The clerk gestures to the three boxes, placing his/her hand on the first.*

HRO: First, the Silver Frame.

*The clerk pulls the frame from the box and ceremoniously presents it to Frances. She looks at it for a moment and, unimpressed, lays it back on the desk.*

HRO: Look through it when you have tried everything.

Next, the Earth's Witness.

*The clerk lifts the cicada-earring from its box and presents it to Frances. At first, she doesn't want to touch it, but then she takes it and lays it beside the frame.*

HRO: Listen to it when static has filled your ears.

*The clerk lifts a long feather from the last box and holds it up.*

HRO: Last is the Messenger,  
flying to learn what you need to know,  
and summoned: So!

*The clerk drops the feather*

*When the clerk drops the feather, lights come down; both clerk and HRO disappear into the dark, and Zia appears from stage left, moves center stage, picks up the feather and hands it to Frances.*

Zia: Turns out cross-training is a double-cross.  
Just don't expect me at the rallies.  
It is a clash of fashion.  
My Supremes and white supremes don't mix.  
Even you can't tempt me, Baby-Love.  
Let's get out of here.

*Zia pulls Fran's sleeve. They exit. Stage is dark.*

### Ensemble 7

#### Act 2 Summary:

*Frances arrives in Fairall at the beginning of a mega-worship event at the Church of the Final Hour. The Reverend Hiram Rehoboam Still is the leader. In this act, Frances meets former friends, the “dissenters,” who furtively wave as she enters, and a former boyfriend, Zachary Still. Meanwhile, Zia visits Aunt Rosemary Lyons, who shows signs of both dementia and wisdom. As the service begins, the Reverend Still, seated behind the pulpit, watches Frances enter with his son, Zachary, who wears the uniform of the Fairall Security Force. Zachary shows Frances to a seat. Clearly, he wants to say more but Fran simply smiles without offering encouragement, so he returns to his post by the door.*

*Flipping through his Bible while studying Frances, Hiram has apparently found something to enter on his laptop. In his rambling sermon—actually more of an infomercial—Hiram mentions the special event on Monday, when the Fairall Independent Electrical plant will begin operations. A “surprise VIP” is to land with him at the church’s heliport and give the opening address at the ribbon-cutting. Then the gates will open for the “waterfall of the Elect.” Among other promotional offers, he reminds the congregation about securing their homes and families for the Final Hour by buying into the church’s Apocalypse Insurance Plan for special seating and accommodations on the last day. A collection is made. He also mentions the church’s legal actions with the “powers of this world,” its Bible studies with worldly leaders and its actions against others “outside the nest of the faithful.” And another collection is taken—this time for work “outside the nest.” The “qualifications for compassion,” according to Hiram, such as a “broken and contrite spirit,” are certainly not met by the many outsiders looking for*

*handouts. When the Board of Faith and Practice took over the town council, it immediately ended all programs for vagrants, idlers, drug-dealers, degenerate criminals. The savings were then invested in training all the mothers and unwanted children saved from abortion to do manual labor at the Reclamations and Revival plant and in sending the incarcerated to work at the Slag and Tailings Plant. Finally, after repeatedly referring to her as "our returning prodigal girl," he invites Fran to testify.*

*As the last members are seated, the combo repeats variations on this vamp until Hiram gives the signal to begin the service. Some of the Dissenters furtively wave at Frances as Zachary seats her. He fails to engage her in conversation.*

Onscreen:

### **THE CHURCH OF THE FINAL HOUR**

*As he goes to the pulpit, words appear on the screen behind him. It seems that the Church of the Final Hour also has many slogans.*

Onscreen:

### **RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL**

*The choir leaders wear brightly colored robes. Hiram raises his arms and the congregation raise their arms, stand, and sing. Throughout the singing, Hiram likes to pick various phrases to say aloud after the words are sung, such as: "Waters of life!" Hiram continues to "line out" at times selected by the vocalist. He always wants center stage.*

Choir and Congregation:

Waters of life, strength from above,  
None can escape from your power.  
You are the way, truth, and the life;  
flood in the world's Final Hour.

The country's invaders must be washed away  
to make the Way flat and right.  
The unarmed who think they will all make a break  
will be left out and swept from your sight.

*Hiram begins his pitch: partly sermon, partly barker's chant, partly auctioneer's spiel.*

Onscreen: **THE APOCALYPSE INSURANCE PLAN**

Hiram:

Yes! And let's be ready on that day with A.I.P.

The Apocalypse Insurance Plan:  
secure seating, special accommodations and arrangements  
for your family in the Final Hour—

Choir: Waters of life, swollen with love,  
snatch us when all is lost.  
Waters of life, blow past the world.  
We speak up or else pay the cost.

Musical interlude: *The slogans in boldface are shown onscreen. The choir sits as Hiram shakes, hands, walks around the stage, and finally returns to the podium, where he clasps the lectern and begins to speak. At the end of this section go to EP 8: Act 2 Scene 2 Hiram's Sermon. Onscreen: **THE EYES OF THE WORLD***

### Ensemble 8

#### Act 2, Hiram's Sermon

*The tempo is set by the chanting sequence at the beginning of the sermon and continues with hypnotic insistence to the end of the spoken portion of the sermon. Hiram always gets the desired response from his listeners, but the "Amens" shouted by the congregation evolve from enthusiastic to routine by the end of the sermon. The sermon is accompanied by changes in the projected slogans, occasional flashes of colored lights with cymbals, and the combo's variations on a repetitive riff, played pianissimo.*

Onscreen: **THE EYES OF THE WORLD**

Hiram: The things that we see. The things that we hear,  
the so-called news of our times are Satanic views.  
So be very clear. These are the Very Last Times.  
The Bible says to *come out from them and be separate from them!*<sup>iii</sup>  
It's the last chance for the Last In-gathering<sup>iv</sup> of the last prodigal sheep.  
Like our returning prodigal girl, don't you know. Amen?

*The congregation gives him Amens when he asks for them.*

Yes, the things we see, the things we hear,  
the so-called news of hate and fear,  
are Satanic views—we must be clear, be very clear--  
the anchor-solid proof that the End Time is near.  
And that separation's coming forever between dark and light,  
Dumb and bright, wrong and right, day and night. Amen?

***Onscreen: GIVE YOUR PROMISE COUPONS FOR THE LIBERTY DEFENSE FUND***

Be sure to give an usher your Promise Coupons  
for our Legal Liberty Defense Fund  
against the powers of this present world

Congregation: Be separate! Be separate! Amen.

Hiram:

The Darkness masses against us.  
But we know the life and lives that matter!  
Keep standing on the promises!  
Pass those cards to the center aisle!

**COME OUT, AND BE SEPARATE FROM THEM!**

Watch for the signs! Watch for the signs!  
Watchman, tell us. What of the morning?  
The End Time is near! The time has come to put your house in order.  
That's why we removed the worldly town council.  
Your Board of Faith and Practice wastes no time  
to bring this town under the dominion of the Lord, in my stewardship,  
and to complete our separation from the powers of this world.  
Amen?  
Don't forget the Box for the Bible Study Fund when you leave today!  
We're still bringing senators and representatives together—  
all the legislators we can find to bear witness,  
to study the Word, and to update our Armory.

But for now, we use the weapons we have, "consecrated and useful  
to the master of the house, ready for any good work."<sup>v</sup>  
Yes, even in the last week two vagrants were caught on the perimeter  
by field officers of the Fairall Security Force.  
Chief Zachary, stand where you are.  
Let's show our thanks to our brave defenders!

*Hiram leads applause.*

You know, we have so many coming to us now for hand-outs  
who don't meet our guidelines for compassion.  
Where is their confession? Where are their offerings and contrite heart?  
You be sure to make a love-offering for the munitions plant, weapons cache,

and this summer's Lock-and-Load camp for the kids.  
 Give your good-will gifts to one of the ushers.  
 Dominion of the Earth comes a square inch at a time  
 but we are closing in on the Enemy! We're in the final runoff! Amen?

### **THE F.I.E. PROJECT AND THE WATERFALL OF THE ELECT**

Yes, independence from the powers of this world is coming!  
 Bring your families tomorrow for the cook-out and grand opening of F.I.E.  
 We'll cut the ribbon for the Fairall Independent Energy plant  
 and open the gates to the Waterfall of the Elect.  
 For early-arrivals, there's a special event at the Helipad of the Final Hour.  
 I will arrive with a Very Important Person to address the rally.  
 You will be surprised! I guarantee it. Standing room only:  
 So purchase tickets from the ushers.  
 Don't miss his landing here in the Lord's home town!

No, the City of God isn't in Hippo, or Geneva, or Bay Colony.  
 The Lord's last stand is right here in Fairall, the last stand for Freedom,  
 for all the things that freedom-lovers have worked and died for.  
 Here in Fairall, there is no place for vagrants, handouts, drugs, or deviants.  
 Here in the Nest of the Faithful, we're set on the rock above the world,  
 the Rock that is higher. *Hither by your hand we've come!*<sup>vi</sup>

We save the last and the lost and put them to honest work:  
 prodigal girls and their babies now work in Reclamations and Revival,  
 deviants are sent outside the Nest and back into the world,  
 vagrants and incorrigibles serve time at the Slag and Tailings Plant—  
 Remember, if you hate baby-killers, dial 619 on your mobile  
 and vote with a special gift for *STOP IT, JUST STOP IT*.

### **STOP IT, JUST STOP IT!**

And because we know that *in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart*, we go on with our well-doing by saving any outsiders who survive the mine-field on the perimeter of our Nest of the Faithful.

### **LET US NOT GROW WEARY IN WELL-DOING FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP**

In due season, we shall reap—by clearing ground for the expansion of more bitcoin plants.  
 And what about the local miscreants of the worldly mainstream news,

the vipers who formerly had so much to say?  
Well, we regenerate them *by the transformation of their minds*  
as we let them print *The Fundamentals* for worldwide distribution. Amen?

We save the lost, but don't forget: we also save our hard-won earnings  
in the *Solomon's Allies Investment Plan*. Join today!

**S.A.P.S. TODAY!**  
**SOLOMON'S ALLIES PLANNED SECURITY**

For you and your loved ones, while there is room  
for a few more *people of great faith looking for great rewards*,  
be sure to invest before the F.I.E. comes on line tomorrow.  
If you forget it, you'll regret it—when you see how others prosper.  
Remember to renew automatically  
with direct payment from your bitcoin account.

**DOMINION OVER EVERY SQUARE INCH**

Yes, the time is coming when the Lord will rule every square inch,  
kept until then in my custody and safekeeping until the Final Day.  
Now, you may have heard that Wando and other godless towns  
have complained about the Fairall Bitcoin Mine, but Saint Paul said,  
*Envy, murder, lies, and deceit*<sup>vii</sup> are all you can expect from unbelievers.  
Amen?

**BITS FOR THE LORD**

You just go on entering your *Bits for the Lord* when you go to our website  
and the *bread that you throw out on the waters*  
*Will in no wise return to you void!* Amen?

**MARTHA'S SAVERS**

And you ladies, don't forget *Martha's Savers!*  
What better way to invest your retirement savings!

Now, it's testimony time. And today we want to hear our prodigal girl,  
young Frances Burns, who grew up among us, but went out into the world,  
into that godless university of worldliness  
where pagans dance in circles around the devil. Our prodigal girl went  
where they worship the Green Eco-Goddess of the Earth on the high  
places,



as the back-sliding Children of Israel danced around blood-thirsty Baal.

She studied in the haven for so-called experts of worldly knowledge,  
the dark sciences and perverted stories of godless creation.  
She fell into the chaotic world of elites, & unbelievers, & the Great Beast,  
the pig-sty of *the powers and world rulers of the present darkness*<sup>viii</sup>.  
But we know the Life and the Lives that matter! Praise God. Amen?  
And she has returned! Safe at last! Back and safe in the nest of the faithful.  
Come up, Sister Burns, and testify!

---

*Hiram and the congregation initially give her "Amens," but their enthusiasm tapers off as she continues.*

**Ensemble 9**  
**Act 2, Frances' Witness**

FRANCES: I see the light now. I have returned now,  
just like the story's younger brother.  
Going away has changed the picture.  
I see clearly now!

*She looks at Hiram.*

I do!

For study changed my frame of reference.

*Something in her tone has disturbed Hiram and Zachary. She reads from the pulpit Bible:*

*"But while he was yet at distance, his father saw him and had compassion—"*  
He didn't pass through a checkpoint or mine-field  
which keeps more from leaving than entering. Amen?

*The congregation gives an ambivalent response, but, as she continues, does not give Frances any more Amens. She holds up a copy of Huckleberry Finn.*

Here's something from the story of another prodigal:  
From the *Holy Huck*, Chapter 31 and verse 97.  
You know the story!

*"It was awful thoughts, and awful words, but they was said.  
And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming.  
. . . and I would steal Jim out of slavery again."*

Amen?

*Hiram is looking at her hand-held microphone. Only a couple of Dissenters say "Amen."*

Reverend Still recalls  
many prodigals  
from many holy books—  
Like that cliff above town  
where the golf club filled a lake  
that sits on a cliff.

*She points to the lake above the town.*

If's a beautiful view from the Club! (I guess.)  
Although the civil engineers gave them a bad report,

*She points to Hiram and the others. Hiram moves toward her, nodding to Zachary, who stands.*

which your holy Board never questioned.  
Actually, they skipped it.  
And now a power plant!

*Frances moves around the podium away from Hiram, playing "keeps" with the microphone.*

All the prodigals that the Reverend knows—  
Martha's Savers, Bitcoin-Mines, and SAPS.

*She pronounces it "saps."*

will gladly spend their way  
through ev'rything you own.  
They're sanctified as spiders with their traps.  
Like a web around a fly  
what you sanctify

*Frances holds up a Bible.*

will spin you 'round and wrap you in a blink!  
Just be careful what you buy  
when you're told to sanctify  
a book or plan that tells you not to think.

*The Dissenters are standing in the way of Hiram and of Zachary and the other security officers as they try to reach Frances. A scuffle ensues as Frances holds onto the microphone, keeping the podium between her and Hiram, while the choir and congregation helplessly watch.*

Unanswered questions back up like rivers  
pushing their way to flood over.  
Start asking questions. Think!  
And even wonder!  
Denied questions pull you under.

### Ensemble 10

#### *Act 2 The Close of the Service*

*Most of the members of the congregation have stood. Hiram and Zachary move toward the pulpit. Frances' former school friends (the Dissenters, A,B,C, & D) crowd around to help her exit quickly. Hiram hurries to the pulpit to regain control. Many of the congregation are leaving as the choir leaders attempt to repeat the praise song, which is difficult because Hiram has announced two different hymns. Some sing one hymn while others sing the other and the effort peters out. Everyone is too disturbed and confused to finish. Most members have left before the music ends. Hiram points to Zachary and several other Security Force officers to follow Frances and the Dissenters.*

Hiram: Later we'll have a season of prayer for poor young Frances,  
but let's sing another verse of "Waters of Life"  
or "Give us a Lord Protector--"

Remember the rally in the morning  
and come to the helipad!

Congregation & Choir:

At the clang of the bell  
the Left shall go to hell  
and the Leftovers taken and fried . . .

Give us a good Lord Protector  
to scrub out the swamp sin.  
Give us a Great Detector  
to find our way . . .

*Lights down. Stage is dark.*

**Ensemble 11**  
**Act 2, Rosemary**

*Zia and Rosemary Lyons are sitting in Rosemary's living room as they look through the Fairall High School yearbook at pictures of Zia, Frances, and their friends.*

Zia: Here's Frances at the DeepWater Protest.  
Remember the rain?

Rosemary: Rain on the green grass.  
Rain on the tree.  
Rain on the housetop,  
but not on me.

Zia: You taught us that in Second Grade—

Rosemary: Rain on the green grass.  
Rain on the tree.  
What am I to you?  
What are you to me?

*Together:*

|Rain, rain, go away.  
Zia: |Come again another day.

Here we were at baccalaureate,  
Remember how everyone laughed  
when the School Board Chairman spoke—  
the preacher before Hiram Still.  
He was such a joke  
because of Fran's number in the faculty roast?

*Zia imitates Frances.*

***I am the Ruler of the School Board  
And the Oceans and the Air.  
I pay back the complainers  
With administrative flair.***

***And when I have a notion***

*I'll be caught and brought to task,  
I table such a motion  
And pass around the flask.*

*Being . . . being . . .*

*As Zia tries to recall the words, Fran enters and completes the number.*

Frances: *Being Ruler of the School Board  
Is a mighty grand sensation.  
I dominate and delegate,  
And appoint my close-relation;*

*Choose books, along with what is thought,  
While nicely stamping out imagination—*

Zia: *| While nicely, nicely, nicely stamping out—  
| While nicely stamping out imagination.*

*They laugh.*

## Ensemble 12

Zia: The town fathers were not sorry to see you go to college—  
Frances: —even a godless college.  
Zia: They—

Rosemary: I see the moon.  
The moon sees me.  
And the moon sees the one  
I want to see.

*Zia looks at Frances and shakes her head.*

Frances: Better to be caught in the past like Aunt Rosemary  
than to be trapped in fear and delusion like her neighbors.

Zia: What happened at the rally?

Frances: The landslide that the HRO warned me not to cause—

Zia: No surprise—

Frances: But Crawley University will claim to be surprised—

Zia: So much for slowly unsettling things—

Frances: We haven't much time—

Rosemary: I see specks.  
Specks see me.  
I see someone today  
I don't expect to see.

*They are startled by a loud knock at the door. The Dissenters (A,B,C, & D) knock and noisily enter the room, shouting and interrupting each other.*

**Ensemble 13**

Aaron: Frannie, we're glad you're back but you must leave—

Bela: You can't do the things you used to do—

Clelia: Nobody can—

David: If Security knew that we were here—

Aaron: Of course they know—

Bela: They know already—

*Clelia notices the open yearbook.*

Clelia: Look at that—the Deep Water Protest,

David: when it rained—but we did it anyway

ABCD: *In April twenty, twenty-ten, the rig began to shake*

*“Keep pumping!” said the Foreman.*

*“No time to take a break.”*

*The slick line seized, the sea turned black;*

*A fireball from below*

*Blew roustabouts all off the deck*

*Like duckpins in a row.*

*Deep Water Horizon—*

*Deep pockets, you know.*

*Deep trouble's arisin'*

*From bubbles down below*

Frances, Zia and ABCD:

*Deep Water Horizon—  
Deep pockets, you know.  
Deep trouble's arisin'  
From bubbles down below*

*They laugh, but then Clelia frowns and addresses Frances.*

Clelia:                   The Deep Pockets have taken over—

Aaron:                   We're living in the bubble.

Frances:                But only you can pop it—not me!

Zia:                     Now you're talking! I'll pack for Rosemary.  
Why do you think I took my mama with me to college?

*Zia exits. Rosemary is disturbed by her leaving the room.*

Aaron & Bela:        Don't see how we'd stop them.  
Clelia & David:      Chanting all the slogans.  
ABCD:                 Don't see how.

Frances:              Well, it's *inside, out!*  
Inside-out! Only you can do it!

ABCD:                 Inside out?

Frances:              Inside out:  
The devout only believe  
if an insider leads them out.

David:                Like Moses.

Frances:              They chafe from friction  
between truth and fiction.  
The fever must burn out.

*The Dissenters leave.*

ABCD:                Inside-out! Inside-out!  
Even the devout can be led out.  
From inside, out.

*Frances is surprised when Rosemary speaks.*

Rosemary:                I see specks.  
Specks see me.  
Specks in anyone I see.

Frances:                Even Hiram Still?

Rosemary:                Even he was a boy  
And the boy always remains.

Frances:                I don't know.

Rosemary:                I see specks.  
Specks see me.  
Someone coming:  
Not for me.

*Rosemary exits.*

#### Ensemble 14

*Zachary enters, dressed in his camo uniform with the Sharpshooter badge and a prominent decal of the "Don't tread on me!" rattle-snake image. He has a knife, revolver, and a rifle slung on his back. They stare at each other.*

Frances:                So, I go with you now?

Zachary:                It doesn't have to be that way.  
You could be part of us. Remember?  
When I said you were mine—

Frances:                Oh, yes—

Zachary:                We costed out the options

Frances:                So you did.



Zachary: And Uncle Hiram guaranteed  
that you could share the benefits.

Frances: Benefits?

*He approaches her and clumsily attempts an embrace, hindered by the weapons. She pushes him away.*

Frances: Thanks, but no thanks.  
You said, as I remember,  
| 'love's a transaction'  
| you could 'cost out.'

Zachary: | You twist my words.  
  
You never listened.

Frances: Perhaps I've heard enough.

Zachary: You could be part of our managed care.  
It all comes with market share.

| Uncle says you'd be part of the team.  
| Paid transactions, all priced in tiers  
| Build up a fortune for retirement years.

Frances: | What Hiram manages is his cash flow.  
| That's where the premiums and donations go.  
| Let other people shed your tears?

Zachary: Take 'til morning. It's only business.

*Frances turns her back to him. Zachary exits.*

### Ensemble 15

Frances: Business!

*Frances is exhausted. She sits on the sofa and takes a compact from her purse. Then she notices the silver frame and cicada-earring and also takes them from the purse. Dropping them in her lap, she puts her head back and closes her eyes as the lights dim.*

*She rouses herself, picks up the Silver Frame, looks at it closely, and reads the summoning words.*

Frances:                    So, “Look through this when you have tried everything.”  
                                 But have I even had a chance to try a thing?’

*The Silver Frame has the voice of Professor Ricks. In staging this, both Ricks and Matta are spot-lit on a side-stage when they sing.*

Silver Frame:            You humans are quick to exaggerate achievement  
                                 and much too quick to think you're lost.

Frances:                    Oh, great! Now an empty frame that talks back to you.

Silver Frame:            The point is emptiness and loss.

Frances:                    None of that “what is one-hand-clapping?” nonsense!

Silver Frame:            Look through me at that book.

*She looks at the yearbook through the frame.*

Silver Frame:            The empty space within the frame  
                                 around your life and righteous cause:  
                                 See Frances then and Frances now.

*She looks at herself in the compact.*

Silver Frame:            You played one part today.  
                                 Now learn another.

*She impatiently throws the Silver Frame on the couch and puts her hands over her ears. Then she picks up the Golden Cicada earring, called the Earth Witness, and reads the inscription. The Earth Witness, summoned by this reading, speaks in the voice of Matta, her mentor.*

Frances:                    “Listen to it when static rises and stops your ears.”

Earth Witness: Beware of oak. It draws the stroke.  
Beware of ash. It courts the flash.

Frances: Another riddle. Worse than Aunt Rosemary!

Earth Witness: Your part is done.

Frances: | Your part is done.  
|  
| How can I be done  
| when I haven't even begun?

*LOUD KNOCKING AT THE DOOR. The lights come up. Zachary enters.*

Zachary: Frances! Right now, you must decide!

Frances: Is it morning already?

Zachary: We caught four plotters from your cell!

Frances: You mean our classmates?

Zachary: Terrorists! What have you decided?

Frances: I—

*A great booming sound comes from backstage. Zachary runs to the window.*

Zachary: It's the dam! You did this!  
YOU did it all!  
I will be back!

*Zia enters, carrying a feather. Rosemary follows her. They each have a suitcase. Zachary stares at Zia.*

Zachary: **You!** So that's it!

*He looks back at Frances.*

Zachary:            You and that sketchy Zia!  
                         You did it all!  
                         By God, Fran—  
                         By God, I'll be back!

*He rushes off. Zia hands the feather to Frances.*

Zia:                 Sketchy? Hmm.  
                         Well, this house may be on a hill,  
                         but by my calculation we have ten minutes—

*Rosemary carries her suitcase to the door.*

Rosemary:         Rain on the green grass.  
                         Rain on the tree.  
                         Rain on the housetop  
                         But not on me.

***ALL EXIT. LIGHTS DOWN. END OF ACT 2.***

**Ensemble 16**  
**Act 3, Summary:**

*The Campus Center is now a triage site. Before the lights come up, the screen shows a flood scene of vast devastation. During the opening chorus, students and members of The Fellowship of the Attentive are preparing care-packages at tables along the walls. A few survivors, including the Dissenters, huddle at some of the tables, where they are being served. A few people seem to be starting a circle dance, but stop when a man is brought in on a gurney. Efforts to revive him fail and as the gurney is being taken out, Zachary enters, still wearing the camo uniform with the snake decal. He is disheveled, unshaven, and carrying an assault rifle. The others back away as he wanders around the room. Ricks, also wearing camo, has been handing out water bottles at the door. Ricks guides him to a table, engages him in conversation, and, with some Wake-Up Tea, de-escalates the potentially deadly situation. The scene and the musical close with another circle dance, this time with Zachary in the center of the circle.*

Chorus:

*The chorus consists of everyone on stage—survivors, students, aid-workers—as they go about their tasks. The survivors include Rosemary, the Dissenters and a few other people from Fairall. An Aid worker calls for help for a woman who is staggering. The victim wears a choir robe from the Church of the Final Hour.*

Aid Worker:                      Over here!

*An EMT is called to attend to a victim on a gurney.*

Another aid worker:              This one. Here!

*The EMT cautions everyone to stand back as he uses an AED (automated external defibrillator). The onlookers watch the victim for a sign of recovery.*

EMT:                                Now stand clear!

Onlookers:                        Ah!

*The victim's condition seems unchanged.*

Onlookers:                        Ah!

*The victim moves his arm. Everyone returns to work.*

*Onscreen: a montage of the flooded town.*

All women:                        Houses all up-ended,

All men:                            All beginnings ended,

All women:                        All they were is past now.

All men:                            Useless now to ask how.

All:                                 Now they have given—they have given out.

Dissenters(ABCD):                Is there a tomorrow?  
    We are frozen fast in sorrow.  
    Frozen fast.

*Zachary appears at the door, stage right. He's carrying an assault rifle port-arms. He stares around the room. Nearby, Ricks has been handing out cups and bottles of water. He pours some of the Wake-Up Tea into one of the cups. As Zachary begins to walk around the room, Zia sees him and pulls Frances off-stage. As Zachary begins to alarm everyone, Ricks hands him the cup.*

Zachary:                      Where is she? Where is Frances?  
                                      She'll pay for this!  
                                      All of you will pay for this!  
                                      Where is Frances? Where—

Ricks:                         Won't you have some water?

*At first, Zachary pushes the cup away, but he notices Ricks' fatigues uniform. He seizes the cup and drinks it all.*

Ricks:                         | Isn't your weapon an M-16?

Zachary:                     | I'll blow them all away!

Ricks:                         Just like the one that I used in Nam so long ago.

*Zachary looks at him with a dazed expression, staggers slightly, and follows Ricks back to the drinks table. Ricks nods to one of the aids workers, who hangs a yellow umbrella on the back of one of the chairs. The teapot on the table is the same one previously seen in the HRO office during the first act. Ricks pours another cup. As he hands Zachary the cup, he gently touches the rifle. Zachary drinks more.*

Ricks:                         May I see it?

*Zachary stares blankly at him. Everyone in the room is watching them. Onscreen is a close-up of the "Don't tread on me!" decal.*

*Zachary shakes his head, as if there were something in his ears. He seems more confused as the tea has its effect. After a long pause, he allows Ricks to see the rifle, to the relief of the onlookers. As he talks, Ricks points to Zachary's badges and exchanges the rifle for the yellow umbrella. One of the onlookers takes the rifle offstage.*

Onlookers:                   Ah!

Ricks:                                You're old-school. Sharpshooter!  
    Good for you!

*Zachary shakes his head, as if there were something in his ears. He seems more confused as the tea has its effect. After a long pause, he allows Ricks to see the rifle, to the relief of the onlookers. As he talks, Ricks points to Zachary's badges and exchanges the rifle for the yellow umbrella. One of the onlookers takes the rifle offstage.*

*When Ricks hands the umbrella to him, Zachary takes it as if it were the rifle. He seems sleepy and disoriented, slurring speech.*

Zachary:                            Where is—  
    Where is Frances? She's the one.  
    Just came back to tempt me,  
    Just to start it up again—  
    | All her fault—all the death!

Ricks:                                | Now, take it easy. What did you see?

Zachary:                            All the people ran as water climbed  
    Spun away the band-stand—the band  
    Everything was drowning  
    When I heard Uncle's helicopter flying off.

    Frances did it!  
    Why'd she have to go with Zia and those people?  
    She did it!  
    Why'd she have to go with *those people*?

Ricks:                                By THOSE PEOPLE, I guess you mean the women?

Zachary:                            Yes, women—

Ricks:                                Such a puzzle.  
    We can help you with such puzzles.

*As Ricks nods to them, two men help the groggy Zachary to stand, still holding the umbrella. They take him to join the dancers, who have begun to form a circle under Zia's direction. Frances and Matta enter stage left.*

Matta: Can you make sense of what you've seen?  
Can you make sense of the pride of ignorance?

Frances: I want to be a lightning stroke  
But I had to learn to smolder—

*Zia joins them.*

Matta: Can't cook with a blaze.

Zia: My girl Frannie's getting older.

*Zia points to the survivors and the aid-workers, who have begun to form a circle.*

Zia: Matta, you have to help us.

Matta: What is it?

Zia: The dancers cannot decide on a dance  
that can heal Frances' friend.

Frances: | Ha! As if it mattered!

Matta: | What do they want?

Zia: The men want Jericho.  
The women want the troubles of the world.

Matta: I see. Well, Zia,  
Maybe you've made some sense on your own.  
Instead of waiting for Frances to lead,  
Suppose *you* help them decide.

*Zia walks back to the circle-dancers.*

Women: Troubles of the world!

Zia: So, I am looking for a tune that will bring us all around.

Women: Around.



Women: Troubles of the world!

Zia: So, I am looking for a tune that will bring us all around.

Women: Around.

Zia: Looking for a space for to lay a common ground.

Women: Looking for a common ground.

Zia: Yes, a way to break the steady pace  
of ignorance and pride

Women: Looking

Zia: That keeps the Outs all out  
and keeps Ins safe inside.

Women: Safe

Zia: | I want to find a tune for pride and ignorance  
|

Women: | in ignorance, and safe in pride. We are looking  
|

Men: | We are looking for that tune  
|

Zia: | instead of floods or lesser ways of learning sense  
|

Women: | We are looking for the tune  
|

Men: | for that tune, for that tune  
|

Zia: For us who settle down in a comforting sweet spot  
I want the kind of tune that will bump us from our slot.  
I want the kind of tune that circles far and wide,  
The simple kind of tune that brings the Outs inside.

**Ensemble 17**  
**Act 3, Dance & Finale**

*In the final sequence, Zachary, looks dazed as he stands center stage, holding the closed yellow umbrella as if it were a rifle. The cast forms two circles, one on Zachary's right and one on his left. Some of the dancers are wearing yellow articles of clothing, the color matching the umbrella. Dancers in the two circles pat Zachary on the shoulders as they walk beside him. The shape of the dance is like the tail-wag dance of honeybees, in which the bees wise to life-fostering-nectar give directions to the others. At measures 52-55, Zachary is brought into the group, and the umbrella opened as the two circles become one circle. The dancers may change to a grapevine step. Whenever Matta, Ricks, Zia, and Frances have solos, they step out of the circle-dance and face the audience. Singers in the choral sectional-solos keep dancing as they sing.*

ALL:                   We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          Together on the same dark way.

Chorus throughout:       Walking, Walking, We are Walking.

Matta and Ricks:       Everyone goes on the same dark road.  
                          Everyone goes on the same dark road.  
                          Everyone goes on the same dark road,  
                          The walk going down into night.

Women's Chorus:       Every mother's daughter, every father's son  
                          Every mother's daughter, every father's son,  
                          Every one of us—yes. Yes, every one  
                          Will walk going down into night.

ALL:                   We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          Together on the same dark way.

Men's Chorus:       All walk down on the same dark road.  
                          Every one of us. Every one of us.  
                          And that road gets the most treacherous  
                          In the darkest dark of the night.

Matta, Zia & Frances:   There is no escaping, no escaping from the road

Though you search the Earth—  
The Earth and the skies—  
With a peacock fan of eyes.

*Several peacock feathers are lifted by some of the dancers. Two images are onscreen: the former antenna at Arecibo and the open fan-tail of a peacock.*

ALL:                   And that road plays a mighty fine trick  
                          The darkest dark of the night.  
                          Taking a turn, in the darkest dark of the night,  
                          It takes a turn, takes a turn into light.

*The yellow umbrella opens over Zachary. He carries it as he enters the dance and the two circles become one large circle.*

ALL:                   We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          Together on the same dark way.

                          We are walking on our way.  
                          We are walking on our way.  
                          The longest walk that you will find  
                          goes from the heart to the mind.

*Zia and Frances, holding hands, step out and slowly say: "The longest walk that you will find goes from the heart to the mind."*

***The End***

## Comments

While the musical draws on *Frameshifts* (2011)<sup>ix</sup> and some of my other works, it also draws upon our difficult national experience from 2019 to 2021, with all its fatalities and injustices. It is my hope, and the message of *Escape Plans*, that we will now walk in a better direction.

The walking songs of many peoples have informed such sections as Ensembles 2 and 17. See, for example *Siyahamba*: “We are walking in the light of God.” A popular version in the 1990s was performed by the Mwamba Children’s choir. The anthem, *Lift Every Voice* (James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamund Johnson), and many African-American spirituals, like *Wade in the Water*, are also walking songs. And the music of the Dances of Universal Peace, founded by Samuel Lewis, is entirely made of walking songs.

Other music quoted includes a few bars of “*Isn’t it Romantic?*” (Rodgers and Hart), the spiritual *Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho*, the traditional hymn, *Soon-a will be done*, and the ancient tune, *l’Homme armé*. The listener will also notice a number of childhood chants scattered through the music.

Monica Coleman’s familiar text about walking is now well known: “*Make the way out of no way.*” Ensemble 17 sets the walking-words of James Baldwin in *Giovanni’s Room*: “*Everyone, after all, goes the same dark road—and the road has a trick of becoming most dark, most treacherous, when it seems most bright.*” It also sets the words of an indigenous American, “*Which way is the way for me? Your routines become the direction you walk. The longest journey is from the heart to the mind. You make the way by walking.*” (From “Hear my voice,” an exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in September, 2017.) The last sentence cites an even older saying of many pilgrims to sacred sites or to different kinds of living.

I am particularly grateful to have been able to finish this work, parts of which have been waiting for two decades. Working on the opera *Nightcaps* in 2020 with playwright Brooke Vandervelde of Amherst, VA enabled me to clear away major obstacles that had prevented completion. That being said, this work is not as important as the kind of witness-work done by those like Regina Goodwin, descendant of the Greenwood survivors of the Tulsa 1921 massacre, who said, “*While I have breath, I have time to get it right.*”

But it was important to me to finish *Escape Plans*, to get it right, and to give it away before I was done with the troubles of the world.

—Richard L. Rose, Richmond, VA 9/15/2021

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i For more background, see the link to *Frances's Handbook* on the blog site, *frameshifts.com*. For the origin and development of the Fairall, Wando, and Fellowship communities, see *Frameshifts* (2011).

ii In the second book of FRAMESHIFTS, especially in the verse-section entitled "The Profit of Doom," the strange circumstances of defedding are explored. The origins and development of the Northern Region (aka "Northridge") are described in the stories of the first volume of FRAMESHIFTS.

iii 2 Corinthians 6:17, which quotes a statement with a similarly exclusionary sentiment in Isaiah 52:11

iv In FRAMESHIFTS, the various "in-gatherings" of the faithful sheep for the *Journey of Jubilation* (vol 1, p263), for the Northern Regional Council of Temple Independents (vol.1, p.407), and other migrations to the town of Fairall, Virginia, where the religious community finally took over the town and established a theocracy under its Board of Faith and Practice (volume 2).

v 2 Timothy 2:21

vi A line from the hymn "Come thou fount of every blessing." Hiram's hymnodic allusions are numerous and insidious. Like the scriptural tags, slogans, and references to causes ("no baby killers!"), they are charms on identity-bracelets being quietly welded into manacles.

vii Romans 1:29

viii Ephesians 6:12, paraphrased. Note: Hiram puts Biblical phrases and language to his own use in so many ways that, like his references to hymns, like *In times like these*, most of them are not cited.

ix This musical is based on earlier works by Richard L. Rose, primarily the two volumes of *Frameshifts*, published in 2011, the *Tales Since the Shift*, published as a flipbook in 2020, and the story collection, *Forms of Resistance*, two poetry collections (*Coming Around*, 2016, and *PushBack*, 2021), and the opera *Monte and Pinky* (2016). More information about flipbooks, other operas, and writings is on the author's author landing-page, <https://formsofresistance.com>, and blog-site, <https://frameshifts.com>. The book of stories, *Forms of Resistance*, will be made available in some format in the near future. Check the blog-site.

