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## My Sisters and Me: A High School Play

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Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Education,  
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for the Master of Arts in Education degree.

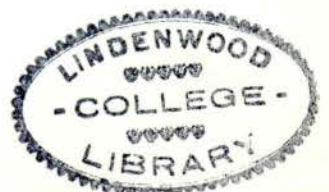
MY SISTERS AND ME: A HIGH SCHOOL PLAY

*[Faint handwritten signature]*  
Faculty

*[Faint handwritten signature]*  
of Lindenwood Colleges

BY  
ANNE McCORMACK

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts in Education degree  
The Lindenwood Colleges  
May, 1981



## ABSTRACT

My Sisters and Me: A High School Play is a history of the production of a one-act play at a secondary school, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Masters of Education at the Lindenwood Colleges, Saint Charles, Missouri. The philosophy of the educator-director is presented along with a log of the processes of selection, casting, rehearsal and performance. A review of the literature concerning educational drama is incorporated. The chosen play, My Sisters and Me, is a compiled script, adapted by the author, and included in the appendix of this paper.

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## CHAPTER I

### ORIENTATION

On opening night in the professional theatre, nothing can be more important than pleasing the audience. Tickets must be sold, the rent must be paid. The professional performer must be ready, in Boleslavsky's phrase, "For the sake of the theatre to give up everything, to suffer everything!"<sup>1</sup>

In this orientation lies the difference between educational theatre and the professional stage. For the drama educator, it is the process, not the product that is all important. The educator in the secondary school has special concerns. The high school stage usually does not bear the burden of operating in the black. It does not have the reservoir of talent available to the university, nor does it feel the weight of responsibility of training professionals. Theatre in the high school offers the tremendous enthusiasm of the adolescent, along with the clumsiness of the raw recruit.

This is not to say that the director of the high school play ignores the final product, for the objectives of the school play go beyond self expression. The student cast in the play

must communicate with others. No director should count on an audience of adoring parents to cover for a half-hearted attempt at a theatrical spectacle. A poorly rehearsed show will dilute student and faculty support for future productions and ultimately be rejected by the cast and crew themselves as they realize they have only been playing a game. Somewhere between process and product the theatre educator must strike a middle ground.

The starting point of this procedure is the premise that creativity can be developed. It is not an expressive, inner life that comes easily. If this were so, every movement would be a dance, every interaction would be a drama. Instruction in the skills and crafts of the theatre combine with strategies that foster the imaginative life of the students for effective dramatic training. The theatre educator must help students analyze the language of the script and translate this into purposeful movement, clear articulation, and sensitive communication with an audience.<sup>2</sup>

Language arts skills go beyond the memorization of lines and cues. Questioning and discussion during rehearsal facilitate discovery of the meaning that underlies the character's words and actions. Improvisations directed by the teacher can deepen the performer's appreciation of the motivations of all characters. Experimentation with voice and movement can help expand the horizons of the performance and the performer. Through this process of questioning, discussion, and experimentation, the student's



sensitivity to the author's tone is developed.<sup>3</sup>

The author's attitude toward the character and the character's attitude toward his or her own words must be discerned. An example of the process we used to search for the author's tone was our practice of "The Clozcat Blues."<sup>4</sup> We had rehearsed this number for several weeks. Tammy Bopp, the soloist, had learned the lines and the movements of the dance, but the character was not as powerful as I wanted. I accompanied the rehearsal on guitar and immediately afterwards asked, "Tammy, this woman says she loves to wax her floor. Do you think she really means it?" At first, she replied that she did. Next I asked Tammy about the character she was accustomed to doing and her own attitude toward them. The four students who served as the chorus in this number joined in, voicing their reaction to routine household duties. Soon the whole group decided that no one could love waxing a floor, and the song was satiric. We practiced the number again, and from this point on, Tammy and the chorus enjoyed themselves more and felt freer to improvise gestures and movement.

Each performer must thoroughly understand the motivation of the character portrayed if the drama is to be believable. The process of discovering this motivation was ongoing throughout the weeks of rehearsal. Each student was faced with the problem of finding the actor's motivation to perform the character. The teacher's role was to help the student discover the character's motivation. The teacher's role was to help the student discover the character's motivation. The teacher's role was to help the student discover the character's motivation.

finding the reasons for her character's words and for the actions that follow from these. Through discussion, we explored the meanings of words at early rehearsals. The process of dramatization itself helped the students understand their characters. As it does in life, the reactions of others to the character helped the performer define her own position. For example, in rehearsing the cutting from Hagan's One Sunday Afternoon, the more intensely Karen Bergmann, as Virginia, said, "Why Amy, he's terrible! My mother's told me about him!" the more reason Maureen Carey, as Amy, has to turn abruptly away, with crossed arms, replying, "So has mine, but I don't care!"<sup>5</sup> I encouraged the students to extend their characterizations by experimenting with exaggerated movements and greater vocal variety. My admonitions, "Try it louder; softer! Move closer; faster!" helped the students see options for their performance and forced them to find justification for their ultimate choices.

McGregor has identified other components of the dramatic process, especially those involving the affective domain.<sup>6</sup> Social interaction is an important asset of the experience of participating in a school play. Working cooperatively with others, both on stage and off, requires that the students rely on each others' gifts. The director who spends time rehearsing each role, insisting that even the smallest of parts be performed to the best of the student's ability, conveys this attitude of respect to



the whole cast. The group becomes aware of the need for a team effort and the vital contribution of each individual. A sense of responsibility is promoted as the director demands regular, prompt attendance and consistent effort. My specific attendance policy is described in Chapter VIII, Rehearsal. Because there are so many tasks to accomplish before the premiere, responsibility must be delegated. Leadership and an appreciation of the importance of each task are developed as the director appoints students to manage cast or crew. These interactive skills have application far beyond the production dates of a particular show. The understanding of group effort and the rising self-esteem that accompany successful results will transfer to the student's life experience.

Motor skills, which are the media of acting, are of no less importance than the social skills.<sup>7</sup> The teacher must cultivate the student's understanding of the use of space and physical objects. This learning process may be a long one because of the awkwardness and self-consciousness felt by the inexperienced actor. Viola Spolin has identified several specific problems for the novice performer: moving aimlessly right and left on stage, not knowing what to do with the hands, clinging to furniture or properties, insistence on sitting while on stage, and fear of touching others.<sup>8</sup> She suggests the director use "side

coaching" in order to help the actors, "reach beyond their  
 noses."<sup>9</sup> Side coaching returns the student to concentration  
 on the acting problem whenever distraction occurs. Directions  
 such as, "Share the stage picture," convey a clearer image to  
 the mind of the student than the more theatrical, "Don't upstage  
 your partner!"<sup>10</sup> An example of this type of coaching was used  
 in rehearsal for One Sunday Afternoon:<sup>11</sup> "See Biff coming!  
 He's half way up this street. See him with your toes!" Direc-  
 tions of this type helped the students depict their characters'  
 emotions. Improvisations and theatre games, such as those  
 suggested by Spolin which emphasize physical contact are also<sup>12</sup>  
 useful in overcoming these common failings of amateur actors.  
 Limited rehearsal time prevented me from spending much time on  
 these exercises, which are part of the curricular drama program.

Concern over the basics of education has prompted some to  
 question the inclusion of theatre in an already crowded curric-  
 ulum. But an understanding of the steps involved demonstrates  
 that these essentials--language arts, motor skills, and social  
 responsibility--are the heart of play production at the secondary  
 level. Participation in a theatre program has value for every  
 student involved: leading player and spear-carrier; usher and  
 audience.



Bruner has pointed out the need for strategies that teach students to learn.<sup>13</sup> The drama teacher, by allowing the students to participate in directing the play, provides an important opportunity for them to master the problem-solving behavior he describes. The three steps in this mode of learning-- recognition of the problem and avoidance of frustration, the resolution to work to solve the problem, and the drive to continue till it is solved<sup>14</sup>--become an integral part of play production in educational theatre.

No where was this problem-solving behavior more necessary than in the choreography. My background in dance is weak, and the dancers had only basic knowledge of modern dance. Together we resolved to work out an expressive dance and brainstormed about movements. In planning "The Cell Block Tango,"<sup>15</sup> the students each suggested a posture she felt conveyed the proper mood. These we combined for a tableau during one of the solo verses. At other points in the dance, we began with a basic movement, such as a walk, and interpolated from this to a variety of movements on different levels. I suggested to the group, "Let's have one person take this line of the verse standing up, another take the next line from a middle position, a third complement that position with the next line, and the final line will be delivered from the floor." The students set to work to create the needed positions, and then created the steps needed to bring them to these spots. The whole cast was fond of this number and offered suggestions and encouragement.

It is important that the teacher avoid dictating answers to the students. During the performance, the students will not have the director to aid them, and must serve as their own creators and critics. The tutor must foster within the students an understanding of the corrective process so that it can be assumed independently.<sup>16</sup> Involvement in this discovery process is the key to learning problem solving. Including the student in the judging, planning, encouraging, and criticizing encourages an attitude among the cast that says, "This is our play." This attitude carried into all phases of our production, even to the cast voting on the type of refreshments that were offered at the reception. Each student, with guidance from the teacher, and mutual respect from the other performers, persists until the portrayal is ready for presentation. The response of the audience demonstrates that teamwork and perseverance are worthwhile. And as the curtain rises, more than the parents in the audience, or the director hiding in the back of the house, it is the students who want to be proud.

My Sisters and Me, a one-act play which I compiled and directed as the culminating project of my graduate study in theatre and education at the Lindenwood Colleges, provided a chance for twenty-three cast members and one playwright-director to learn about ourselves. The hours of preparation and rehearsal brought rewards that went beyond the applause.



## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Richard Boleslavsky, Acting: The First Six Lessons (New York: Theatre Arts, 1934), p. 16.
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- <sup>5</sup> James Hagan, One Sunday Afternoon, quoted in McCormack, p. 73.
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- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 28.
- <sup>11</sup> Hagan, One Sunday Afternoon, quoted in McCormack, p. 73.
- <sup>12</sup> Spolin, Improvisation for the Theater, p. 184 and 230.
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- <sup>14</sup> Bruner, et al., "Learning about Learning: A Conference Report," quoted in John O'Toole, Theatre in Education: New Objectives for Theatre, New Techniques in Education (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> Fred Ebb and John Kander, "The Cell Block Tango," quoted in McCormack, p. 81-83.

<sup>16</sup> Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 53.

#### REFERENCES TO THE PLAY

The world of the play is the theater's response to the world of the audience. It is a world that exists in the mind of the audience, and it is a world that is created by the playwright. The playwright is the one who creates the world of the play, and it is his job to make that world as real as possible for the audience. In this sense, the playwright is the one who is responsible for the success or failure of the play. The playwright must create a world that is both believable and interesting, and he must do so in a way that is accessible to the audience. This is a difficult task, and it is one that requires a great deal of skill and imagination. The playwright must also be able to communicate his vision to the audience, and he must do so in a way that is clear and compelling. This is a challenge that few playwrights are able to meet, and it is one that makes the job of the playwright so difficult. The playwright must be able to create a world that is both believable and interesting, and he must do so in a way that is accessible to the audience. This is a difficult task, and it is one that requires a great deal of skill and imagination. The playwright must also be able to communicate his vision to the audience, and he must do so in a way that is clear and compelling. This is a challenge that few playwrights are able to meet, and it is one that makes the job of the playwright so difficult.

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## CHAPTER II

### SELECTION OF THE PLAY

The creation of a successful theatrical experience begins with the selection of a play that will thrive in the environment given the director. As the drama teacher at Saint Joseph's Academy, I had many factors to consider in the selection process. The chosen play must contribute to the educational aims of the school. It must offer roles that could be effectively portrayed by our students. An additional factor to be considered was the limited budget. After reviewing these conditions, My Sisters and Me, a one-act which resulted from my independent study of playwriting at the Lindenwood Colleges, was chosen for the second semester production of 1981.

Since Saint Joseph's is an all girls' academy, any play chosen had to feature women. This can be a difficult prospect since the bulk of dramatic literature features males with a few females in supporting roles. In the past, open auditions have not been successful in bringing male performers into the school. Our choice has been limited to children's theatre and those plays with male roles that could be believably played by females. To meet the need of our theatre department, I drew on strong female characters from a wide range of prose and dramatic literature.



This assemblage builds a statement about feminine existence. In this way, My Sisters and Me turned our liability into an asset.

The educational philosophy of our school stresses Christian values, an appreciation of the uniqueness of each person, and an awareness of the world community.<sup>1</sup> As I compiled the playscript, I tried to implement these goals by maintaining an appropriate ethical perspective. The play was not intended as a parade of stereotypes, but as a sampling of individual female characters and their views of life. An awareness of the diversity of women's roles in society was represented as the play united characters such as Sojourner Turth, a former slave,<sup>2</sup> and Jane Austen's aristocratic Miss Bates.<sup>3</sup> By presenting a panorama of women as they view their own existence, I hope to prompt the student audience to think more deeply about issues relevant to their experience. Our subject was topical, but not so controversial as to lose support among faculty and students. At the same time, My Sisters and Me aspired to provide enough entertainment to keep the attention of a relatively unsophisticated audience.

My Sisters and Me was also a financially feasible project. The collection of dissimilar roles necessitated a simple, abstract design on a small stage. Without the requirement for elaborate sets, draperies, and costumes, expenditures were minimal. The talent was available in the student body and faculty for accompaniment

for the musical numbers, sparing us the expense of hiring musicians. With the help of a portable lighting board donated by Mega Products, Incorporated, and instruments owned by the school, we were able to adequately light the show at low cost. The most significant saving was that a fee to a publisher--which normally exhausts half our budget--was unnecessary.

A factor in play selection at least as important as the rest is the director's preference. Only a project for which the director has enthusiasm will achieve success. I was eager to accept the challenge of writing and then directing my own work. My Sisters and Me was an unequalled opportunity to express myself as I gathered and adapted material from fascinating sources. The response of the audience was very moving knowing that I had supervised the production in every phase.

## FOOTNOTES

1

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2

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### CHAPTER III

#### SOURCES

In 1975, I had the privilege of seeing Viveca Lindfors perform her work, I Am a Woman.<sup>1</sup> This performance was inspiring to me, not only because it was an exciting theatrical experience, but because of its message. I Am a Woman expressed love, bitterness, tenderness, cynicism, sorrow, and the dignity of womankind. This experience was the beginning of the project that in 1981 became My Sisters and Me. Like Lindfors, I chose pieces from various types of literature that expressed differing views of femininity. Four selections in my play came to me through this work: "I Want a Wife," by Judy Syfers,<sup>2</sup> "Cutting Loose," by Sally Kempton,<sup>3</sup> transitional material by Sigmund Freud,<sup>4</sup> and an entry from Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl.<sup>5</sup>

A play by Ntozake Shange, which she describes as a "choreopoem," was another fountainhead of inspiration. Unlike the compiled script of I Am a Woman, For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuf,<sup>6</sup> is Shange's own poetry, focusing on the experience of black women. The simplicity of design in her work was a model for my own. A cutting from For Colored Girls was used as part of the closing of My Sisters and Me. Megan Terry's Calm Down Mother<sup>7</sup> also served as an example, suggesting techniques for smooth transitions. Two selections from this play were included.

Anthologies provided a wealth of characters from which to choose. Scenebook for Student Actors,<sup>8</sup> introduced me to James Hagan's One Sunday Afternoon,<sup>9</sup> included in the first section of My Sisters and Me. Another collection for acting students, Monologues for Women,<sup>10</sup> gave me Jay Broad's The Killdeer,<sup>11</sup> and Robert Patrick's Salvation Army.<sup>12</sup> Miriam Schnier's Feminism<sup>13</sup> provided the 1851 speech by Sojourner Truth<sup>14</sup> and the selection from A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf.<sup>15</sup>

The remainder of the cuttings were taken from my own knowledge of literature and from recommendations. I had intended to include some of Jane Austen's work but was unable to find a satisfactory piece from Pride and Prejudice. A co-worker referred me to Emma,<sup>16</sup> from which I obtained Miss Bates' speech. I was familiar with Jean Girardoux's drama, and the leading character of The Madwoman of Chaillot<sup>17</sup> fit well into my theme. From another favorite work, Spoon River Anthology, by Edgar Lee Masters,<sup>18</sup> came the character of Lucinda. John Van Druten's character from I Remember Mama<sup>19</sup> was a positive example of motherhood; a scene between Mama and her daughter was included.

Because of the constraints of time, limited casting, possibilities, and finances, I had to cull only a small portion of the female characters of prose and poetry. Some characters I would have liked to have included were simply too different from the others to allow for acceptable transitions. Among these were



Shaw's Saint Joan,<sup>20</sup> Georgina from Dream Girl,<sup>21</sup> Nora of  
A Doll's House,<sup>22</sup> Blanche from A Streetcar Named Desire,<sup>23</sup>  
 and Martha from Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?<sup>24</sup> Other characters,  
 for example, Ma from The Grapes of Wrath,<sup>25</sup> were rejected because  
 of an untenable casting situation. I chose not to interrupt the  
 upbeat theme with characters that might evoke the audience's pity,  
 such as Mary from Long Day's Journey into Night,<sup>26</sup> and Velma of  
Birdbath.<sup>27</sup> Some, like Cecily and Gwendolyn of The Importance  
of Being Earnest,<sup>28</sup> Cherie from Bus Stop,<sup>29</sup> Jill from Butterflies  
Are Free,<sup>30</sup> and Emily Dickinson in The Belle of Amherst<sup>31</sup> were  
 excluded simply because of the time factor.

My Sisters and Me is organized into four parts, each dealing  
 with an aspect of the theme. The first, entitled "My Girlish Days,"  
 takes place in a city park. It presents characters who have little  
 interest in searching for identity. Included in this section are  
 attempts at courtship as well as the pain of rejection. The next  
 section, "The Blues," deals with the disillusionment which can  
 follow the idealized concept of love presented earlier. The setting  
 is a kitchen, and later, a jail. In "By the Waters," the third  
 part, the search for identity begins. The characters gather to  
 look to the past. "My Self" completes the cycle. In this final  
 segment, the characters, seated in an ice cream parlor, become  
 aware of their own worth and that of others.

Unity was achieved in a variety of ways. Partly to minimize the differences in syntax between the cuttings, I chose for the most part authors of the twentieth century. Each segment was introduced by a stanza of my original poem "My Sisters and Me." A simple costume, uniform for all characters, also contributed to the harmony of the show.

An eclectic group of songs advanced the theme and served as transitional material. Janis Ian's haunting "At Seventeen"<sup>32</sup> closes "My Girlish Days" and sets the tone for "The Blues" which follows. "The Glocoat Blues," by Jimmie Fadden,<sup>33</sup> fit well into that section which features housewives. Fred Ebb's "The Cell Block Tango," from the musical Chicago,<sup>34</sup> closes "The Blues." The traditional hymn, "Babylon,"<sup>35</sup> opens the third segment, set in a meeting house. A recording, "Love Theme," by John Williams,<sup>36</sup> was played behind the poem from Spoon River Anthology, which bridges the third and final sections. A guitar solo of "Both Sides Now"<sup>37</sup> was played under the dance-poem from For Colored Girls. Our finale, with its chorus, "We are family,/ I got all my sisters with me,"<sup>38</sup> inspired the title of the play.



## FOOTNOTES

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## CHAPTER IV

## CONCEPTS

Every director is a communicator, designing visual and auditory signals for a specific audience. Having taught at Saint Joseph's Academy for three and a half years, I knew my audience well. It was comprised mainly of fourteen to eighteen-year-old girls, with reading abilities at or above their grade level. Some are experienced theatre-goers, others have seen only a few examples of amateur theatre. These students tend to come from upper-middle income families with a politically middle-of-the-road or conservative orientation. The remainder of the audience was made up of the faculty at Saint Joseph's and families of the performers. Much of this portion of the audience is well versed in literature, with an appreciation for live drama.

I wanted several concepts to reach the audience. The first was the universality of womankind. A conscious effort was made to compile a heterogeneous group of characters ranging from the saint to sinner, the innocent to the cynical. The picture encompassed adolescents, housewives, murderesses, activists, and poets. Women of different periods of history came together to express themselves. The articulate Virginia Woolf<sup>1</sup> is contrasted

with the vacuous, chattering Miss Bates. Flirtatious  
 Virginia waits for her beau in the park, followed by the frustrated  
 wife and mother, Sparky, telling of one tumultuous day in her  
 life. Tenderness is shown in the character of Mama, as she tells  
 her young daughter about the death of her first child. She is  
 preceded by the devilish and droll manslayers of "The Cell Block  
 Tango."

The search for identity is another aspect of the theme. The possibility of defining one's existence through a relationship with the opposite sex is explored in "My Girlish Days," as the characters experience the first date and the first kiss. The innocent, happy mood is broken as Janis sings of the loneliness an adolescent can feel. Reliance on others to bring fulfillment precipitates the complaints voiced in "The Blues." Righteous anger is the tone of "By the Waters." Here the characters urge us to, "Grab the universe, little daughter." Finally the missing piece, the love of oneself, is found in a selection from For Colored Girls.

The theme of independence pervaded every phase of the play's development. If a particular talent was needed, we found it within our school community or we developed that skill. For example, we needed a drummer for several of the musical numbers. Our search brought us to a ninth-grade student, already cast in the show. She owned a drum, and with guidance from Nancy Hayden, our music teacher, she accompanied the singers.



Interest in the technical side of the theatre has been difficult to develop at Saint Joseph's Academy, partly because many of our students do not feel that manual labor is part of their sphere. They are not convinced that simple carpentry or electrical skills have any relevance to their future needs. To fill this gap in their experience and our needs for the production, I scheduled a work day. Cumbersome lighting instruments and unwieldy scaffolding was pushed, rolled, carried, and dragged by members of the cast from our main stage at the north end of campus to the first floor. The portable light board was cabled together by the students under my supervision. Painting and other handiwork was also done by the cast.

I do not mean to suggest that we spurned help whenever it came from a man. Our maintenance staff was invaluable as they kept the auditorium livable, moved the piano, replaced innumerable fuses, and made extra circuits available. However, I did attempt to show the cast that their province included more than making costumes for the play or baking cupcakes for the reception.

My aim was to leave the audience feeling good about themselves and their femininity. I chose to use the curtain call not only as an opportunity for the audience to show their appreciation to the players, but as a chance to involve them in the spirit of the production. As each actress took her bow with the other performers from her section of the play, the remainder



of the cast sang and swayed to the chorus, "We are family, / I got all my sisters with me!"<sup>10</sup> After taking a final bow together, the cast made their exit through the auditorium, encouraging the audience to sing along.

Throughout the production, I had the firm support of the school administrators. Far from being fearful that we were rehearsing some radical, leftist propaganda, Sister Nancy Folkl, our principal, showed her trust in my judgement and supported my goals. I knew I need not produce a timid or nebulous play because of any uncertainty about its acceptance. As the show went into production, I did not have to fear--as many other high school directors might--that some power would frown on the feminist outlook of My Sisters and Me.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Woolf, A Room of One's Own, quoted in McCormack, My Sisters and Me, Appendix A, p. 84-85.
- 2 Austen, Emma, quoted in McCormack, p. 75-76.
- 3 Hagan, One Sunday Afternoon, quoted in McCormack, p. 69-75.
- 4 Broad, The Killdeer, quoted in McCormack, p. 79-80.
- 5 Van Druten, I Remember Mama, quoted in McCormack, p. 88-90.
- 6 Ebb and Kander, Chicago, quoted in McCormack, p. 81-83.
- 7 Ian, "At Seventeen," quoted in McCormack, p. 76-77
- 8 Terry, Calm Down Mother, quoted in McCormack, p. 87.
- 9 Shange, For Colored Girls, quoted in McCormack, p. 91-92.
- 10 Rodgers and Edwards, "We are Family, quoted in McCormack, p. 92.

## CHAPTER V

### DESIGN

I had concentrated on selecting literature that would communicate my message and had given little thought to the staging of the production until a January conference with Dr. Wesley Van Tassel at the Lindenwood Colleges. He suggested that since the play moves from one character to another, with a corresponding change in motivation and tone, any radical changes in the stage picture would inhibit the logical progression of the theme. To contribute to unity, we adopted a plan that would minimize scene shifts and blackouts. The boundaries of time, finances, and labor resources, as well as the goal of a cohesive production, guided us to a show that emphasized words, movement, and music, rather than spectacle.

Two stages are available at our school. The larger is twenty-nine feet by twenty-two feet, nine inches, with seating for five hundred or more on the gymnasium floor. The so-called Little Theatre, located on the main floor, is twenty-one feet by eleven feet, ten inches, with a raked auditorium providing permanent seating for one hundred eighty persons. Since I wanted to produce a show that would allow the audience an exchange with the performers, the decision to use the smaller stage was an easy one.



The Little Theatre's limitations influenced the design. Only a small backstage area is available, with no backstage access from right stage to left. The electrical capacity was little better than that of an average classroom. No loft area above stage was available for hanging lighting instruments. These disadvantages were outweighed by the fact that the Little Theatre could be used as rehearsal space at all non-school hours.

The schedule for the production was set after a conference with my principal, Sister Nancy Folkl, C.S.J.. We had agreed in September of 1980 that a production would be offered in the spring semester of 1981, tentatively set on February 15. In January, we changed that to February 27 and 28 to allow for the printing of a recently finished script and ample rehearsal time. Performances were planned during the school day on Friday, the twenty-seventh. The play would run for only fifty minutes (or two class modules) in order that students could attend during their English classes. At the Saturday evening performance, we hoped to draw the families of the performers. Our schedule later had to be changed to Sunday afternoon when we realized that the evening show would conflict with one of the most important basketball games of our team's schedule. A copy of the tentative rehearsal schedule was given to Sister Nancy so that she could inform the maintenance staff to open the building on weekends.

Because we would eliminate scenery, more importance was attached to properties and costumes. "My Girlish Days" is set in a park, suggested by placing a park bench at up center stage. A casual seating arrangement for the characters also helped set the scene. An effect we were unable to afford was a display of colorful helium balloons for this setting. Had these been available, each performer would have held one, with an additional group tied to the bench. Balloons could also have been distributed to the audience in the finale and decorated the reception following the Sunday matinee.

The setting in the second section, "The Blues," was suggested by the properties carried by the five performers. A mop, dish and dishrag, a feather duster, an iron, and a small skillet helped the audience imagine a home filled with chores. The song which ends this section calls for a jail. Without a loft, we were unable to fly any bars on stage for this number. After discussing this problem with my brother, who had seen a professional production of Chicago,<sup>1</sup> I decided to design the jail bars as property pieces. Working drawings of these are included in Appendix C. Since I wanted the dancers to have the freedom to lean on the bars or move independently of them, hooks were added in the ceiling of the stage to receive the top piece. The performers could then carry them on stage, mount them on the hooks, and disassemble them with ease.



A few wooden chairs were used to suggest a meeting hall in "By the Waters." To increase this illusion, the characters were directed to speak and act as if the convention hall included the auditorium as well as the stage.

This section closes with Lucinda's epitaph from Spoon River Anthology.<sup>2</sup> Since I knew it would be difficult for the audience to accept a seventeen-year-old actress as a ninety-six-year-old speaking from beyond the grave, I planned to project slides of elderly women on the darkened stage as a voice read the poem over a microphone backstage. Unfortunately we were unable to obtain the needed slides. Limited backstage area prevented us from placing a microphone outside the sightlines. Yet Lucinda's speech, besides being an inspiring statement about life, was needed to cover the change of scene required for "My Self" which followed. We resolved this by providing a step unit at the stage left edge of the apron. Laura Henry, who played Lucinda, left the stage in a blackout to come to the microphone on the auditorium floor while the stage was prepared. I was never satisfied with the effect. Had we obtained the needed time and resources, I would have used the original plan.

For "My Self", two metal ice cream parlor chairs and a short, glass-topped table were placed at stage right, a wooden table at upstage center represented the counter, and a stool and small table were set on the left. A real float and sundae eaten by the

characters also suggested the ice cream shop. A legend, reading "One Thousand Varieties" on the cyclorama's center would have added to the atmosphere, but we were unable to design and execute this idea in time.

The stage was cleared in a blackout which followed Reba's reminiscence on her childhood,<sup>3</sup> since the selection from For Colored Girls<sup>4</sup> has no specific location. No further changes were necessary for the finale.

I was influenced in the costume design by Shange's work.<sup>5</sup> I discussed the concept of an abstract, simple costume with Rose McBryan, our chemistry teacher and costume designer for the last four theatre productions at Saint Joseph's. We decided that black tights, leotards, and dance slippers for all characters would contribute to the unity of the play. Miss McBryan suggested skirts over the leotards, and we chose to use one color of fabric for each of the parts. An element in the design was the maize-colored cyclorama in the Little Theatre. Had the drapery been black velour as it is on our main stage, we would probably have opted for colored dance outfits. For more detail about these designs, see Appendix D.

The fabric for the skirts was inexpensive shirting material, with a matching ribbon waistband. For "My Girlish Days" we chose a light yellow, "The Blues" used a medium blue. Special tunics, striped black and white, were chosen for "The Cell Block Tango."



The third section, "By the Waters," used a magenta skirt, longer than those used in other parts of the play; rose-colored fabric was chosen for "My Self." The final dance-poetry sequence costume symbolized a synthesis of all the previous roles. Miss McBryan constructed these in a rainbow of fabric from the four main colors, with rose waistbands. The performers in this closing piece wore pink ballet slippers, but the black leotard and tights remained.

Costume changes were simple since the basic outfit did not change. Two girls who performed in "The Blues" were able to don the loose-fitting tunic offstage in moments to perform "The Cell Block Tango." Only one change required background music to cover. Karen Bergmann, who played Reba in "My Self," required about ninety seconds to switch skirts and slippers for For Colored Girls.

A modification of costume was made for the four dancers in the finale. Glossy black pants were worn over the tights and a white blouse was tied halter-style over the leotard.

Hair style was one method of setting certain characters apart from the others in her section and adding to her characterization. All the performers in "My Girlish Days" wore their hair tied back in ribbons matching their skirts. Debbie Miller, who sang "At Seventeen"<sup>6</sup> at the close of this segment, wore multicolored ribbons in her pigtails. Characters of "The Blues" wore their hair free and frizzy. Amy Fister, who played that most frustrated



of housewives, Sparky, rolled her hair loosely on brush curlers.<sup>7</sup>  
In "By the Waters," Laura Westhoff wore a purple and black lace  
open-crown hat, as well as a white feather boa to give the  
proper tone to Aurelia, from The Madwoman of Chaillot.<sup>8</sup>

Lighting is an important element of any dramatic design. Adequate lighting enables the audience to see the performers. Superior lighting gives brilliance to the stage and performers, shapes the movements of dancers, and lends emotional tone to the scene. With the equipment available to us, we were able to adequately light the whole show, and achieved excellent visual effects in a few parts.

Five instruments and a spotlight controlled from the rear of the house were placed in the auditorium and focused on stage. Four anteproscaenium lamps were also used, though because of circuitry problems, these were controlled by a supplemental light board back stage. Poorly lit areas still remained, so four fresnel instruments were mounted in the wings. Without a loft, these had to be focused at an awkward angle, but the sidelighting proved helpful in the dance numbers. The color media for our instruments, ordered from TRS, Inc. of Minneapolis, were bright rose, light amber, and special lavender.

While the instrument and control boards were sufficient, the electric circuits in the Little Theatre were not. We proceeded clumsily, testing the load limit of each circuit until we blew the fuse. Finally, Mr. Pat Patton, of our

maintenance staff, was able to make an additional circuit available through the heating system. This extra power made it possible for us to use all our equipment, but the problem was never completely controlled.

Some special decorations were used in the lobby and auditorium. Photographs clipped from the collection The Family of Woman<sup>9</sup> decorated a bulletin board in the lobby. A display of drawings of women, done by the freshmen Fine Arts class, was mounted in the auditorium. Following the Sunday performance, a reception was held in our student lounge, where photos, programs and posters of past productions were displayed.

Our poster and program were designed and drawn by a senior art student, Martha Brooking. The design for the poster was inspired by a photograph from The Family of Woman.<sup>10</sup> After I discussed some of the concepts in the play with her, Martha designed the mirrored faces that became our program. Calligraphy student Peggy Stohr did the written material inside. These are included in Appendix G.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1  
Ebb and Fosee, Chicago.
- 2  
Masters, Spoon River Anthology, quoted in McCormack, p. 87.
- 3  
Patrick, "Salvation Army," quoted in McCormack, p. 90-91.
- 4  
Shange, For Colored Girls, quoted in McCormack, p. 91-92.
- 5  
Ibid.
- 6  
Ian, "At Seventeen," quoted in McCormack, p. 76-77.
- 7  
Broad, The Killdeer, quoted in McCormack, p. 79-80.
- 8  
Giraudoux, The Madwoman of Chaillot, quoted in McCormack,  
p. 85-86.
- 9  
Jerry Mason, ed., The Family of Woman (New York: Grosset &  
Dunlap, 1979).
- 10  
Ibid., p. 154.



## CHAPTER VI

### MUSIC

Five songs and background music, both prerecorded and live, helped maintain interest in My Sisters and Me. Nancy Hayden, music teacher at Saint Joseph's Academy, directed the musical portions of the show. Heidi Cerneka, a sophomore, was our accompanist. Scores and chords are included in Appendix D.

A major problem in producing the music for this show was obtaining a published score. Of the five, only Ian's "At Seventeen" was published and available to us.<sup>1</sup> The other songs had to be transcribed from recordings. "The Glocoat Blues" has never been published as sheet music.<sup>2</sup> Although a number of vocal selections from Chicago have been collected and published, "The Cell Block Tango" is not among them.<sup>3</sup> Samuel French publishing company hold the rights to this play. A phone call to New York not only revealed that "Cell Block" is unpublished, but that Chicago is restricted in the Saint Louis area at this

time and not even a perusal copy could be obtained. "Babylon" is a simple, traditional hymn and written music was unnecessary.<sup>4</sup> "We Are Family" has been published as sheet music, but it is now out of print.<sup>5</sup> Nancy experimented with chords for these songs while I played the role of the critical listener. Heidi then learned the chords for piano accompaniment. This process was not complete till the fourth week of rehearsals.

At Dr. Van Tassel's suggestion, an overture was added to the play. This Nancy composed of themes from the five songs. The overture begins with a portion of "We Are Family," carrying the bass from this tune into "The Glocoat Blues." "Glocoat" ends with an anticipatory chord, followed by a glissando into "The Cell Block Tango." The tango moves from G minor to G seventh chords, leading to C major. This is the key for "At Seventeen," which is used throughout the first portion of the play as a transitional theme. When "My Girlish Days" closes with "At Seventeen," Heidi accompanied Debbie Miller, the vocalist, on the guitar.

During "The Blues," music was especially important. As Laura Hoemeke presented "I Want a Wife,"<sup>6</sup> Nancy joined her with a blues improvisation on guitar. This led into "Glocoat" as a bass line played by Heidi on piano joined the guitar, followed by brushing on the snare drum by Laura Westhoff. At this point,

Tammy Bopp began the song and I added my harmonica to the ensemble.

"Cell Block" closes this section of the play. A drum introduction, tom-tom style, without snare, was added to the arrangement of the recording. The song features irregular changes of tonality centering around G minor. The construction of the chord progression is such that the climactic point comes at the center of the piece rather than near the end. The audience's attention was focused on the spoken verses and the dance until a drum roll, adding snares, was used at the high point with a rim shot for emphasis. The song then modulates a half step upward and continues its pattern.

"Cell Block" is followed by a blackout and the hymn, "Babylon." This was planned to be a round, modeled after the arrangement used by Don McClean.<sup>7</sup> Nancy accompanied the song with a banjo, using a drone string. However, we did not have singers strong enough to carry their parts in the round, and after much rehearsing, finally had to settle for a single part with extra singers supporting offstage.

Background music for Lucinda's monologue<sup>8</sup> was the original sound track from the film, The Missouri Breaks.<sup>9</sup> This music also played behind the poetry that opens "My Self."



The dance and poetry from For Colored Girls<sup>10</sup> was designed to be accompanied by a guitar solo of "Both Sides Now," recorded by Randy Scruggs.<sup>11</sup> However, during the second performance of the play, the electrical system failed and Nancy improvised on the piano a melody in a minor key with a slow tempo. Some major and minor seventh chords were used, modulating at dramatic points. (See Chapter IX, "Performances.")

Our finale, "We Are Family," used a standard disco chord progression. Octave skips in the bass were used to recreate the electric guitar bass in the popular recording. The piano played one chorus as three dancers entered through the auditorium. The curtain call then began as each group entered and took their bows, after which singing was added. Following a final bow, the cast exited through the house, encouraging the audience to join the song. At the rear of the house, the cast paused for one last chorus, a cappella, then disappeared.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Janis Ian, "At Seventeen" (New York: Mine Music, 1974).
- <sup>2</sup>Fadden, "The Glocoat Blues," in the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Stars and Stripes Forever.
- <sup>3</sup>Ebb and Kander, "The Cell Block Tango," in Ebb and Fosse, Chicago.
- <sup>4</sup>McLean and Hays, arrangers, "Babylon," in Don McLean, American Pie (Los Angeles: United Artists Records, 1971).
- <sup>5</sup>Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards, "We Are Family," in Sister Sledge, We Are Family (New York: Cotillion Records, 1979).
- <sup>6</sup>Syfers, "I Want a Wife," quoted in McCormack, p. 78.
- <sup>7</sup>McLean and Hays, "Babylon," in McLean, American Pie.
- <sup>8</sup>Masters, Spoon River Anthology, quoted in McCormack, p. 87.
- <sup>9</sup>Williams, Missouri Breaks Original Sound Track.
- <sup>10</sup>Shange, For Colored Girls, quoted in McCormack, p. 91-92.
- <sup>11</sup>Mitchell, "Both Sides Now," in Scruggs, et al., Will the Circle Be Unbroken.

## CHAPTER VII

### CASTING

There is no more severe test of the director's priorities than in casting the show. This is the crucible of educational theatre. If the director chooses performers solely on the basis of ability, a star system may develop. The philosophy, "No one learns from bad theatre," may exclude from the plays those novices who can, with experience and training, produce very good theatre in later productions. To err in the opposite direction, by casting every interested student, is to ignore the director's responsibility to the audience. The director of educational theatre must keep to the golden mean, casting students who will benefit from the instructional and social rewards as they create a theatrical success.

The number of students for the cast of My Sisters and Me is flexible. Five performers with singing, dancing, and acting ability could fulfill all the roles. Simple costume changes would permit such a cast to create a very tight, absorbing show. Since I did not have five such versatile players, this option was not open to me.

Even if this would have been possible, broader support was needed for the play. I wanted the cast to be representative of



the school. Ninth graders build the theatre department's future, seniors bring leadership and greater amount of training to a production. I also knew that too large a cast would drain my energy, as well as waste the student's time in rehearsal. Each student must feel that the given role is important, or disruptive behavior and poor attendance will result. Although I could have used as many as thirty students, I decided to limit that number by asking some students to play two or more roles. Working inside these parameters were the specific abilities each role required.

The campaign to draw support for the play began at the December 11 meeting of our Drama Club. Posters and public address announcements were made in the first week of January. Audition material was duplicated and sorted into large envelopes, one for each speaking part. These nineteen envelopes appeared on a table in the main hallway on the day classes resumed after the Christmas break, January 5.

On January 13, try-outs for the speaking parts were held. Of the thirty students attending, it seemed that no one wanted to go first, and all had to leave early. I decided to proceed alphabetically, hearing each read for no more than three roles. Those interested in additional parts read for them after we had completed the alphabet once. I explained the play briefly and

the procedure we would use in the audition, emphasizing that courtesy and quiet would be required of those waiting. I also warned them that I normally do not listen to a full page of audition material and would interrupt most of the candidates. As the auditions began, I jotted comments on the reverse side of each student's audition form (see Appendix E) and afterward placed it in one of three categories: the "yes," "maybe," and "no" stacks. After almost two hours of auditions, only a few sheets fell into the "yes" and "no" piles; the "maybe" group seemed huge.

On Wednesday, January 14, musical try-outs were held. Many of the same students returned. Nancy Hayden and I kept notes separately. We began with the singers, each performing a verse of a song a capella. Two students auditioned for accompanist. The bulk of the group wanted a dancing role. For them, I played portions of recordings of "Both Sides Now"<sup>1</sup> and "We Are Family."<sup>2</sup> The dancers took the stage in groups of four and improvised. Later I asked several to return to improvise to "The Cell Block Tango."<sup>3</sup> A few students had prepared dances and brought their own recordings. Auditioning in a group helped the students feel more secure and offered me the opportunity to see and compare their talent.

After the audition, Nancy and I consulted on the singers and dancers. We found that our "yes" and "no" categories were very similar. In deciding which of the "maybe's" to choose, we considered enthusiasm, talent, experience, availability for rehearsal (according to the audition form), and physical characteristics. Using similar criteria for the speaking parts, a group of twenty-three was chosen, including ten actresses, nine singer-dancers, five dancers, one vocal soloist, and one pianist.

Notes of thanks were sent to the twenty-five students who were rejected. These notes, delivered during the homeroom period the following day, have helped us build a positive attitude toward the sometimes frightening audition experience. A public address announcement notified the school that the cast list had been posted on the fine arts bulletin board. We were ready for the first rehearsal.



## FOOTNOTES

1 Mitchell, in Scruggs, et al., Will the Circle Be Unbroken.

2 Rodgers and Edwards, in Sister Sledge, We Are Family.

3 Ebb and Kander, "Cell Block Tango," in Ebb and Fosse, Chicago.

The amount of time spent in giving a performance of any play cannot compare with the time spent in its rehearsal. Rehearsal is the instructional period, the time for achieving those social and educational goals of the high school play. While the director should relay to the student the attitude that rehearsal is serious business, it should be as enjoyable as possible for all concerned.<sup>1</sup>

A director with outstanding acting talent could attempt to demonstrate the method each student could use to communicate the proper message to the audience. Yet if a director were able to play every role perfectly and the students were able to mimic these actions with equal perfection, the result would never be as rich as a production that sees in action the creative imaginations of all the members of the cast and crew. The focus should be on the student, not the teacher. The problem of how to portray a character belongs to the performer; the director guides this process. The educator helps the student

## CHAPTER VIII

### REHEARSAL

The amount of time spent in giving a performance of any play cannot compare with the time spent on its rehearsal. Rehearsal is the instructional period, the time for achieving those social and educational goals of the high school play. While the director should relay to the student the attitude that rehearsal is serious business, it should be as enjoyable as possible for all concerned.<sup>1</sup>

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learn problem-solving behavior and with the help of other members of the cast, the performer can work out the details of each characterization.<sup>2</sup>

From the dramatic viewpoint, the aim of the director is to develop the student's abilities with an eye to producing a result that will hold an audience's attention.<sup>3</sup> This means as much rehearsal time as is available should be spent on encouraging the growth of acting skills: the ability of the performer to use speech, movement, and the manipulation of objects in a manner that is meaningful to others.<sup>4</sup>

Finding a method of communicating believable emotion begins with a supposition, which Stanislavski calls, "the magic if."<sup>5</sup> When the student imagines, "What would happen if I were in the situation of my character?" external actions follow logically.<sup>6</sup>

During rehearsal, I asked the students to search their memories for an emotion comparable to the one the character experienced.<sup>7</sup> Sojourner Truth tells the audience how her children were taken from her and sold into slavery.<sup>8</sup> Claudia Charles, who portrayed Sojourner, found an emotion in her experience that she felt was analogous; she felt hurt and angry when her purse was stolen. The Merry Murderesses each remembered a time when they had killed an obnoxious insect. Patti Sullivan,



as Mama discussing the death of her first child,<sup>10</sup> thought of the loss of a family pet. Using these memories, the students were aided in developing physical actions which transmitted their experience to the audience.<sup>11</sup>

The problem-solving approach to our choreography has already been mentioned. The formation of these dances was a creative, cooperative effort of cast and director. "The Glocoat Blues"<sup>12</sup> was the least difficult to execute. The featured singer needed only a few rhythmic movements to maintain interest throughout the song. The others on stage for this segment of the play planned simple, contemporary steps which they performed in unison. Both lead singer and chorus used properties as part of their dance.

"We Are Family's"<sup>13</sup> choreography was simplified by the fact that two of the dancers, Maria Ojascastro and Carroll Cabrera, could use a disco routine they had already learned. This was adapted and taught to the others in the number.

A modern dance style was chosen for the dance-poem from For Colored Girls.<sup>14</sup> Katryna Beckman, dancer and stage manager, took the recording of "Both Sides Now"<sup>15</sup> home and created a basic series of movements which we used in the first part of the dance. Here only one of the four dancers

performed at a given moment; the others shared the lines of poetry. In the second half, we formed two duets. The dance ended with the performers returning to their original positions in unison. The dance progressed slowly as we experimented with interpretations of the music. When it was complete, Katryna asked one of our physical education teachers who has an extensive dance background, Robin Murphy, to view our choreography and offer her criticism. She was able to make suggestions about details as well as give encouragement.

"The Cell Block Tango"<sup>16</sup> was the most difficult number, consuming as much rehearsal time as the other dances combined. Because we were not able to obtain the score, we began rehearsals using the recording of the original Broadway production. This differed from our adaptation of the song, causing us to rework many details when we were able to add live music. We used the method of experimentation and criticism described above. The singer-dancers in this number showed no lack of energy, but were frequently at a loss as to how to create the threatening characters of the Merry Murderesses while sustaining a comic atmosphere. At each session we were able to add new parts to the dance, however, and with the help of notes taken at each rehearsal by stage manager Katryna, we gradually built an ef-

fective and varied dance.

Our rehearsal period covered six weeks, including twenty-three sessions, totaling forty-eight hours. Wednesdays were reserved for musical rehearsal. During the early sessions, I rehearsed with one group, and Nancy Hayden, our music teacher, rehearsed with another, as a third group practiced on their own. As musicians, dancers, and singers became more proficient, we set separate times for each group's rehearsal so that Nancy and I could offer criticism.

Early acting rehearsals concentrated on collating the script, understanding the main thrust of the play, blocking each of the four segments, and organizing transitions. In the third week, sessions grew longer. We concentrated on learning cues, and began work on timing and characterization. As we began the last week of rehearsal, the performers polished characterizations, and lighting, sound effects, property changes, and musical transitions were coordinated.

Lack of punctuality and attendance plagued us during the rehearsal period. Any student who could not attend a complete session was required to present a note to the stage manager, Katryna. It seemed that no matter how I demonstrated the im-



portance of perfect attendance, only the excuses improved. Katryna's records show thirty-four absences in a cast of twenty-one. Each time a student was missing, it was impossible to completely rehearse a scene. Throughout the production, Katryna served admirably as secretary, understudy, prompter, and intermediary between tardy students and a frustrated director.

Some of this absence was unavoidable. The advanced chorus needed after-school time each Monday for practice since they were entered in a music festival during the same week as the show. This included four members of the cast. A religious retreat, scheduled the previous fall, caused five cast members to miss a run-through. One student missed two rehearsals in the final week in order to travel to a college audition. These reasons, combined with illness, accounted for more than half of the absence. As for the rest, I often felt like the pastor who preached against the sin of avoiding church services-- those who needed to hear my words of wisdom were not to be found. Weather compounded the problem. Three sessions, totaling seven and a half hours, had to be rescheduled because of snow.

Six students were dropped from the original cast of twenty-five. One dancer, cast in "Cell Block" and For Colored Girls, could not meet the schedule because of commitments at her

school of dance. Three seniors, members of the editing staff of the school's literary magazine, were unable to attend any Wednesday rehearsal. Since they could not meet their responsibilities to both groups, they chose to remain with the literary magazine. One student withdrew from the school in the second week of rehearsal. Due to illness, confusion about the schedule, and other commitments, one student, in both "Cell Block" and For Colored Girls, missed four of our last seven rehearsals. I decided to remove her from the cast since I knew the quality of her work would not match that of the others. Having stressed attendance for five and a half weeks, a demonstration was needed that rehearsal was indeed essential for performance. After explaining my course of action to her, one of the other singer-dancers in "Cell Block" was assigned her verse. For Colored Girls was modified for three dancers instead of four.

As we began the last week of rehearsal, I saw for the first time some of the students showing signs of boredom. Many of them felt that after having learned lines, cues, blocking, and dance movements, there was nothing to do but mark time until the performance.

I used several methods to counteract this attitude. We discussed the process of characterization, added costumes and

properties to rehearsals. A videotaped session would have renewed enthusiasm and would have given the students a better sense of the visual impact of the show and the need for honest emotion in each character. Mechanical failure cancelled this rehearsal.

The real cure for this lack of concern occurred by accident. During this sixth week, several spectators appeared in the auditorium. I was so busy taking notes on the run-through that I was unaware of their presence until one performer complained that the small audience made her nervous. Normally I do not allow anyone to view the show until the preview, or final dress rehearsal, but because of these spectators, the rehearsal seemed to have more energy. Thereafter, I encouraged guests to attend. We were ready for the final element, the audience.



## FOOTNOTES

- 1  
Helen Louise Miller, Pointers on Producing the School Play (Boston: Plays, 1960), p. 8.
- 2  
Bruner, quoted in O'Toole, Theatre in Education, p. 56.
- 3  
Hersee, quoted in Dodd and Hickson, Drama and Theatre in Education, p. 75.
- 4  
McGregor, Tate and Robinson, Learning Through Drama, p. 26.
- 5  
Konstantin S. Stanislavski, quoted in Sonia Moor, The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor, new rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 27.
- 6  
Ibid.
- 7  
Ibid., p. 50.
- 8  
Truth, "Ain't I a Woman," quoted in McCormack, p. 83-84.
- 9  
Ebb and Kander, "Cell Block Tango," quoted in McCormack, p.81-83.
- 10  
Van Druten, I Remember Mama, quoted in McCormack, p. 88-90.
- 11  
Moore, The Stanislavski System, p. 52.
- 12  
Fadden, "Glocoat Blues," quoted in McCormack, p. 78-79.
- 13  
Rodgers and Edwards, "We Are Family," quoted in McCormack, p. 92.
- 14  
Shange, For Colored Girls, quoted in McCormack, p. 91-92.
- 15  
Mitchell, "Both Sides Now" in Scruggs et al., Will the Circle Be Unbroken.
- 16  
Ebb and Kander, "Cell Block Tango," quoted in McCormack, p. 81-83.

## CHAPTER IX

### PERFORMANCES

Four performances of My Sisters and Me were given on Friday, February twenty-seventh for the student body at Saint Joseph's, and one performance was open to the public on Sunday Afternoon, March first. Admission was free to all shows.

My Sisters and Me was designed to run for fifty minutes, short enough to be seen by a class that met for two modules. The English classes were formally invited the previous week to attend one of the four shows Friday. The ninth-grade Fine Arts classes were also invited to the first show, for a total of approximately four-hundred-ninety students. Teachers who accepted the invitation were given a list of the sources of the selections included, and were asked to prepare their students for a one act on the theme of women.

The lack of admission fee spared the teachers the difficulty of collecting money from their classes and circumvented any possible copyright problems. A donation jar was by the main door of the Little Theatre in hopes that the students would help defray the costs the Drama Club had incurred. (see Appendix F).

Before the first performance, the cast held a brief meeting on stage. I reminded the students of the need for quiet backstage, suggested a relaxation exercise to aid them in dealing with anxiety, and emphasized that the show was now in their control. Everyone exchanged words of encouragement, and a present was given to the stage manager. I was not surprised to find that attendance at this meeting was not perfect. A few of the cast had arrived late and were still applying makeup and donning costumes.

The first performance had the largest audience, about one-hundred-fifty. It took some minutes to arrange seating for all. As the overture began in the black out, an uninvited class arrived, filling the back row which we had reserved for the dancers in the finale. The commotion ended soon after the curtain opened. The performance went smoothly, but the acting was self-conscious, and many of the performers seemed hurried. Because of the delay in seating the audience, the play was five minutes overtime. Several of the faculty and a number of students left before the final sequence because the third module, or class period, had started. Most of the audience remained, realizing that their next class would be postponed.

A traffic problem was brewing in the hall as the finale began. The next group of classes arrived to see the show, one-hundred-ten in all, and were trying to enter the Little Theatre. With



several faculty members, I directed the group to move away from the doors and allow those inside to leave.

As the first audience left, talking excitedly, the next group entered. Again, it took longer than expected to settle the students, but since there was an hour time lapse in the production schedule, no traffic problem followed this performance. To prevent the distraction of people leaving, I assured the students that they would be admitted to their next class even if they were a few minutes late.

The timing of this performance improved and the performers energies were more controlled. However, before the third section of the play began, a circuit failed and the sound effects and half of the lighting disappeared. The maintenance staff was unavailable and the fuse could not be replaced. With the help of Sister Mary DePaul Berra, president of the school, I used the fifty-foot extension cables we kept backstage to engage the circuits in the faculty lounge and the teachers' workroom. The dance-poem from For Colored Girls,<sup>1</sup> meant to be performed to "Both Sides Now,"<sup>2</sup> had to begin without the recording. Nancy Hayden, realizing the predicament, began to improvise on the piano for this dance (see Chapter VI, Music.) Her accompaniment was so effective that we decided to forego the record and use Nancy's live music in all the later performances.

We experienced some problems with people trying to enter during the performance. Each time someone opened the door to the Little Theatre, bright light from the hallway streamed in and the audience was distracted. To remedy this, the hall lights were dimmed, "Do not disturb" signs were posted, and faculty members guarded the doorways during class-change periods.

As the third performance began, the fuse had not yet been replaced, but the extension cables served adequately. This was among our best shows. The audience responded especially well, no new technical problems occurred, and the acting was more sensitive.

The final student performance encountered only minor problems. One performer's skirt gave way and she was forced to make a dive for it. Because of the leotard and tights, however, no real shock ensued, and she quickly recovered from her embarrassment. In the final segment, loud, continuous blasts from a car horn were heard as a carload from a nearby boys' school tried to gain some notoriety. The finale for this performance was very energetic and the audience joined in our singing.

Last minute difficulties delayed the Sunday matinee for a few minutes. The head of our light crew, Michelle Mariani, as a member of the school raquetball team, was advanced to the final playoffs for Sunday noon. We were already shorthanded; Michelle had planned to take over the cues of another member of the crew who could not be present Sunday. We arranged that I

would take Michelle's cues, and Susan Grasser, the only remainder of the original light crew, would handle the other instruments with the help of Sandra Nelsen, a friend of mine and a theatre aficionado. One girl had forgotten her skirt and had to drive home to retrieve it with only minutes to curtain.

Once the show began, our troubles seemed to end. We lost a fuse after the first fifteen minutes, but this time our janitor, Mr. Patton, was seated at the fuse box with a lapful of replacements. The entire cast was delighted with the liveliness of the audience. Many more adults were present Sunday than previously, and they responded to the material with more understanding. The curtain call was especially joyous.



## FOOTNOTES

1

Shange, For Colored Girls, quoted in McCormack, p. 91-92.

2

Mitchell, "Both Sides Now," in Scruggs, et al., Stars and Stripes Forever.

The evaluation of the high school play puts the educator in a dilemma. Pleasing the audience is not the only criterion of success, yet outside of their contribution it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of an extra-curricular drama program. For me I the most objective reviewer of a project that I chose, compiled, designed, cast, and directed. To evaluate the production, I examined the responses of the students and adults in the audience and presented my own subjective analysis.

The audience's response indicates the performer's skills in communication of ideas, moods, and action. Without an understanding of the content and symbols within the literature and the clear articulation to express these, only vague, confusing signals will be received by the audience. Successful communication of ideas enables the cast to manipulate the assembly's response. Their sustained attention demonstrates the effectiveness of the visual aspects of the production, including the movements of characters and elements of the design. The performer that exhibits concentration and interacts with others on stage assures that the audience will respond to the characters as well. When these qualities are lacking, the viewers' willingness to believe in the

## CHAPTER X

### EVALUATION

The evaluation of the high school play puts the educator in a dilemma. Pleasing the audience cannot be the only criteria of success, yet outside of their contribution it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of an extra-curricular drama program. Nor am I the most objective reviewer of a project that I chose, compiled, designed, cast, and directed. To evaluate the production, I examined the responses of the students and adults in the audience and presented my own subjective analysis.

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action of the play disintegrates or never develops, and they soon become bored or unruly.

The four performances for the student body on Friday, February twenty-seventh were received in similar ways. All the groups were attentive and appreciative of the entertainment.

Clearly a favorite cutting was that from One Sunday Afternoon.<sup>1</sup>

The two girls waiting for a blind date appealed to the student audience tremendously, and the lively caricature of a giddy schoolgirl by Karen Bergmann was favorably received. Another section that was a favorite of all audiences was "The Glocoat Blues."<sup>2</sup> The performance of singer Tammy Bopp and the blues rhythm of the musicians drew applause at each performance.

Discussions held in my classes the following Monday were enlightening. I heard no negative comments. A few students questioned me on the message of some selections. One asked if the play, particularly the cutting "I Want a Wife"<sup>3</sup> was anti-male. Some students felt that it was, others did not, others were unsure. I indicated the audience's interpretation is the best guide, but that My Sisters and Me is a play about women of all kinds, including those who express frustration over their role in society. I pointed out that the piece cited was included in a section entitled "The Blues," which implies complaining, but not revolution. In another class, a question was raised about the statement that God is a woman, from the cutting from For Colored Girls.<sup>4</sup> Another



student replied that the poem had not said that God was a woman, but that God is in one's self, which is female. Nearly all the students were pleasantly surprised with the quality of the acting and singing. Outside of class, I received many unsolicited compliments from students, and overheard congratulations given to members of the cast. I was delighted to see these students reinforced for their work, since many have found little recognition in academics or sports.

Another type of evaluation was suggested to me, but unfortunately this recommendation was received well after the completion of the project. A form distributed at the first rehearsal could have measured the expectations of the cast by asking, "What do you hope to learn from participating in this play?" After all the performances were completed and the equipment replaced, another form would ask, "What value did you find in participating in this production?"

Faculty support was behind me throughout the project. Almost daily, one or two teachers would stand at the door to enjoy the rehearsal and offer encouragement. After the shows on Friday, many teachers offered their insights. Some expressed an appreciation for the unique approach to woman's position, as well as the call to involvement implicit in the play. One teacher explained that "The Glocoat Blues" was her favorite because of its ironic treatment of the mundane tasks of the homemaker. Several of the faculty felt the songs selected were as expressive

as the dialogue. One teacher noted that the limited use of properties helped the action flow. A suggestion was made that the last section, "My Self," be expanded.

There were no journalists to review the show of course, but Dr. Wesley Van Tassel offered his comments. He felt that the goals I set at the project's outset were accomplished. My Sisters and Me took a feminist stand, but was fair in its treatment of the sexes. The quality of the acting was amateur. and he remarked on the extreme self-consciousness that many of the students showed during rehearsal. He doubted that the quality problem would be overcome without six months of study in acting for the cast. At the same time he noted that several of the performers showed promise. He commented on the good working relationship I had with the cast during rehearsal and performance, but suggested that at some future time I limit the size of my cast in order to work more intensely on their acting skills.

The animated Sunday matinee audience has already been mentioned. As I looked at their faces from my vantage point at the light board backstage, I saw a group of people thoroughly enjoying themselves. I couldn't help but pay special attention to the faces of the women, most of whom were the mothers of my students. They seemed particularly approving of Amy Fister's portrayal of the harried housewife, Sparky. "The Glocoat Blues"



proved to be a show-stopper again. I would have liked to have seen their reaction to Patty Sullivan's touching portrayal of Mama<sup>6</sup> near the end of the play, but the lighting problem prevented me from spying. This audience surprised me by their appreciation of all the subtleties in the literature. I had not realized how much my compilation was influenced by my own adult perspective. Their reaction demonstrated that I had unknowingly built a collection of works that was entertaining to secondary students, but appealed most to others in my own milieu.

A short celebration was held after the matinee. Laura Hoemeke, house manager as well as performer, arranged for cookies, ice cream, and coffee for the guests. The student lounge, decorated with photographs, posters, and programs of past productions, served as our reception hall. I was elated by the reception from the high-spirited group of friends and families of the cast. My students presented Nancy Hayden, Rose McBryan, and me with flowers and a pin that read, "We are family."

Because of the nature of our school and the composition of our faculty, I had received little feedback from the male viewpoint. This reception presented an opportunity to fill this gap. One young man told me he enjoyed the show, but it did not make him feel very good about being a man. I answered that he should not feel uncomfortable about the play since over half of its text was written by men. One of the parents in the crowd complained



about the weakness of the coffee, then added that he supposed it was significant that the students who brewed it were better on stage than they were in the kitchen. None of the men present mentioned that they were offended by any passage in the play; most were accepting and expressed their appreciation.

Although the audience response is a crucial measurement of the success of a theatre program, it cannot be the only criteria since it does not measure the progress of the students involved. In a report to the University of London, McGregor proposes that assessments of dramatic work can only be made in light of the teacher's goals. <sup>7</sup> My aim was to produce a play that would provide strong acting material for my students, give their self-confidence a boost, and be entertaining to an audience. I am satisfied that I accomplished these objectives with My Sisters and Me.

Watching my play come to life was a thrilling experience. The first rehearsal caught me off guard--I was stunned by the fact that these students were now sharing in the work and thoughts that had been a part of me for so long. I loved watching the comraderie develop in the cast, listening to the audience's laughter, gasps of surprise, and applause. The happiest moment came as I joined the cast at the back of the darkened auditorium to clap and sing the last chorus of the finale. As we sang "We Are Family," we meant it.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Hagan, One Sunday Afternoon, quoted in McCormack, p. 69-75.
- 2 Fadden, "The Glocoat Blues," quoted in McCormack, p. 78-79.
- 3 Syfers, " I Want a Wife," quoted in McCormack, p. 78.
- 4 Shange, For Colored Girls, quoted in McCormack, p. 91-92.
- 5 Broad, The Killdeer, quoted in McCormack, p. 79-80.
- 6 Van Druten, I Remember Mama, quoted in McCormack, p. 88-90.
- 7 McGregor, et al., Learning Through Drama, p. 96.

By Hester and Me

compiled by Anne McEwen

Part One: My English Days

(Player's writer, dressed in black tights and yellow shirts.  
Music: recorder "no accompaniment" on piano. A park bench is  
placed upstairs.)

- (1) I am a schoolgirl, waiting for answers, Who am I? Where am I?  
No need to worry.  
My life is now, no need to define it.  
I am a schoolgirl, slowly emerging.

(All mother down left crossed Anne Frank as she reads to the  
group from an imaginary diary. Music ends.)

Anne: Tuesday evening, just before eleven o'clock, 16 April, 1944.  
Darlingest Kitty,

#### APPENDIX A

Yesterday yesterday's date for it is a very important day in  
my life surely it is an important day for any girl when she  
receives her first kiss. Then it is just as important for me too.  
How did I suddenly come by this kiss? Well, I will tell you.  
Yesterday evening at eight o'clock I was sitting with Peter on  
his divan. It wasn't long before his arms went around me.  
"Let's move up a bit," I said. "Then I don't jump my head against  
the cupboard." He moved up, almost into the corner. I laid my  
arm under his and across his back, and just about buried my  
head because his arm was hanging on my shoulder. Now we've sat like  
this on other occasions, but never so close as yesterday. He  
held me firmly against him, my left shoulder was against his chest,  
and already my heart began to beat faster, but we had not finished  
yet. He didn't rest until my head was on his shoulder and his  
against it. When I sat upright again, after about five minutes,  
he took my head in his hands and laid it against his chest once  
more. Oh, it was so lovely. I couldn't talk much; the joy was too great.  
He stroked my cheek and arm a bit awkwardly, played with my curls,  
and our heads lay touching most of the time. I can't describe  
the feeling that ran through us all the while. I was too happy  
for words and I believe he was as well. We got up about half-past  
eight. Peter took off his gym shoes, so that he wouldn't make



My Sisters and Me

compiled by Anne McCormack

Part One: My Girlish Days

(Players enter, dressed in black leotards and yellow skirts.  
Music behind: "At Seventeen," on piano. A park bench is  
placed upcenter.)

All: I am a schoolgirl, waiting for answers, Who am I? Where am I?  
No need to worry.  
My life is now, no need to define it.  
I am a schoolgirl, slowly emerging.

(All gather down left around Anne Frank as she reads to the  
group from an imaginary diary. Music ends.)

Anne: Sunday morning, just before eleven o'clock, 16 April, 1944.  
Darlingest Kitty,

Remember yesterday's date for it is a very important day in  
my life surely it is an important day for any girl when she  
receives her first kiss. Then it is just as important for me too.  
How did I suddenly come by this kiss? Well, I will tell you.  
Yesterday evening at eight o'clock I was sitting with Peter on  
his divan. It wasn't long before his arms went around me.  
"Let's move up a bit," I said. "Then I don't bump my head against  
the cupboard." He moved up, almost into the corner. I laid my  
arm under his and across his back, and just about buried me,  
because his arm was hanging on my shoulder. Now we've sat like  
this on other occasions, but never so close as yesterday. He  
held me firmly against him, my left shoulder was against his chest,  
and already my heart began to beat faster, but we had not finished  
yet. He didn't rest until my head was on his shoulder and his  
against it. When I sat upright again, after about five minutes,  
he took my head in his hands and laid it against him once more.  
Oh, it was so lovely. I couldn't talk much; the joy was too great.  
He stroked my cheek and arm a bit awkwardly, played with my curls,  
and our heads lay touching most of the time. I can't describe  
the feeling that ran through me all the while. I was too happy  
for words and I believe he was as well. We got up about half-past  
eight. Peter took off his gym shoes, so that he wouldn't make

noise when he went through the house and I stood beside him. How it came about so suddenly, I don't know, but before we went downstairs, he kissed me. Through my hair, half on my left cheek, half on my ear. I tore downstairs without looking around, and am simply longing for tonight.

Yours,

Anne Frank

(Players freeze. Theme on piano, "At Seventeen" returns. Amy and Virginia take their place at park bench, center stage.)

Amy: Did--did you tell him you would meet him over here?

Virginia: Of course I did.

(Music fades. She dusts bench with handkerchief and sits.)

Amy: (sits) Oh, Virginia--that's being forward.

Virginia: That's not being forward. I guess if a girl tells a boy she will meet him in Avery's Park that's not being forward.

Amy: What did you say his name was?

Virginia: I told you, Hugo Barnstead. Isn't that a swell name for a man--Hugo. Wait till you see him.

Amy: How did you happen to meet him?

Virginia: (jumps up to sit on back of bench) Well--I was in the drugstore getting a plaster for Ma--when in he comes. I knew he was looking at me cause he rapped on the counter and coughed twice. Then he smiled--so I smiled. Then he winked--

Amy: Oh, Virginia!

Virginia: Yes, he did--just like this--

Amy: Weren't you horror-stricken?

Virginia: For a second I was. I saw he was awfully good-looking, so I winked back.

Amy: (stands) Virginia!

Virginia: There wasn't anybody looking. Shucks, if a boy is good-looking what's the harm in a little wink. It didn't hurt him.



Amy: I know, but--

Virginia: (comes down on level with Amy) Amy, a girl has to be up-to-date nowadays. You can't be old-fashioned any more. How are you going to get a beau if you don't wink at him?

Amy: It's brazen. (takes seat) Well?

Virginia: (sits) Well--he waited outside for me and we walked down Meadow Street together. Oh, he was just swell. He had vanilla on him--smelt nice--he said, "What's your name?" I didn't tell him--that would be brazen. So I said, "What's yours?" He said, "Hugo Barnstead." Then he said, "Can I meet you next Saturday afternoon." I said, "I don't see why you couldn't." Then he said, "I've got a friend. Have you got one?" I said, "Yes," thinking of you, of course. "Good," he said. "This friend of mine is awfully swell-looking--tall and handsome."

Amy: (giggling) Oh, golly--

Virginia: (steps downstage) Couldn't be any sweller-looking than Hugo. Hugo's the swellest-looking thing in the world.

Amy: (timidly) Virginia--I'm afraid.

Virginia: Of what?

Amy: (follows Virginia) Well, I never met a boy like this--that is, without proper introduction. Why if my mother knew--

Virginia: You don't have to tell her you were over here, do you?

Amy: of course not, but Ma loves to snoop.

Virginia: Amy, you're the biggest 'fraid cat I know of.

Amy: Yes, but--

Virginia: Now there are no buts--you'll have to meet this boy whether you like it or not. You are helping me out, aren't you?

Amy: Of course I am!

Virginia: Well--

Amy: Well all right. Just this once. Do you suppose he is a nice looking fellow?



Virginia: Of course he is.

Amy: Do you think he will like my new dress?

Virginia: I know he will.

Amy: And do you think he will like me?

Virginia: He'll fall in love with you the minute he sees you--

Amy: Now, Virginia, you stop that. Don't you talk like that.

Virginia: Well, he might. You can't tell. And you might fall in love with him.

Amy: (retreats to bench) Why, Virginia, I'd die!

Virginia: (follows Amy) If you fell in love with a man?

Amy: I'd fall down and die right on this spot.

Virginia: That's because you're weak, Amy.

Amy: No, I'm not--but I just couldn't stand it.

Virginia: I'd like to fall in love. I want to see what it feels like.

Amy: I'd die right on this spot--

Virginia: (taking her hand) Tell the truth, Amy--weren't you ever in love with a boy?

Amy: Virginia!

Virginia: You can tell me--I won't tell anybody.

Amy: (pause) Honest?

Virginia: Cross my heart.

Amy: I thought I was once--I don't know. Maybe it was love, I don't know, but--

Virginia: Well--

Amy: Well, when I was very young--of course, that's a long time ago, you understand--It was in school. There was a boy. I don't know--he never looked at me and I never--Virginia, did you ever have a feeling in your heart--Something that you feel is going to happen and it doesn't--that's the way my heart was--(touches heart)It wasn't love, I know that--He never even noticed me. I could have been a stick-in-the-mud as far as he was concerned. Virginia, this boy always seemed lonely somehow. Everybody had it in for him, even the teachers--they called him bully--but I know he wasn't. I saw him do a lot of good things--when the big boys picked on the smaller ones, he helped the little fellows out. I know he had a lot of good in him--good that nobody else could see--that's why my heart--

Virginia: Who was this boy?

Amy: You wouldn't know him--

Virginia: I might.

Amy: (pause) Biff Grimes!

Virginia: (rising) Biff Grimes! You mean that big bully that hangs around Goldstein's drugstore?

Amy: Yes...

Virginia: (crosses behind bench to Amy) My mother has told me about him.

Amy: So has my mother but I don't care.

Virginia: Why, Amy, he's terrible. The reputation--why, Amy, I'd be ashamed to mention his name. I heard that he drinks and smokes cigarettes.

Amy: Of course, that was a long time ago. Shucks, I'm all over it now. He doesn't even know I'm alive--Can you see them yet?

Virginia: (crosses downstage) Yes--there they are.

Amy: (rising) Oh, Lord! Virginia, do you think I had better go home?

Virginia: They're looking the other way--

Amy: I'm glad--

Virginia: Now, they're turning around--

Amy: (sitting, facing offstage) What does the other fellow look like?  
Tell me quick.

Virginia: Amy, do you know who it is?

Amy: How would I know? I'm not looking that way.

Virginia: It's Biff Grimes.

Amy: Biff Grimes!

Virginia: Yes, that's who it is, Biff Grimes--

Amy: Oh, Virginia--I can't stay here.

Virginia: Well, you can't go now.

Amy: Why?

Virginia: 'Cause they have seen us--yes, here they come, walking this way.  
(returns to bench)

Amy: What'll I do, Virginia?

Virginia: Do? Do nothing. Sit where you are--

Amy: Don't you feel frightened?

Virginia: My heart is jumping a little.

Amy: Mine is kerpluncking all over.

Virginia: Now listen--we won't say a word to them. Just let them pass.  
Of course, if they say something--we'll say something.

Amy: And if they don't say anything--we won't say anything.

Virginia: No--just drop your eyes.

Amy: Drop my eyes?

Virginia: Yes--that will show them we are good girls and they can't  
trifle with us.



Amy: All right--let me know when they get here.

Virginia: Here they are. (drops handkerchief)

Amy: (closing her eyes) "Our Father which art in Heaven--"

(Amy and Virginia freeze as musical theme returns. Miss Bates and Miss Woodhouse rise from their position down left. Miss Bates fixes her bonnet in place and takes a big breath as she begins the speech at high speed.)

Miss Bates: What was I talking of? Oh, yes, Mr. Frank Churchill. For, would you believe it, Miss Woodhouse, there he is, in the most obliging manner in the world, fastening in the rivet of my mother's spectacles. The rivet came out, you know, this morning; so very obliging! For my mother had no use of her spectacles--could not put them on. And by the by, everybody ought to have two pair of spectacles; (Miss Woodhouse tries to interject a comment.) they should indeed. Jane said so. I meant to take them over to John Saunders the first thing I did, but something or other hindered me all the morning; first one thing, then another, there is no saying what, you know. At one time Patty came to say she thought the kitchen chimney wanted sweeping. "Oh," said I, "Patty, do not come with your bad news to me. Here is the rivet of your mistress's spectacles out." Then the baked apples came home; Mrs. Wallis sent them by her boy; they are extremely civil and obliging to us, the Wallises, always. I have heard some people say that Mrs. Wallis can be uncivil and give a very rude answer, (Miss Woodhouse again attempts to comment) but we have never known anything but the greatest attention from them. And it cannot be for the value of our custom now, for what is our consumption of bread, you know? Only three of us. (Miss Woodhouse, now showing signs of annoyance, tries again.) Besides, dear Jane at present--and she really eats nothing--makes such a shocking breakfast, you would be quite frightened if you saw it. I dare not let my mother know how little she eats; so I say one thing, and then I say another, and it passes off. But about the middle of the day she gets hungry, and there is nothing she likes so well as these baked apples, and they are extremely wholesome. (Miss Woodhouse almost gets a word in.) But I was really quite shocked the other day; for Mr. Knightley called one morning, and Jane was eating these apples, and we talked about them and said how much

she enjoyed them, and he asked whether we were not got to the end of our stock. For really as to ours being gone, I could not absolutely say that we had a great many left--it was but half a dozen indeed; but they would be all kept for Jane, and I could not at all bear that he should be sending us more so liberal as he had been already; and Jane said the same. And when he was gone she almost quarrelled with me--no, I should not way quarrelled, for we never had a quarrel in our lives--but she was quite distressed that I had owned the apples were so nearly gone; she wished I had made him believe we had a great many left. "Oh," said I, "my dear, I did say as much as I could." I wanted to keep it from his knowledge; but, unluckily, I had mentioned it before I was aware.

(Miss Woodhouse looks to the audience in despair. "At Seventeen" begins again on piano, as Janis enters wearing a blue skirt. She crosses to left center and others sit on floor around her.)

Janis: (sings)

I learned the truth at seventeen  
That love was meant for beauty queens,  
And high school girls with clear-skin smiles  
Who married young and then retired.

The valentines I never knew,  
The Friday night charades of youth  
Were spent on one more beautiful--  
At seventeen I learned the truth.

And those of us with ravaged faces,  
Lacking in the social graces,  
Desperately remained at home,  
Inventing lovers on the phone,  
Who called to say, "Come dance with me,"  
And murmured vague obscenities.  
It isn't all it seems--at seventeen.

A brown-eyed girl in hand-me-downs  
Whose name I never could pronounce,  
Said, "Pity, please, the ones who serve,  
They only get what they deserve."

And the rich-related home-town queen  
Marries into what she needs,  
With guarantee of company  
And haven for the elderly.



Remember those who win the game  
 Lose the love they sought to gain,  
 In debentures of quality,  
 And dubious integrity,  
 The small town eyes will gape at you,  
 And dull surprise when payment due  
 Exceeds accounts received--at seventeen.

To those of us who knew the pain  
 Of valentines that never came,  
 And those whose names were never called  
 When choosing sides for basketball:

It was long ago and far away,  
 The world was younger than today,  
 And dreams were all they gave for free  
 To ugly-duckling girls like me.

We all play the game and when we dare  
 To cheat ourselves at solitaire,  
 Inventing lovers on the phone  
 Repenting other lives unknown,  
 That call and say, "Come dance with me,"  
 At ugly girls like me--at seventeen.

(Lights fade. Players exit, with Janis leaving last. Bench should be removed in the blackout.)

#### Part Two: The Blues

Professor Freud's voice: (in blackout) The great question that has never been answered and which I have never been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is what does a woman want?

(Lights come up quickly on Part Two players, dressed in blue skirts. All are holding something to suggest that they are housewives.)

Megan: (holding a featherduster) I want to get to the point in my life where the anger that people send me, the disapproval they show me, the criticism they yell at me can be absorbed by me and sent right on through me into the ground all the way down to China and out the other side. I can't stand all these tailspins. I hate the discomfort of it.



Judy: (holding an iron) I belong to the classification of people known as wives. I am a wife. And not altogether incidentally, I am a mother too. Not too long ago, a male friend of mine arrived on the scene fresh from a recent divorce. He had one child, who is with his ex-wife, naturally, and he is now looking for another wife. As I thought about him while ironing one evening it suddenly occurred to me that I too would like to have a wife. Why do I want a wife? I would like to go back to school so that I can become economically independent and support myself and I want a wife to take care of the children while I go to school. (others onstage react) I want a wife who will keep the house clean, sees that my clothes are washed, ironed, mended, replaced when need be and kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the minute I need it. I want a wife who is sensitive to my needs, who sees that I am satisfied...I want a wife who will remain faithful to me so that I do not have to clutter up my intellectual life with jealousies...and I want a wife who understands that I must, after all, be able to relate to people as fully as possible. (Guitarist begins a blues progression) If by chance I find another person more suitable to me than the wife I already have...I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one...Naturally I will expect a fresh new life.., my wife will take the children, and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

All: My God, who wouldn't want a wife?

(Tammy moves downstage with mop to the beat. Piano and drum come in. Others form chorus line around her.)

Tammy: (sings) I woke up this mornin', (harmonica begins)  
 B'lieve I'll wax, wax my floor.  
 I woke up this mornin',  
 B'lieve I'll wax, wax my floor.  
 You know I been usin' that Johnson's Glocoat  
 An' I just don't have to wax, wax no more.

(spoken) My baby left me, he left me a brand new mop.  
 I'm gonna wax the floor  
 And baby, you know I ain't gonna stop.

(sings) Well--I woke up this mornin'  
 B'lieve I'll, b'lieve I'll wax my floor.  
 Well I'm usin' that Johnson's Glocoat--  
 Wo--I don't have to wax no more.

Megan: (spoken) Well I waxed in the corners.

Sparky: (spoken) I'll wax along the baseboard.

Judy: (spoken) I'll wax along the refrigerator.

Sally: (spoken) You know I ain't gonna wax no more!

(sings) But I woke up this mornin'  
 I b'lieve, I b'lieve,  
 You know I b'lieve I'll wax my floor.  
 I love waxin' my floor.  
 And I'm usin' that Johnson's Glocoat--  
 Honey, I ain't gonna wax no more.  
 (ends number at upcenter)

(Sparky, in curlers and holding a dishrag and plate, crosses to center. This speech is given rapidly.)

Sparky: (music behind: blues progression on guitar) You want to know about my day? Well, I got up, went to the bathroom, made breakfast, argued with you, through my cup across the kitchen when you slammed the door as you went out, answered the telephone, Susan's car is broken, so I made the kiddie run, that's the third time this week, then I came back, washed the dishes, then Sparks and Mumsey called about coming to visit--like you said they would--then Frieda came over, we drank coffee, talked about her divorce, talked about her lawyer, talked about her alimony, then the bank called and I had to run down there to transfer out of our savings, that's wrong...to transfer what was left of our savings to cover your overdraft, then I came back and the phone rang again, It was Safeway tellin' me our grocery check had bounced, I told them to send it back through and the man said he would if I would bring him over two dollars to cover the redeposit cost, so I drove over to Safeway. I was very embarrassed but I did it anyway because I knew you wouldn't even if you said you would and I'd just have to answer the phone again tomorrow or start shopping somewhere else, then I heard screaming out on the street and I ran out, the Carlson's dog had been run over and nobody knew what to do, so I wrapped him in a towel and put him in the back of our car and I drove over to the Vet's, he was dead when I got there and there was blood all over the back seat and there was nobody to help me get him out of the car except a smart little snot who wanted to know why I brought a dead dog to the Vet's, then I came back here and cleaned the back seat, it's still wet, and



the man came to give an estimate on the roof, it'll cost eight hundred and ninety dollars, not including any new spouts or gutters he may have to replace, I told him you'd call him tonight or tomorrow, and Georgia called, she was behind getting ready for the party and wanted to know if I'd do some shopping for her, I said OK, and back I went to Safeway, the groceries for Georgia came to fourteen something and all I had was ten, I asked if they'd take a check and we went through that whole thing again, but I promised and they did, and I took the groceries to Georgia, Susan was there and her car was still broken so I did the afternoon kiddie run for her, I came back here, Huck and Spike were home but Spike had gotten mad at Huck and locked him out, so Huck went over to Lynch's and got on the telephone and called Spike and told him he was a dirty pooper, so Spike had let the door close behind him and locked us all out and my keys were inside here on the counter so we had to break the lock on the garage window and Huck crawled in, and by that time I'd had my fill of one day on this green earth so I told them to make their own supper and I went over to have a drink with Georgia, but Marty was home and they were arguing over how many plates to put out for tonight's party, so I came back over here, closed the garage door, and sat in the car listening to the radio and drinking my martini...and it's the best twenty minutes I've had this year. Then I heard you come home, so I came in here and you were standing there shouting about the television...and you're lucky I didn't knock your teeth out...

Sally: My name is Sally Kempton, and I am "Cutting Loose." I used to lie in bed beside my husband and wish I had the courage to bash in his head with a frying pan. I would do it while he slept, since awake he would overpower me, disarm me. If I only dared, I would mutter to myself through clenched teeth, pushing back the realization that I didn't dare, not because I was afraid of seriously hurting him--I would have loved to do that--but because even in the extremity of my anger I was afraid that if I cracked his head with a frying pan, he would leave me.

All: (sing) Baby, you don't know my mind today.

(Lights blackout. As piano begins introduction to "The Cell Block Tango," two murderesses enter carrying bars which they attach to hooks behind the downstage teaser. Other two murderesses enter. All are dressed in tights and black and white striped tunics.)



Announcer: And now the 4 merry murderesses of the Cook County Jail  
in their rendition of the "Cell Block Tango!"

(All stand upstage of bars as they begin.)

Murderesses: (spoken)

Pop, six, squish, uh-uh, Cicero, Lipshotz  
Pop, six, squish, uh-uh, Cicero, Lipshotz  
Pop, six, squish, uh-uh, Cicero, Lipshotz.

(sing) He had it comin', he had it comin',  
He only had himself to blame.  
If you'd o' been there,  
If you'd o' seen it,  
I betcha you would have done the same.  
Pop, six, squish, uh-uh, Cicero, Lipshotz.

First

Murderess: (others sing chorus behind spoken verse)

Ya know how people have these little habits that  
getcha down?  
Like Bernie. Bernie liked to chew gum.  
No not chew, pop.  
Well I come home this one day and there's Bernie,  
layin' on the couch, chewin'.  
No, not chewin', poppin'.  
So I said to him, I said, "Bernie, you pop that gum  
one more time..."  
And he did.  
So I took the shotgun off the wall and I fired two  
warning shots--  
Into his head.

All: (sing) He had it comin', he had it comin'.  
He took the power in his time.  
And then he used it and he abused it,  
It was a murder but not a crime.

Second

Murderess: (spoken)

Now I'm standin' in the kitchen carvin' up the chicken  
for dinner,  
And in storms my husband Wilber in a jealous rage.  
"You been seein' the milkman," he said.

And he kept sayin', "You been seein' the milkman."  
Then he ran into my knife.  
He ran into my knife--ten times.

All: (sing) If you'd o' been there, if you'd o' seen it,  
I betcha you would have done the same.

Third

Murderess: (spoken)

Conoci amos. Me robo el corazon. Yo me fui, elle  
estaba tan entadado con un tigre. Todavia he decho  
"Quitate de medio."  
El vino hacia mi con una pistola de mi buro.  
Yo lucho con el.

Murderesses: But did you do it?

Third

Murderess: Uh-uh, not guilty.

First and

Second: (sing)

They had it comin', they had it comin',  
They took the power in their time,  
And then they used it, and they abused it.  
It was a murder but not a crime.

Third and

Fourth: (sing)

They had it comin', they had it comin',  
They had it comin' all along  
I didn't do it, but if I'd done it,  
How can ya tell me that I was wrong?

Fourth

Murderess: (spoken)

I loved Alvin Lipshotz. He was a real artistic guy.  
Sensitive. A painter.  
But he was always trying to find himself.  
He'd go out every night looking for himself.  
And on the way he found: Ruth, Gladys, Rosemary, and  
Bubbles.



I guess you could say we broke up because of artistic differences.

He saw himself as alive--and I saw him dead.

All: (sing) The dirty bum, bum, bum, bum, bum.  
The dirty bum, bum, bum, bum, bum.  
They had it comin', they had it comin',  
They only have themselves to blame.  
If you'd o' been there,  
If you'd o' seen it,  
I betcha you would have done the same.

(Blackout.)

Part Three: By the Waters

(Banjo begins intro as lights come up slowly.)

All: (sing) By the waters, the waters of Babylon,  
We lay down and wept, and wept  
For thee Zion.  
We remember thee, remember thee  
Remember thee, Zion.

First half  
group:

(continues to sing above in round through poem)

Half group:

I have a past, let it speak for me,  
Am I alone? What am I missing?  
Let me look back, back through my mothers.  
I have a past, let it speak to me.

(As song ends, Sojourner Truth steps down center.)

Sojourner: My name is Sojourner Truth. That is my name, the name  
I gave myself for freedom. Couldn't nobody else tell  
me who I was. But what's all this here talkin' about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped  
into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the  
best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages,  
or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And  
ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have  
ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man  
could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much



as a man--when I could get it--and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

That that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Virginia  
Woolf:

I have had the freedom to be a writer because I have a room of my own and the finances to keep it. This is why you know my name is Virginia Woolf and why you have asked me here to speak.

But, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage and there were tears in his eyes.

How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She make up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down

by a rope on summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager-- a fat, lose-lipped man--gaffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting--no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted--you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last--for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows--at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and--who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?--killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some crossroads where the buses now stop outside Elephant and Castle.

Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. This opportunity, as I think, it is now coming within your power to give her.

Aurelia: Well, poetry is fine and all that, but this morning, exactly at noon, I discovered a horrible plot. There is a group of men who intend to tear down the whole city.

Gabrielle: But I don't understand, Aurelia. Why should men want to tear down the city? It was they themselves who put it up.

Aurelia: You are so innocent, my poor Gabrielle. There are people in the world who want to destroy everything. Even when they pretend that they're building, it is only in order



to destroy. They build cities as that they can destroy the countryside. Humanity is now dedicated to the task of universal destruction. I am speaking, of course, primarily of the male sex.

Gabrielle: Oh!

Constance: (clasping her hands over Gabrielle's ears) Aurelia! Must you talk sex in front of Gabrielle!

Aurelia: Oh, she can't be as innocent as all that. She keeps canaries.

Gabrielle: I think you're being very cruel about men, Aurelia. Men are big and beautiful, and as loyal as dogs. I preferred not to marry, it's true. But I hear excellent reports from friends who have had an opportunity to observe them closely.

Aurelia: My poor darling! You are still living in a dream. But one day, you will wake up as I have, and then you will see what is happening in the world. The tide has turned, my dear. Men are changing back into beasts. They know it. They no longer try to hide it. A man doesn't take your hand nowadays. He give you his paw. However, nothing is ever so wrong in this world that a sensible woman can't set it right in the course of an afternoon. Only, the next time, don't wait until things begin to look black. The minute you notice anything tell me at once.

All: We will, Countess, we will.

Aurelia: Well, let's go on to more important things. Four o'clock. My poor cats must be starved. What a bore for them if humanity had to be saved every afternoon. They don't think much of it as it is.

Margaret: I'm Margaret Fuller. I know I am because. . . "From the time I could speak and go alone, my father addressed me not as a plaything, but as a living mind." I am Margaret Fuller and I accept the universe!

Two Women: You had better. You had better. Carlyle said you had better. You had better. You had better. You bet your butter, Carlyle said that you had better.



Margaret: I accept. I accept, not as a furry animal plaything,  
but as a mind, as a living, loving, blinding mind.

Two Women: If you know what's good for you, you had better. Better  
grab the universe, little daughter. Grab it while you  
can. You had better, you had better. You had better  
grab it before you melt.

All: (sing) Praise the Lord, I saw the light!

(Lights black out. Screen is lowered, and slides of old women's  
faces are projected as we hear Lucinda's voice. Music behind:  
"Love Theme from Missouri Breaks.")

Lucinda's

Voice:

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,  
And played snap-out at Winchester,  
One time we changed partners,  
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,  
And then I found Davis.  
We were married and lived together for seventy years,  
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,  
Eight of whom we lost  
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.  
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick,  
I made the garden, and for holiday  
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,  
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,  
And many a flower and medicinal weed--  
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.  
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,  
And passed to a sweet repose.  
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,  
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?  
Degenerate sons and daughters,  
Life is too strong for you--  
It takes life to love life.

(Music fades. Lights come up on Part IV: My Self. Two ice  
cream parlor chairs and small table are set down left, a  
stool down right, upstage a table serves as an ice cream  
parlor counter.)

Part IV: My Self

(Four girls enter, dressed in rose-colored skirts.)

All: I see a vision, ageless and childlike,  
And with my sisters the answers are nearer.  
Katrin: The answer is me, my self born today.  
I am a woman, ageless and Christlike.

(Mama turns to Katrin)

Mama: Katrin, you like we go next door, and I treat you to  
an ice-cream soda?

Katrin: Mama--do you mean it?

Mama: Sure. We celebrate. We celebrate that Dagmar is well,  
and is coming home again. (move to drugstore down left)  
Katrin: What you like to have, Katrin?

Katrin: I think a chocolate...no, a strawberry...no, a chocolate  
soda.

Mama: You are sure?

Katrin: I think so. But Mama, can we afford it?

Mama: I think this once we can afford it.

Clerk: What will it be ladies?

Mama: A chocolate ice-cream soda, please--and a cup of coffee.

Katrin: Mama, she called us "ladies"! Why aren't you having  
a soda, too?

Mama: Better I like coffee.

Katrin: When can I drink coffee?

Mama: When you are grown up.

Katrin: When I'm eighteen?

Mama: Maybe before that.

Katrin: When I graduate?

Mama: Maybe. I don't know. Comes the day you are grown up,  
Papa and I will know.

Katrin: Is coffee really nicer than a soda?



- Mama: When you are grown up, it is .
- Katrin: Did you used to like sodas better...before you were grown up?
- Mama: We didn't have sodas before I was grown up. It was in the old country.
- Katrin: You mean they don't have sodas in Norway?
- Mama: Now, maybe. No I think they have many things from America. But not when I was little girl...(clerk brings soda and coffee)
- Katrin: (after big drink through straw) Mama, do you ever want to go back to the old country?
- Mama: I like to go back once to look, maybe. To see the mountains and the fjords. I like to show them once to you all. When Dagmar is big, maybe we all go back once...once summer... like tourists. But that is how it would be. I would be tourist there now. There is no one I would know any more... Any maybe we see the little house where Papa and I live when we first marry. And...something else I would look at.
- Katrin: What is that? (Mama does not answer.) What would you look at, Mama?
- Mama: Katrin, you ko not know you have brother? Besides Nels?
- Katrin: No! A brother? In Norway? Mama...
- Mama: He is my first baby. I am eighteen when he is born.
- Katrin: Is he there now?
- Mama: He is dead.
- Katrin: Oh. I thought you meant...I thought you meant a real brother. A longlost one, like in stories. When did he die?
- Mama: When he is two years old. It is his grave I would like to see again. (She is suddenly near tears, biting her lip and stirring her coffee violently, spilling some. She gets her handkerchief, dabs at her skirt, then briefly at her nose, then she returns it) Is good, you ice-cream soda?



- Katrin: Yes, Mama...have you had a very hard life?
- Mama: Hard? No. No life is easy all the time. It is not meant to be. (Pours spilled coffee back from the saucer into her cup)
- Katrin: But...rich people...aren't their lives easy?
- Mama: I don't know, Katrin. I have never known rich people. But I see them sometimes in stores and in the streets, and they do not look as if they were easy.
- Katrin: Wouldn't you like to be rich?
- Mama: I would like to be rich the way I would like to be ten feet high. Would be good for some things--bad for others.
- Katrin: I want to be rich. Rich and famous. I'll buy you a pearl necklace.
- Mama: We talk too much! Come, finish your soda. We must go home.

(Mama and Katrin freeze. Focus shifts to stage right. Reba leaves her stool at down right center, pays clerk for coffee she has been drinking and says:)

- Reba: I'll tell you how it was when I was a little girl. The ice-cream, oh, yes, that was the big thing. That was the crowning moment of the week. We each got a dime-- whenever times were good--and one nickel of it was for the picture show (They were very short then and didn't have much of a story)--and that was very exciting--but the ice-cream cone--that was what the other nickel was for--the ice-cream cone--and I remember one Saturday--I saw a lady eating a dish of ice cream when I went in to get my cone-- and on top of it was a bright red marachino cherry--and I was just--oh! I had to have that! (cross to stool)--so I hopped up on a stool--it was so high (climbing)--stools aren't that high anymore--because ladies' dresses were so long--and I said: "I'll have a dith of the ithe cream pleathe," (clerk laughs) and she laughed and they all made me say it again-- and finally she gave me the saucer of ice cream, no more than you'd get in a cone, but with that cherry--and I gave her my dime (gives clerk dime) and picked up my spoon--(clerk turns to face upstage) and she put my dime in the old beautiful black cash register covered with gold scrolling (clerk crosses up left)--and I held out my little hand for my nickel change

(clerk crosses up left)--and she just walked past me down to the other end of the counter--and I looked up and the little tab in the cash register window said "ten cents!" And I hadn't known that ice cream in a dish at the counter cost a whole dime--and that meant I wouldn't get to see the picture show--and I didn't even get to have a cone--they were wonderful in those days, they were covered with scrolling as elaborate as the cash register--and so I picked up the spoon--and I was crying, the front of my little dress was wet, tears were running out of my eyes--and I started to eat that one dip of ice cream--and I savored every drop--and the sun was slanting in the window, and (all crowd around to watch) in came my Mommy and Becky and Sally looking for me, and I knew they were going to tease me for crying and because I needed help to get down off the stool, and because I hadn't come to the picture show--but first they had to watch me, with my tiny little silver spoon, eat that big, bright, red marachino cherry--and---do you know--I stole the spoon.

(Lights fade and piano begins soft, melancholy tune. Furniture is cleared from stage. Lights come up slowly on three dancers. They are dressed in black tights, leotards, pink ballet slippers. Their skirts are a patchwork of all the colors of the previous parts, with a handkerchief hem. Guitar solo of "Both Sides Now" begins. They dance the poem.)

First dancer: I was missin somethin  
 Second dancer: somethin so important  
 Third dancer: somethin promised  
 First dancer: a layin on of hands  
 Third dancer: fingers near my forehead  
 First dancer: strong, cool, movin  
 Second dancer: makin me whole  
 Third dancer: sense, pure  
 Second dancer: all the gods comin into me/layin me open to myself  
 Third dancer: i waz missin somethin



Second dancer: somethin promised, somethin free

First dancer: a layin on of hands

Second dancer: i waz missin somethin

Third dancer: a layin on of hands

All: a layin on of hands

First dancer: not my mama/holdin me tight/sayin/i'm always gonna be her girl, a layin on of hands/the holiness of myself released

Second dancer: i sat up one nite walkin a boardin house/screamin/ cryin/the ghost of another woman/who waz missin what i waz missin/i wanted to jump up outta my bones/ and be done wit myself/leave me alone/and go on in the wind

Third dancer: it waz too much/i fell into a numbness/til the only tree i could see/took me up in her branches/held me in the breeze/make me dawn dew

First dancer: that chill at daybreak/the sun wrapped me up swinging rose light everywhere/the sky laid over me like a million men/i waz cold/i waz burnin up/a child/and endlessly weavin garments for the moon wit my tears

Second dancer: i found god in myself/and i love her/i loved her fiercely

All: (Repeating these words softly, rhythmically, as they return to original positions. Music concludes and lights fade to black.)

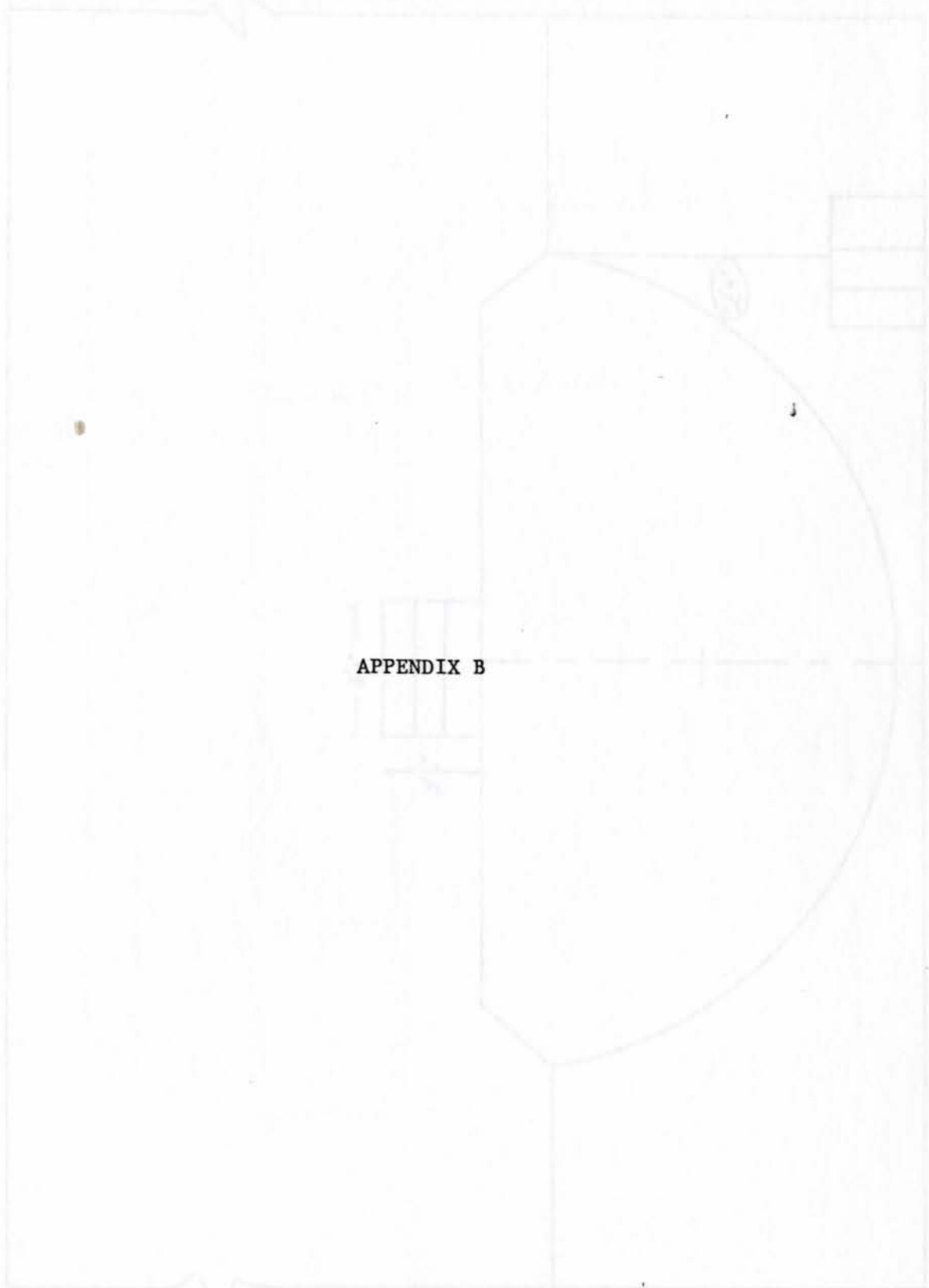
### Finale

(Piano begins "We Are Family" in blackout. Three members of the cast dance down aisle to the stage. They sing the chorus. Remainder of the cast, in groups according to section, enter to take bows. After each group bows, they take an upstage position and sing. After all bows, cast exits through the audience, urging them to sing along.)

Cast: We are family.  
I got all my sisters with me.  
We are family.  
Get up everybody and sing.

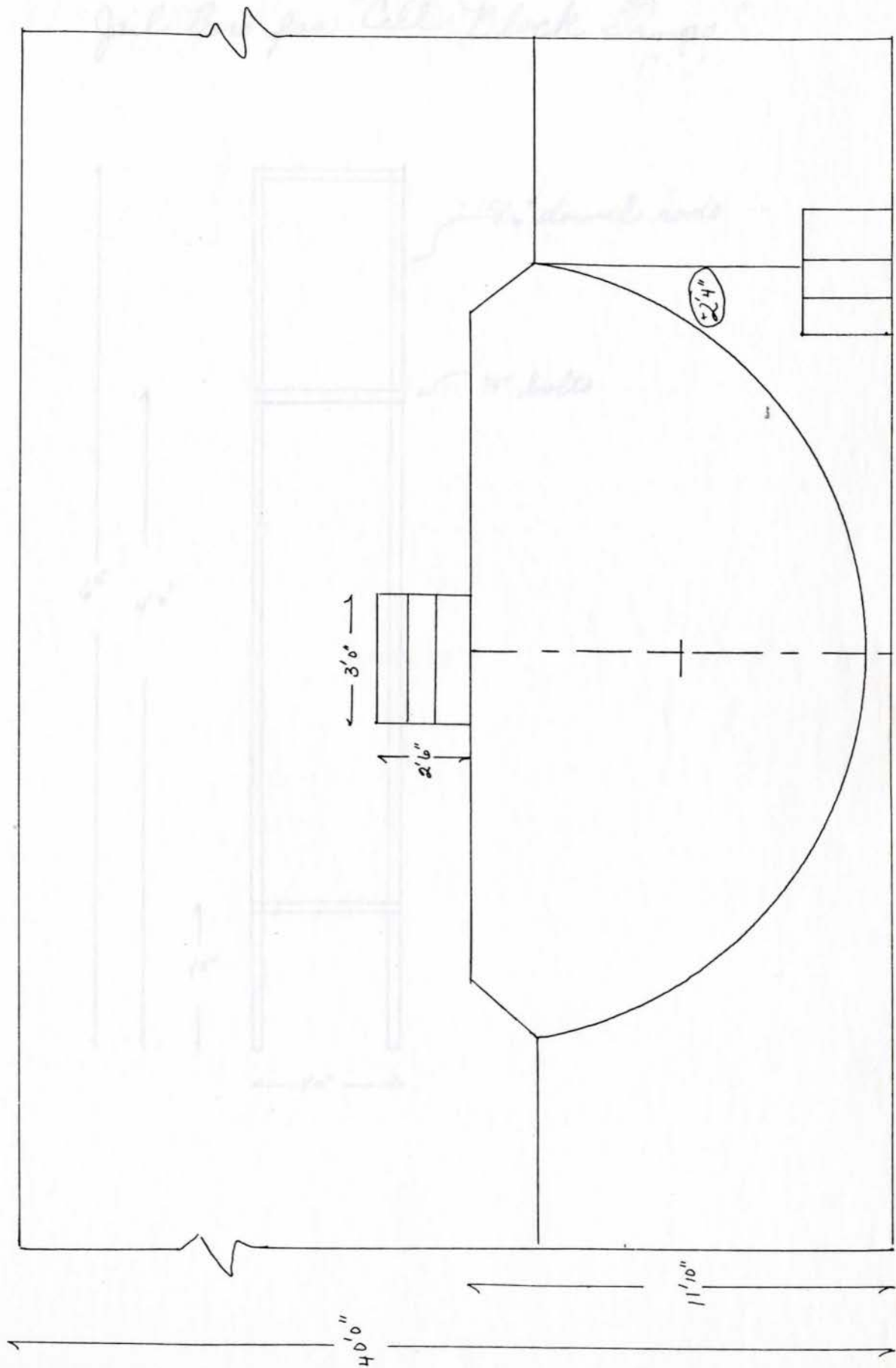


Little Theatre 4-11

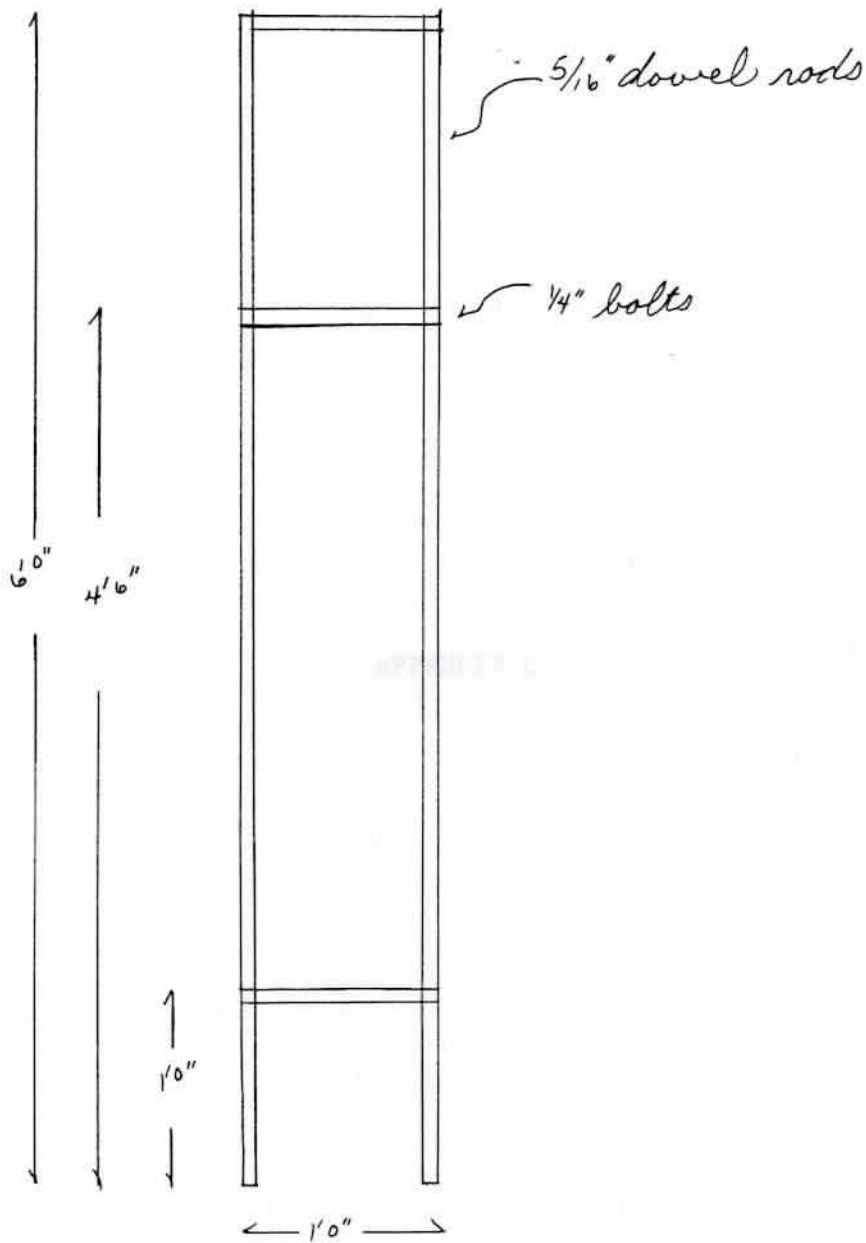


APPENDIX B

Little Theatre  $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'$



Jail Bars for "Cell Block Pangs"  
1" = 1'





## SKIRT

designs by Rose McBryan

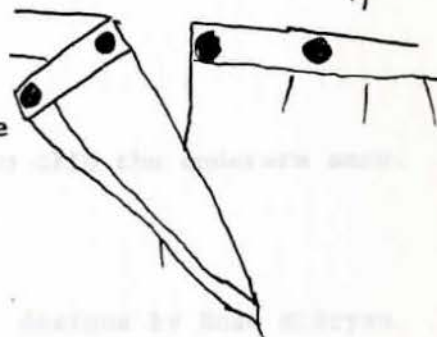
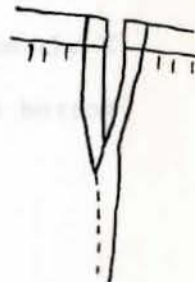
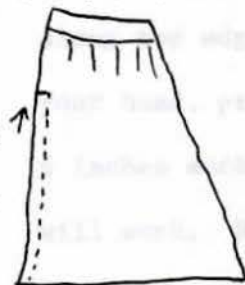
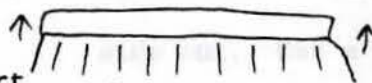
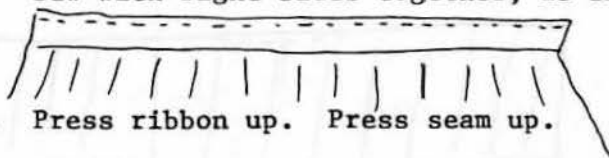
1. Measure ribbon to waistline plus 5 inches. Fold over 1/2 inch on each end to the back side (wrong side). Ribbon will now be waistline plus 4 inches.
2. Gather top edge of material using long machine stitches. (Top edge is the selvage edge, 72" long.) Pull up gather threads to reduce length of top edge to waistline plus 4 inches.
3. Sew gathered edge to ribbon. (Both should be same length.) Sew with right sides together, as small a seam as possible.

4. Press ribbon up. Press seam up.

5. Sew the two sides together (short edges). Sew with right sides together from bottom to 6 inches from top edge of ribbon. Use 1/4" seam.

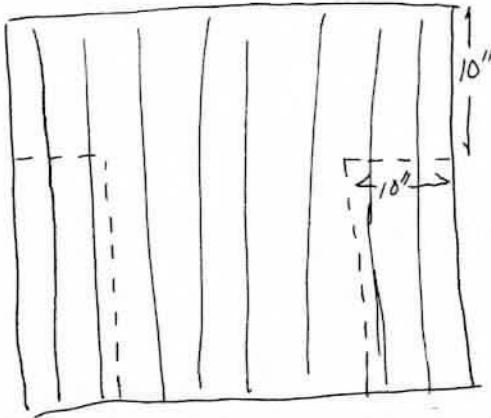
6. Iron 3/4" fold on the 6" not sewn.
7. Put on skirt. Overlap waistband in back. This will make a pleat down the skirt back. Sew snaps to ends.

8. Hem to about 3" below kneecap. (Purple skirts hem to slightly above ankles.)

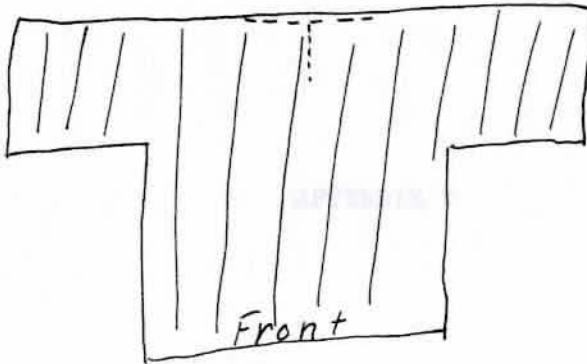


## "CELL BLOCK" COSTUMES

Fold



Fold lengthwise, right sides together. Cut as shown.



On wrong side of fabric, sew underarm and side seams,  $3/4$ ". Turn right side out. Cut a T slit along top edge for your head, probably 6 inches each length will work. Hem the T slit. Hem the bottom of the tunic.



You may have to clip the underarm seam.

designs by Rose McBryan

*My Father and the Court*

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff. It begins with a treble clef and contains several measures of music with notes and rests.

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff, showing a sequence of notes.

APPENDIX D

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff, with the text "APPENDIX D" overlaid in the center.

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff, showing a sequence of notes.

Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff. A large letter 'C' is written above the first measure, and a large letter 'G' is written above the last measure.



# My Sisters and Me Overture

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The upper staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. The lower staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. A double bar line is present. Above the first measure of the bass staff are the notes  $B^b A^b E^b$ . The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The upper staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The lower staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. The upper staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The lower staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. A large 'F' is written above the final measure of the bass staff.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. The upper staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature. The lower staff is a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals. A large 'C' is written above the second measure and a large 'G' is written above the third measure of the bass staff.

| Gm | / | / | G7 |

| Cm | Eb | Gm/D | D1 | G7 ||

Ritard  
| G7 | C → "At Seventeen"

## "THE GLOCOAT BLUES"

E  
 I woke up this mornin',  
 E  
 B'lieve I'll wax, wax my floor.  
 A  
 I woke up this mornin',  
 A E  
 B'lieve I'll wax, wax my floor.  
 B7  
 You know I been usin' that Johnson's Glocoat  
 A E  
 An' I just don't have to wax, wax no more.  
  
 E E  
 My baby left me, he left me a brand new mop.  
 E  
 I'm gonna wax the floor  
 A  
 And baby, you know I ain't gonna stop.

(repeat chorus)

## "BABYLON"

Am Dm Am Dm  
 By the waters, the waters of Babylon,  
 Am Dm Am  
 We lay down and wept, and wept  
 Dm  
 For thee Zion.  
 Am Dm Am  
 We remember thee, remember thee,  
 Dm Am  
 Remember thee, Zion.



## Cell Block Pango

$$| G_m | \times | \times | G^1/B | C_m | \times |$$

$$| E_b | G_m/D | D_1 | G_m |$$

$$| D_1 | E_b \parallel A_b m | \times | \times | A_b^1/c |$$

$$| D_b^m | \times | E | A_b m/E_b | E_b \parallel A_b m \parallel$$

## ACTRESS RESUME

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Homeroom \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Height \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Extra-curricular activities in which I am involved: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Working hours for my job: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates I will not be able to rehearse: \_\_\_\_\_

Drama or dance experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Part(s) I prefer: \_\_\_\_\_

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Account	Balance	Debit	Credit	Balance
Equipment	100.00			100.00
Accumulated Depreciation		20.00		(20.00)
Net Book Value				80.00
Depreciation Expense		20.00		20.00
Accumulated Depreciation			20.00	(20.00)
Equipment			100.00	100.00
Accumulated Depreciation		20.00		(20.00)
Net Book Value				80.00
Depreciation Expense		20.00		20.00
Accumulated Depreciation			20.00	(20.00)
Equipment			100.00	100.00
Accumulated Depreciation		20.00		(20.00)
Net Book Value				80.00
Depreciation Expense		20.00		20.00
Accumulated Depreciation			20.00	(20.00)
Equipment			100.00	100.00
Accumulated Depreciation		20.00		(20.00)
Net Book Value				80.00
Depreciation Expense		20.00		20.00
Accumulated Depreciation			20.00	(20.00)

TOTAL DEPRECIATION 10/1-11  
 20.00

APPENDIX F



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

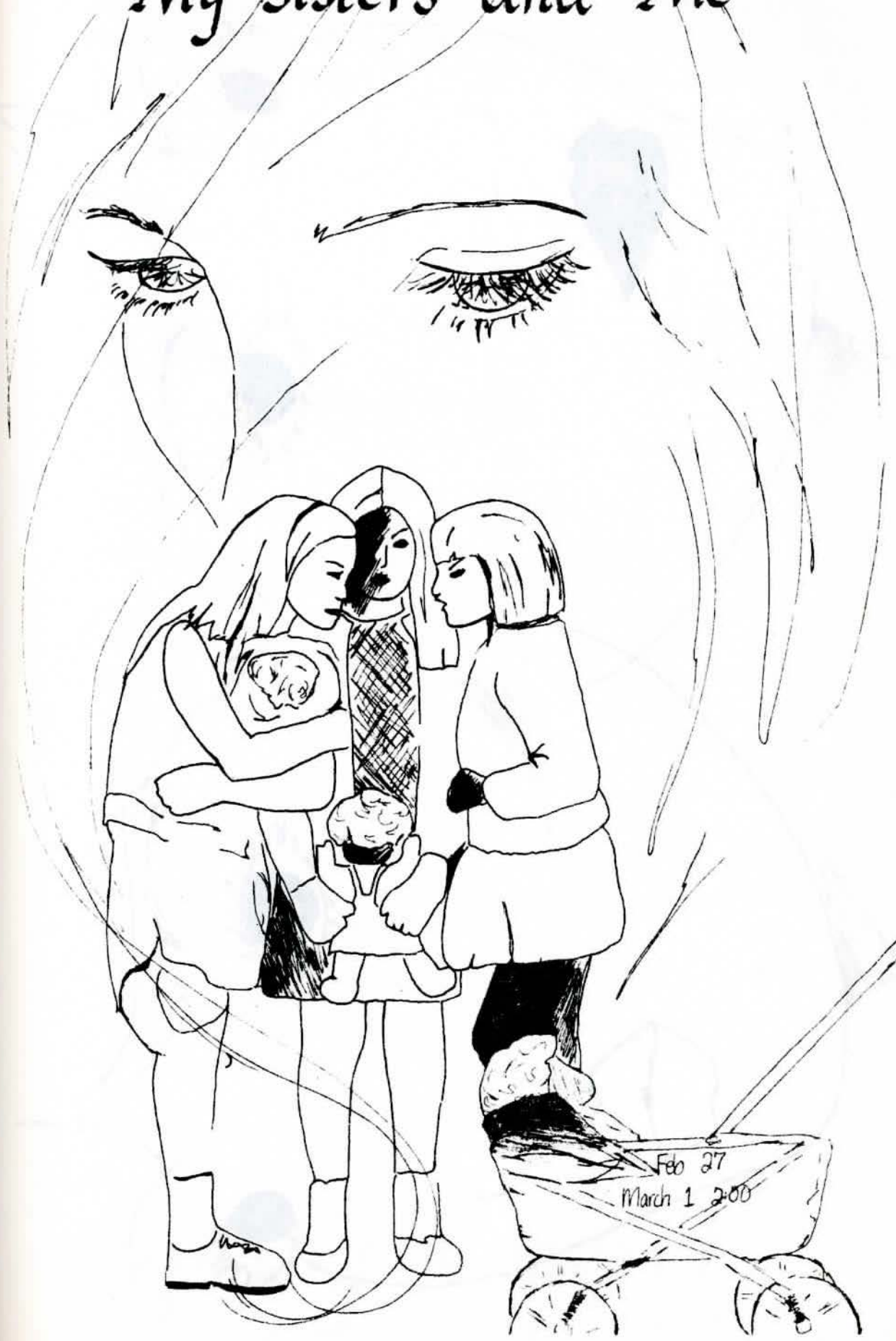
Scripts	Costumes	Publicity Photography	Reception
\$2.00 pockets	\$68.10	\$18.00	\$4.00 coffee
<u>9.95</u> folders	1.38	15.00	2.00 cups, plates
\$11.95	<u>8.31</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>10.00</u> ice cream
	\$77.79	\$37.00	\$16.00
Lighting Equipment		Props	Posters, Program
\$48.01 TRS, gels		\$50.37 jail bars	\$10.00
<u>35.00</u> cable			
\$83.01			
	Total Expenditures	\$271.12	
	Donations	94.92	

# My Sisters and Me



APPENDIX G

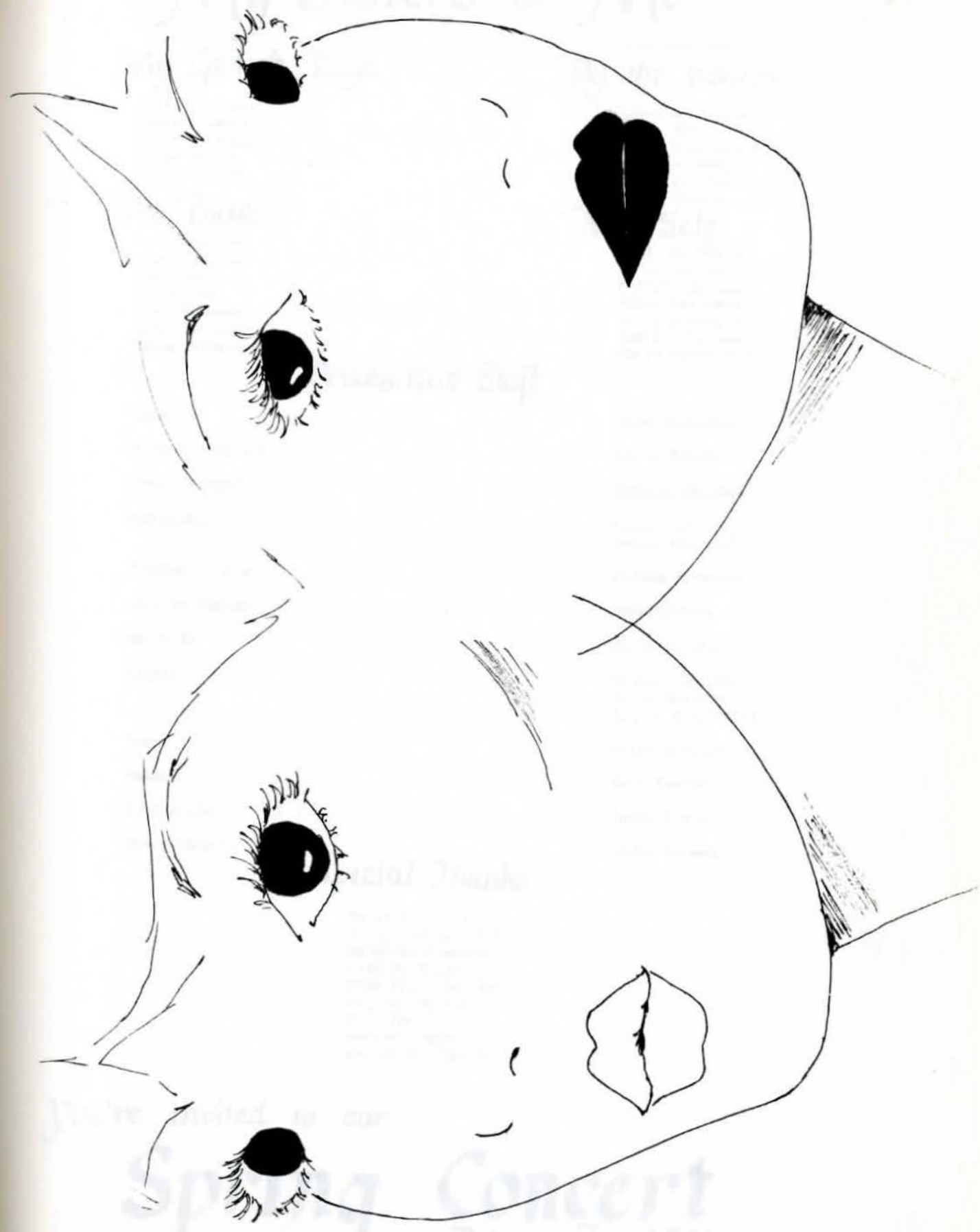
# My Sisters and Me





My Sisters & Me

7



You're invited to our  
Spring Concert  
May 3, 1981

# My Sisters & Me

## My Girlish Days

Patti Sullivan  
Maureen Carey  
Karen Bergmann  
Kacey Horner  
Debbie Miller

## The Blues

Kathy Steffen  
Kaura Hoemeke  
Tammy Bopp  
Amy Fister  
Dara Townsend  
Karen Bergmann  
Maria Robertson

by Anne McCormack

## By the Waters

Claudia Charles  
Laura Henry  
Maria Ojascastro  
Carroll Cabrera  
Peggy Kauffmann  
Kacey Horner

## My Self

Patty Eschbacher  
Patti Sullivan  
Katryna Beckman  
Karen Bergmann  
Maria Robertson  
Carroll Cabrera  
Maria Ojascastro

## Production Staff

Director  
Musical Director  
Stage Manager  
Musicians  
Program, Poster  
Costume Design  
Wardrobe  
Lights  
Sound  
Makeup  
Photography  
House Manager

Anne McCormack  
Nancy Hayden  
Katryna Beckman  
Heidi Cerneka  
Laura Westhoff  
Martha Brooking  
Rose McBryan  
Karen Bergmann  
Michele Mariani  
Susan Grasser  
Angela Bulgarelli  
Robin Lavelle  
Dara Townsend  
Angie Koester  
Laura Hoemeke

## Special Thanks

Nancy Cusanelli  
Sister Nancy Folkl  
Delphine Gladden  
Suzanne Meifert  
Mega Products, Inc.  
Mr. Pat Patton  
Ruth Parkin  
Martha Stegmaier  
Wesley Van Tassel

You're invited to our

# Spring Concert

May 3, 1981

APPENDIX H

Photographs of  
the ...  
...



Rehearsals



Photography by  
Angela Bulgarelli,  
Angie Koester,  
and Guise Studios.



"Surely it is an important day for any girl when she receives her first kiss."



"Unluckily, I had mentioned it before I was aware."





"Hugo's the swellest-looking thing in the whole world!"



"I learned the truth  
at seventeen. . ."





"By that time I'd had  
my fill of one day on  
this green earth."

"Honey, I ain't gonna wax no more!"



"You pop that gum one more time. . ."



"He was always trying to find himself. He'd go out every night looking for himself!"



Musicians





"Must you talk s-e-x in front of Gabrielle?"



"You mean they didn't have sodas in Norway?"



"I hadn't known that ice cream in a dish cost a whole dime!"



For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow Is Enuf





"That big, bright, red, marischino cherry!"

"The holiness of myself released."



Finale



My Sisters and Me



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