

Libretto & Stage Directions

1955

An Original Musical By Stafford Krause

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By

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Libretto & Stage Directions

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Bill Nelson - a freshman with both sports and intellectual promise

Tom Haney - Bill Nelson's freshman roommate and radio station announcer.

Nate Williams - an African-American sophomore dorm-mate friend of Bill & Tom's

Katie Wilson - a freshmen coed and hometown friend of Bill

Sheila Morgan - a vamp-ish Sophomore

***Mary Summerfield** - Katie Wilson's hometown friend

***Birdland Singer** (Birdland Nightclub, New York City)

***Master of Ceremonies** (The Latin Quarter, New York City)

* **The Ricardo's** - Rio De Janeiro, Brazil ballroom dance team.

***Mrs. (Barbara) Nelson** - Bill Nelson's Mother.

***Mr. (Ed) Nelson** - Bill Nelson's Father

***Mrs. (Ethel) Williams** - Nate Williams' Mother.

***Julie Brown** - Nate's African-American sophomore girlfriend. Friend of Katie

***Buddy Barrett** - A junior and a Brother of Delta Omega

***Delta Omega Chi Brothers**

***The Reverend Richard Thomas** - The Williams' Parish Minister

***Alabama Men**

***Chorus & Dancers**

* Multiple parts. May also be Chorus/Dancers

THE SETTING

The musical is primarily set on a northern college campus (Newland College) and in Montgomery, Alabama between the Fall of 1955 to the Spring of 1957.

Scene 1: The Newland College Campus Green. Fall Semester, 1955.

Scene 2: Bill Nelson and Tom Haney's dorm room. Start of Christmas break, 1955.

Scene 3: The Biltmore Hotel, New York City. Christmas break, 1955.

Scene 4: Birdland Jazz Club, New York City, Christmas break, 1955... soon thereafter.

Scene 5: The Latin Quarter, New York City. Christmas break, 1955... a few hours later.

Scene 6: The Nelson's living room, Westchester, NY. Christmas afternoon, 1955.

Scene 7: The William's dining room, Montgomery. Christmas afternoon, 1955.

Scene 8: The Newland College Radio Station. Late January, 1956.

Scene 9: Bill Nelson and Tom Haney's dorm room. A few weeks later.

Scene 10: The Newland College Campus Green. A few weeks later.

Scene 11: The Newland College Campus Green. Beginning of Fall Semester, 1956.

Scene 12: The Montgomery church the Williams attend. Late September, 1956.

Scene 13: The Newland College Campus Green. October 15, 1956.

Scene 14. Somewhere in Alabama. Flashback to the prior evening.

Scene 15: The Newland College Campus Green. October 16, 1956.

Scene 16: The Psi Alpha Mu fraternity house. House Parties Weekend, Spring 1957,

A simple set utilizes props and lighting on a bare stage, with pre-recorded music accompaniment.

The campus-Green, fraternity house, and similar "open" scenes can be played with lights up on a bare stage. The Alabama Assailant scene can be played with low back-lighting on a bare stage. The New York City scenes can be on a dark stage with the Biltmore, Birdland and Latin Quarter areas of the stage softly spotlighted stage right, center and left. The Nelson Christmas scene, Williams' Christmas scene and church scene can likewise be on a dark stage and softly spotlighted stage right, left and center.

SCENE ONE

(The curtain rises on the "Green" or central area on the campus of Newland College in the Fall Semester of 1955.

Students, some with freshman crew hats with their 1959 graduation year embroidered on them, are standing around talking or hurrying to and from classes. Male student dress is khakis, button down shirts and (dirty) white bucks... crew-neck or letter-sweaters. Female dress is period skirts, kilts, blouses, sweaters... bobby socks and saddle shoes or penny-loafers.

ALL sing **'55** as they move on and off stage, change groupings, etc.)

ALL

'55, '55 WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE
'55, '55 ON THE CUSP OF ROCK AND JIVE.
GREASE GUYS RIDING THEIR BIG HOGS.
SOME KID SINGIN' ABOUT HOUND DOGS.
CATS STILL PIPING A COOL HORN.
WHILE NEXT SET NEW ROCK IS ON.
'55, '55 WHAT A GREAT TIME TO BE ALIVE

'55, '55 WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE
'55, '55 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES THRIVE.
COLD WAR ALWAYS ON THE BRINK.
WITCHHUNTS SIFT THROUGH WHAT YOU THINK.
BLACKS ARE REACHING FOR THEIR STAR.
SOME WHITES WANT THEM WHERE THEY ARE.
'55, '55 WHAT A GREAT TIME TO BE ALIVE

'55, '55 WHAT A TIME TO BE ALIVE
'55, '55 WATCHING A NEW AGE ARRIVE.
PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPE,
WON'T GIVE UP WITHOUT A FIGHT..
SIMPLE PRECEPTS STILL NOT GONE.

BUT NEW THOUGHTS TO DWELL UPON.
'55, '55 WHAT A GREAT TIME TO BE ALIVE

(Director may wish to stage a dance number here.)

(ALL exit singing as lights fade out)

'55, '55 WHAT A GREAT TIME TO BE ALIVE.

SCENE TWO

*(Soft spotlight comes up on Bill and Tom's dorm room stage right...
Simple props: a table and chair and a couch. It is the start of Christmas
vacation, 1955.)*

BILL

Boy it's hard to believe the semester is over and it's Christmas vacation already.

TOM

Yeh. And as soon as our ride finishes his last exam, we'll be out of here.
It sure is nice of you and your family to invite me to spend Christmas with you. I
can only afford a round trip fare to the West Coast once a year.

BILL

Mom and Dad are thrilled to have you join us. And, we'll have a blast checking
out the music scene. It's just a hop by train from Westchester to New York City...
AND they only proof age 18 in New York State, so we can get into most clubs.
And don't forget that we're also going to meet Katie and a friend there in the city.
Katie's family celebrates Christmas on Christmas Eve, so she's also going to join
us for Christmas dinner.

(NATE WILLIAMS enters)

NATE

Well guys, I finished my last exam so I'm off for Christmas in Montgomery.
Hope you guys have a great Christmas. We'll see you in the New Year.

BILL

Thanks, Nate. You have a great one too.

TOM

I second that. Hey... and lots of thanks, Nate, for letting me interview you on the
Rosa Parks incident and segregation issues in Montgomery Alabama.

NATE

No problem. Always happy to help a friend and especially W N R S radio's star freshman announcer and disc jockey.

TOM

Get out of here.

(NATE and TOM both laugh. NATE waves and leaves.)

BILL

What was that all about?

TOM

Montgomery Alabama has this law that a colored person must give up his seat to a white person on their public buses. Last week or so, this older colored lady, Rosa Parks, refused to give up her seat to a white man and they arrested her. Now the colored people in Montgomery are starting a bus boycott to get the city to rescind this law... and hopefully address other segregation issues.

I did a special on my radio show the other night on this important event. Nate, being from Montgomery, agreed to be interviewed for the show. He provided some great insights into segregation and its affects on colored people. It was exciting to learn so much from him

Hey, you're my roommate. Don't you ever listen to my show?

BILL

You know I'm more into jazz and standards, and not really into all that rock -'n-roll you spin on your show.

I guess you can say that I'm more for the status quo.

I'm sorry that I missed the word on your special, but even if I had known, that's not my thing either.

Montgomery is a long ways away and I feel that it's up to the people there to solve their own problems.

We aren't segregated here at Newland.

I guess that you have more liberal journalist's blood in your veins than I do.

(BILL laughs.)

(TOM is about to respond when KATIE WILSON enters)

KATIE

Hi guys.

Just finished my Psychology 101 exam... Brutal!

Really looking forward to Christmas and meeting you in New York City.

Bill, you remember our high school classmate Mary Summerfield.
She's going to blind date with Tom.
You'll like her Tom. She's getting into rock music like you are.

BILL

Where do you want to meet in the big city?

KATIE

There's only one place for college kids to meet in New York City.
At the Biltmore Hotel.

(Pause)

Well, I better finish packing and catch my ride. See you later...

BILL & TOM

Alligator.

(ALL laugh.)

(KATIE starts to leave. Stops.)

(BILL & TOM freeze.)

(KATIE sings You Don't See Me -Verse 1 to Bill)

KATIE

I TRY TO BE SO CASUAL AND UNASSUMING, WHEN I'M AROUND YOU
EVERY DAY.
IN FACT IT'S JUST TO HIDE WHAT I AM REALLY FEELING. A BITTER PART
THAT I MUST PLAY.

YOU SEE ME AS YOUR PAL. A FRIEND... AND GOOD OL' GAL.
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.
YOU SEE ME ALWAYS HERE AND GOOD FUN TO BE NEAR,
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.

WHY IS IT MY LOVE IS SO TRANSPARENT TO YOU?
WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THIS HEART JUST ACHING TO BE TRUE?
YOU SEE ME SHARE YOUR CARES... E'VN OTHER LOVE AFFAIRS.
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.

NO, YOU DON'T SEE ME.

*(As she finishes the song, KATIE pulls herself erect and makes a deep
sigh.)*

(BILL & TOM un-freeze.)

(KATIE exits.)

(TOM changes the subject.)

TOM

Say Bill. Have you given any thought to which fraternity you're going to pledge after Christmas vacation.

At this point I'm leaning toward Psi Alpha Mu.

Good clean cut guys like us... smart like you...and not the nerds some try to make them out to be.

(Before Bill can answer SHEILA MORGAN enters. She is wearing a very tight cashmere sweater that shows off her ample features. Her appearance is not wasted on the two young men. Each time she says her name, Sheila, she puckers her lips seductively on the "Sh" sound.)

SHEILA

Hi. I'm Sheila Morgan. May I come in?

I see your getting ready to head out for Christmas.

(SHEILA zeros in on Bill.)

I've been dying to meet you, Bill. Your fame precedes you. As an intellectual... National Honor Society and all kinds of awards. Plus being a top athlete in high school... a 3 letter man. And now you make the varsity football team in your freshman year. Wow.

(During this interchange, BILL and TOM are obviously captivated by the situation and Sheila's sweater. BILL can just blurt out...)

BILL

I'm just the third string quarterback.

SHEILA

Don't be so modest. You're very special to many people here on campus...*(pause.)* including me. Have you given any thought yet to which fraternity you might pledge after Christmas vacation?

BILL

Well, not really.

SHEILA

I think you'd fit in great with the brothers at Delta Omega. Several of them are your

football team mates and I spend a lot of time there. It would be exciting building a closer friendship between us.

BILL

Well, I...

(TOM interrupts, addressing Sheila.)

TOM

Hey! You're not supposed to rush freshman until after the Christmas break. Besides, Delta Omega Chi has a reputation for being just a party house.

SHEILA

I'm not rushing anyone. I'm not a member of the fraternity. I'm just a friend, discussing this PRIVATLEY with my friend Bill

TOM

I'm out of here.
I'll go check if our ride is back from his exam.

(TOM exits looking at Sheila and brushing his brow with the back of his hand as if hot.)

(After Tom leaves, SHEILA sings the song Sheila to Bill. As she sings she moves seductively, runs her fingers through his hair, along his shoulders, etc. Each time she says her name, Sheila, she puckers her lips at Bill on the "Sh" sound. Bill is mesmerized.)

SHEILA

MY NAME IS SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A .
SHEILA, AND I REALLY LOVE TO PLAY.
SHEILA...AND I ALWAYS GET MY WAY.
SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A.

WANT TO MAKE A NEW FRIEND?
WANT TO HAVE A BALL?
LET LITTLE SHEILA HELP YOU,
YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL.
PARTY-TIME AND PLAYTIME;
SHOULDN'T GET AWAY.
PUT DOWN THOSE BOOKS AND CALL ME.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?

MY NAME IS SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A .
SHEILA, AND I REALLY LOVE TO PLAY.

SHEILA...AND I ALWAYS GET MY WAY.
SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A.

KICK OFF SHOES AND ROCK IT.
PARTY UNTIL DAWN.
LET'S KEEP THAT RHYTHM HOPPING,
'TIL YOUR CARES ARE GONE.
LET LITTLE SHEILA HELP YOU
HAVE MORE CAMPUS FUN.
GET YOUR HOT BLOOD A-BOILING
YOUR BRAIN UNDONE

MY NAME IS SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A .
SHEILA, AND I REALLY LOVE TO PLAY.
SHEILA...AND I ALWAYS GET MY WAY.
SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A.

TURN THE LIGHTS DOWN QUICKLY.
DON'T LET THE MOMENT GO.
COME COZY UP AND CUDDLE.
RUB MY BACK JUST SO.
LET LITTLE SHEILA HELP YOU,
TAKE OFF TO THE SKY.
WATCH ALGEBRA AND SLIDE-RULES
'N CHAUCER GO BYE- BYE.

MY NAME IS SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A .
SHEILA, AND I REALLY LOVE TO PLAY.
SHEILA...AND I ALWAYS GET MY WAY.
SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A.

SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A.

SHEILA

I have to run, but let's stay in touch over Christmas. Here. Write down your phone number

(SHEILA gives Bill a pen and paper.)

I do love Christmas. Don't you? It will be fun chatting about your Christmas and your fraternity plans.

(BILL writes and gives back the paper with his phone number on it.)

(SHEILA pauses as she exits.. to smile, pucker again and blows Bill a kiss.)

*(Lights fade to strains of **Sheila**)*

SCENE THREE

(Soft spotlight comes up the lobby of the Biltmore Hotel stage right-center... Simple props: two or three small tables with chairs. It is Christmas vacation 1955.)

KATIE and MARY are sitting at a downstage table. CHORUS MEMBERS fill the other tables.)

KATIE

They ought to be here any minute.

MARY

(checking her face in a hand mirror)

I hope Bill's friend likes me.

KATIE

I'm sure he will.

And I'm sure you'll have a good time.

Tom is really nice and lots of fun.

... and THIS *(gesturing all around)* is New York.

Pause)

... and THAT *(gesturing)* is them!

(BILL and TOM enter stage right and join girls at table)

BILL

Hi Katie.

Hi Mary. Haven't seen you since graduation.

I'd like you to meet our friend and classmate, Tom Haney.

Straight to you from San Diego, California.

TOM

Nice to meet you Mary.

Katie has told me lots about you and your interest in rock music.

I'm always looking for new material for my radio show. Maybe we could trade some ideas.

MARY

That'd be fun.

Nice to meet you too. Katie gives you very high marks.

BILL

(laughs)

Well intros are over, with another welcome addition to our mutual admiration society.

Lets plot our evening in New York.

(sweeping gesture)

Isn't this a great place for plotting?

(Ensemble sings Under The Clock)

KATIE

IN NEW YORK CITY WHERE DO COLLEGE KIDS MEET?
JUST 'ROUND THE CORNER AND JUST UP THE STREET.
FROM GRAND CENTRAL STATION.
UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.

GRAB A SMALL TABLE AND PACK YOUR FRIENDS IN.
JUST LIKE YOU DO IN YOUR VOLKSWAGON.
IT'S A COOL SENSATION.
UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.

ALL

IF YOU'RE FEELING IN THE MOOD, THEN YOU CAN SURELY SWING IT.
FORGET TROUBLES AND YOUR CARES, AND COME ON GUYS JUST WING
IT.

KATIE

BORED AT HOME? THEN, COME RIGHT ON DOWN.
AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS TO DO THE TOWN.
GET NEW INSPIRATION.
UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.

STANFORD AND DARTMOUTH AND BOWLING GREEN.
KIDS FROM ALL OVER TO MAKE THE SCENE.
MEET THE WHOLE NATION.
UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.

ALL

IF YOU'RE FEELING IN THE MOOD, THEN YOU CAN SURELY SWING IT.
FORGET TROUBLES AND YOUR CARES, AND COME ON GUYS JUST WING
IT.

(Director may wish to stage a tap or soft-shoe dance number here.)

ALL

IN NEW YORK CITY WHERE DO COLLEGE KIDS MEET?
JUST 'ROUND THE CORNER AND JUST UP THE STREET.
FROM GRAND CENTRAL STATION.
UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.

*(As spotlight stage right fades out to strains of Under The Clock
Actors move tables and chairs downstage left and exit left, singing.)*

UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.

UNDER THE BILTMORE CLOCK.
UNDERNEATH THE BILTMORE'S CLOCK.

SCENE FOUR

*(Spotlight comes up on a standing microphone upstage center at the
Birdland Jazz Club in New York City. A SINGER steps to the microphone
from upstage right. It is a short time later.*

SINGER sings Doin' The Birdland Scene

SINGER

'CROSS FROM JACK DEMPSEY'S AND UP BROADWAY,
THERE IS A PLACE WHERE THE COOL CATS PLAY.
A FEW STEPS DOWN A NARROW STAIRWAY.
YOU PAY YOUR COVER AND YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.

SMOKE SO THICK.CUT IT WITH A KNIFE.
STAGE IN THE HAZE WHERE THE SPOTLIGHTS STRIKE.
RIGHT NOW IT'S ME WHOSE (COUNT BASIE IS) DOIN' MY (HIS) THING.
BUT ALL NIGHT LONG THEY'LL COME OUT OF THE WINGS.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.

MAY BE GILLESPIE, COLTRANE OR KING COLE,
COMIN' IN FROM HARLEM OR THE METROPOLE.
FROM THE CENTRAL PLAZA OR HOTELS CROSSTOWN,
TO THEIR FAVORITE PLACE TO LAY A FEW BARS DOWN.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.

AND MAN YOU'RE COOL HERE TOO, WHILE SIPPIN' RUM COKES,
WITH STARS, JAZZ WANNABES AND JUST PLAIN FOLKS.

IF INTO JAZZ; TO BE SEEN OR SEE,
NO OTHER PLACE LIKE THIS AND NEVER WILL BE.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.
YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE.

(Director may wish to stage a jazz improvisation interlude of Doin' The Birdland Scene here.)

SINGER

(SINGER repeats phrase...

YOU'RE DOIN' THE BIRDLAND SCENE

... continuously as spotlight fades out.)

SCENE FIVE

(An announcer replaces the Birdland singer at the microphone. . BILL, TOM, KATIE and MARY are seated with OTHERS at the downstage left tables, now with candle lamps on them. Spotlight comes up on the Master of Ceremonies at the famous Latin Quarter, New York City. It is a few hours later.)

M.C.

Ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the Late Show of New York's world famous Latin Quarter.

For your pleasure tonight ...Direct to New York City from Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

Please give a warm welcome to the world champion ballroom dancers... The Ricardos. *(Sweeping gesture stage left)*

(Spotlight out on the announcer.)

(Soft spotlight floods dancers as they enter stage left.)

The RICARDOS dance to Rio Nights - samba or other period Latin rhythms... eg. samba, rumba, tango)

(Blackout.)

SCENE SIX

(A darkened stage. Upstage right corner depicts a corner of the Nelson family's living room in Westchester, NY. Downstage left depicts the William's dining room in Montgomery, AL. MRS. Nelson is seated at a stage piano, with BILL, TOM, KATIE, and MR. NELSON around her. There is a dial phone on a table in the upstage corner of the Nelson's area.)

The Williams' dining room has a table and couple of chairs. There are several food baskets and food items on the William's table. It is Christmas day, 1955... afternoon.)

(Flood spotlight comes up on the Nelson's living room scene. The Williams' dining room scene remains dark.

*ALL are singing the chorus of **Jingle Bells.***

ALL

JINGLE BELLS. JINGLE BELLS. JINGLE ALL THE WAY.
OH! WHAT FUN IT IS TO RIDE IN A ONE-HORSE-OPEN-SLEIGH.

(Shout)

Hey!

(They finish laughing as TOM renders a particularly enthusiastic and loud last line and "Hey!".

TOM

Hey. This is really fun.

KATIE

No one would ever guess that you are having a good time.

(ALL laugh again.)

MR. NELSON

We do have a lot of fun singing around the piano during the holidays. And it's a tradition in this house to add a new Christmas song to our repertoire each year. This year it is Bill's turn to pick the song and to sing it first for all of us.

BILL

I must warn you that it will be quite different from Dad's classical selection last year... All I Want For Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth

(All laugh)

BILL

And I must note that my selection this year is not really my kind of music... but is in honor of Tom's visit.

(BILL spreads out music sheets in front of Mrs. Nelson)

BILL

Mrs. Nelson. If you please.

(Mrs. Nelson imitates playing the piano, while BILL sings Rockin' At Christmas.)

BILL

ROCKIN' WITH MY BABY AT CHRISTMAS TO A HAPPY MELODY.
SWAYIN' AND STRUTTING TOGETHER AS WE DECORATE THE TREE.

THEN, HIGH STEPPIN' OUT TO CHASE MOONBEAMS GLIST'NING ON
FRESH FALLEN SNOW.
SMILING AT LAST MINUTE SHOPPERS, AS THEY HURRY TO AND FRO.

GIVE DASHER AND DANCER THE HIGH SIGN.
WAVE WELCOME TO THAT JOLLY ELF.
LISTEN TO THE RHYTHM OF THOSE HOOFBEATS.
AND YOU'LL START PRANCING IN SPITE OF YOURSELF.

NOW, EV'RYBODY'S DANCING AT CHRISTMAS. ROCK-N-ROLL TO ONE-
TWO-THREE.
DOING THEIR OWN THING AT CHRISTMAS. BUT DOING IT IN HARMONY.

(Music continues one play-through...while...)

BILL

Tom. Show us some dance moves to this new rock music.

(TOM does some disco dance moves and Bill, Katie and Mr. Nelson try to imitate him. All laugh.)

(As song restarts, ALL pick up singing...reading sheet music)

ROCKIN' WITH MY BABY AT CHRISTMAS TO A HAPPY MELODY.
SWAYIN' AND STRUTTING TOGETHER AS WE DECORATE THE TREE.

THEN, HIGH STEPPIN' OUT TO CHASE MOONBEAMS GLIST'NING ON
FRESH FALLEN SNOW.
SMILING AT LAST MINUTE SHOPPERS, AS THEY HURRY TO AND FRO.

GIVE DASHER AND DANCER THE HIGH SIGN.
WAVE WELCOME TO THAT JOLLY ELF.
LISTEN TO THE RHYTHM OF THOSE HOOFBEATS.
AND YOU'LL START PRANCING IN SPITE OF YOURSELF.

NOW, EV'RYBODY'S DANCING AT CHRISTMAS. ROCK-N-ROLL TO ONE-TWO-THREE.
DOING THEIR OWN THING AT CHRISTMAS. BUT DOING IT IN HARMONY.
DOING IT IN HAR-MO-NY

MR. NELSON
That was a great pick, Bill.

MRS. NELSON
A really nice addition to our Christmas repertoire.

(Others nod in agreement. TOM pats Bill on the back.)

TOM
Mrs. Nelson. Could we just do one more chorus of Jingle Bells ?

(All laugh.)

MRS. NELSON
We sure can, Tom.

(As they are about to begin singing, the phone rings. MR. NELSON answers it.

MR. NELSON
It's for you Bill.
It's some girl named Sheila.
She sounds like she's got a cold.

TOM
(Muttering aloud)
Sexy, low...put-on voice.

(BILL goes over to talk on the phone.)

(KATIE looks in the direction where Bill is talking to Sheila on the phone. ALL OTHERS freeze as KATIE sings the ending to You Don't See Me a cappella.)

KATIE
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME

(Blackout)

SCENE SEVEN

(Soft spotlight floods the Williams' dining room in Montgomery, downstage left. MRS.WILLIAMS and NATE are loading articles of food into the baskets. It is the same afternoon of Christmas day, 1955)

MRS. WILLIAMS

We have to do all we can to help.

Many of our friends and your father's patients have been fired for supporting the bus boycott.

We coloreds who have must reach out to those who need.

(Pause)

Your father is out right now fixing up a couple of boys who got beat up pretty bad for speaking their minds.

NATE

We can't let this boycott fail. This is our first glimmer of light in years. If we do nothing now, we'll have another hundred years of virtual slavery.

MRS. WILLIAMS

God bless Rosa Parks.

NATE

Damn rednecks!

MRS. WILLIAMS

Nathan! That's as prejudice as the "n" word. I won't hear it.

There are as many good white working people in this city as there are coloreds. Right now I know that there are dozens of them doing what we're doing to help their colored neighbors.

NATE

I'm sorry, Momma.

(HE gives Mrs. Williams a hug.)

It's just so frustrating that in so many decades we've only come this far... and there are still so many people out there who don't want us to go any farther.

(Pause)

Momma. I've decided that I am not going back to Newland this next semester. I'm going to help organize and see this boycott through to a victory, however small, for our people.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Oh, Nathan. Don't risk your scholarships... your future. There are plenty of us here to carry this forward.

NATE

Yes, Momma. But they're not me.

(Nate sings A Right To Be Free)

NATE

A MAN HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.
TO BE ALL HE CAN BE, WITHOUT FEAR OF REPRISAL.
WALK WITH HIS HEAD HELD UP HIGH.
NOT TO CAST DOWN HIS EYES, WHILE HIS KIDS WATCH HIM GROVEL.

REFRAIN

WHAT IS A MAN IF HE'S NOT
HERE TO BETTER HIS LOT, FOR THE SAKE OF HIS CHILDREN.
WATCHING THEM GROW WITHOUT DREAD
TOWARD A BETTER LIFE AHEAD.
A MAN HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.
HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.
HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.

A MAN HAS A RIGHT TO EXPECT
HE'LL RECEIVE SOME RESPECT FOR HIS IDEAS AND TALENTS.
DREAMS HE CAN TAKE TO THE SKY
NOT WATCH PRECIOUS THOUGHTS DIE. BE DISMISSED AS IRREL'VENT.

REFRAIN

WHAT IS A MAN IF HE'S NOT
HERE TO BETTER HIS LOT, FOR THE SAKE OF HIS CHILDREN.
WATCHING THEM GROW WITHOUT DREAD
TOWARD A BETTER LIFE AHEAD.
A MAN HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.
HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.
HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.

(Spotlight fades with music as NATE hugs his mother)

HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.
HAS A RIGHT TO BE FREE.

(Blackout)

SCENE EIGHT

(Soft spotlight comes upstage center on the radio announcer's booth at the Newland College radio station... Simple set includes bare stage with

table, chair and table-microphone. It is late January, 1956... after the Christmas 1955 vacation . TOM is seated at the announcer's table and speaking into the microphone.)

TOM

Well guys and gals. That just about wraps things up for this session. From Gerry Mulligan's sax to Little Richard... Take The A-Train to Blueberry Hill.

As you know tonight is "Sink Night", when we pledge our favorite fraternity or sorority. Hope you got an invitation to the house of your choice.

We new pledges are in for a future of BOTH fun and seriousness.

Of course, there'll be the zanny pledge stunts, and let's keep it fun and not dangerous.

And in the months ahead, we also face the serious question of religious and racial discrimination by our fraternities. Is it time to put a stop to it? Or to keep looking the other way?

Hope I didn't put the kabosh on this special "Sink Night"... but as we've heard that guy in the big white house on College Lane intone almost too often: "With every right, comes a responsibility."

Have a fun, safe Sink Night. See you back here tomorrow.

(Lights fade on radio station scene.)

SCENE NINE

(Soft spotlight comes up downstage right on Bill and Tom's dorm room. Simple set with a table and chair and a couch. BILL is seated at the table, TOM on the couch. It is a few weeks later.)

TOM

Well I'm sorry that we didn't pledge Psi Alpha together. But I'm happy that you ended up where you wanted to be.

BILL

I'm pretty happy with Delta Omega. The guys are great. And then there is, of course, Sheila.

TOM

Yeh. I notice that you hardly spend any time with Katie and me any more.

BILL

Sorry guy. I'll make a better effort.

By the way, I've been meaning to mention something to you. You know this fraternity discrimination thing you bang-on on your radio show. It's really stirring up a lot of controversy and animosity both within the Greeks and on the campus in general. There's even a group on the Inter-Fraternity and Sorority Council that are proposing an entire campus referendum on the elimination of all discriminatory sections of a fraternity's charter... or requiring the fraternity to go local, without these discriminatory sections.

TOM

Yeh. I know.

BILL

We don't always see eye to eye... But watch yourself here. There's a lot of anger in many of the national houses. You know... "I didn't pledge a national fraternity to become a 'local'." and stuff like that.

TOM

Thanks for your concern, Bill. I'll be OK. Hopefully there are also a lot of guys and gals in both Locals and Nationals who want to do what's right.

(BILL shrugs his shoulders.)

(Blackout)

SCENE TEN

(Stage lights come up on the Newland campus Green. A bare stage BILL is walking across campus with his fraternity brothers and Sheila. TOM< KATIE and JULIE BROWN, run to catch him. All are wearing scarves, sweaters, jackets, etc. It is few weeks later.)

TOM

Hey Bill. Wait-up.

BILL

(Stops and turns)

What's up, guys?

KATIE

We're heading over to a rally to support Drama Professor Ireland.

JULIE

Seems some witch-hunters in the state capital, who are looking for Communists, have come up with a loyalty oath for all teachers at schools receiving any state support.

KATIE

Professor Ireland and several other professors refuse to take such an unconstitutional and self-depreciating oath... And there's pressure from the state capital to oust them.

TOM

We want to show as much support as possible for our professors and for the school to fight back. Bill. Thought you might join us.

BUDDY

Damn Pinko infiltrators. Trying to spread their Commie line. Besides, Ireland and his theatre buddies are probably a bunch of queers to boot.

TOM

Get off your garbage heap, Buddy.

BUDDY

And you're probably one of his pals also. A queer for a queer.

TOM

Why you....!!

(TOM rushes Buddy who squares off for Tom's attack. BILL steps between Tom and Buddy with his arms outstretched to hold them apart, as both sides restrain the combatants before a punch is thrown.)

BILL

Leave him alone Buddy

(pause)

Tom, I'm sorry I can't join you guys... But you know that's not my thing.

*(BUDDY and his OTHER FRATERNITY BROTHERS (except Bill) begin marching around Tom snapping their fingers and spiraling closer in circles toward Tom to the rap-style rhythm of **You Don't Get The Beat***

BUDDY & HIS OTHER FRATERNITY BROTHERS

YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?
THINK WE'RE OBSOLETE... OBSOLETE... WITH THE KLAN?
ONLY YOU'RE ELITE... YOU'RE ELITE... GOT A PLAN.
YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?

YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?
GET OFF SELF-DECEIT... SELF-DECEIT... PETER PAN
YOU AIN'T SUGAR-SWEET... SUGAR-SWEET... SPIC-AND SPAN.
YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?

YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?
DON'T GIVE US HEAT... US YOUR HEAT... SAMARITAN.
YOUR OWN HOUSE AIN'T NEAT... HOUSE AIN'T NEAT.... PREACHER-MAN.
YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?

YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?
CHECK OUT YOUR RETREAT... YOUR RETREAT... IF YOU CAN.
PREJUDICE COMPLETE... IT'S COMPLETE... PURITAN.
YOU DON'T GET THE BEAT... GET THE BEAT... DO YOU, MAN?

(The number ends with BUDDY and his OTHER FRATERNITY BROTHERS repeat as they spiral away from Tom in wider and wider circles and head offstage downstage right. BILL and SHEILA follow.)

(Stage lights fade out).

SCENE ELEVEN

(Theatre lights go up then down gradually, indicating the passage of time.)

(Stage lights come up on the bare stage Newland campus Green. It is the beginning of the Fall Semester, 1956. KATIE and JULIE are headed across campus. BILL runs to catch up with them.)

BILL

Hey, guys.

KATIE & JULIE

Hi, Bill.

BILL

Busy Summer away at my camp job. I didn't see or talk to anyone.
How was your Summer?

KATIE

Had a great Summer. But like you, it was mostly work and I'm glad to be back on campus.

JULIE

Me too. But I did get to spend a couple weeks in Montgomery with Nate and his family.

Boy. He's really into this boycott thing. And now with the Election season coming on, he's rabid about black voter registration.

He won't be back again this semester.

(pause)

I worry so much about his safety.

KATIE

(to Bill)

I suppose you've heard that Tom isn't coming back this semester either. He's helping Nate on this voter registration drive.

BILL

No I didn't hear

I moved into the House this year, so Tom and I won't be rooming together again.

(BILL looks at his watch.)

Opps! Gotta go to Randle's Physics. See you 'round.

(as he walks off)

Boy I feel so out of touch.

JULIE

Amen! He can say that again.

(Lights fade out)

SCENE TWELVE

(Soft spotlight comes up upstage center on Reverend Thomas' church in Montgomery. REVEREND THOMAS is standing at a lectern. NATE, TOM, MRS. WILLIAMS and various CHORUS MEMBERS are standing behind him. It is late September, 1956.)

REVEREND THOMAS

Yes, Brothers and Sisters. God works in many strange and wondrous ways...

When the Philistines sent their armies led by the Giant Goliath, to slay the Israelites... God didn't give them the lightning strikes and earthquakes they must have thought they needed. He gave them a boy with a slingshot.

And when the Jews (Yes, and Gentiles too) were downtrodden and without hope under the Roman Empire... God didn't send mighty legions led by a warrior on a fiery chariot out of the sky to destroy the Roman Armies. He sent a carpenter's son to come in peace.

And when the Negro in America has endured shame and degradation since the 16th century... God again does not unleash the forces of nature or His heavenly armies. He gives us a simple seamstress to show us the way.

God may work in strange ways... BUT HE GETS THE JOB DONE!

And his servant, Rosa Parks, has shown us how to get the job done... by peaceful but determined protest of the injustices heaped upon us.

God Bless Rosa Parks. And God Bless our bus boycott.

We shall overcome.

*(ALL sing **Jesus, Holy Master**)*

ALL

JESUS IS OUR HOLY MASTER.
JESUS IS OUR ONLY MASTER.
WE SHALL HAVE NO OTHER MASTER.
HEAVEN PRAISE.

HE WILL ALWAYS WALK AMONG US.
HEAL OUR WOUNDS AND COME TO HOLD US.
HE WILL ALWAYS BE THERE,
THROUGH OUR DARKEST DAYS.

COME AND FEEL THE POWER OF JESUS.
COME AND SHARE THE POWER OF JESUS.
NOT IN SWORDS OR ARMIES.
CHOOSE HIS WAYS.

COME GIVE LOVE TO ALL AROUND US.
FRIEND OR FOE OR THOSE WHO BOUND US.
LOVE THY BROTHER NOW AND
YOU WILL SING GOD'S PRAISE.

(Light fades out slowly with voices)

JESUS IS OUR HOLY MASTER.
JESUS IS OUR ONLY MASTER.
WE SHALL HAVE NO OTHER MASTER

SCENE THIRTEEN

(The stage lights come up on the Newland campus Green (bare stage). Two groups of pickets are marching in circles on opposite sides of the stage. One group carries signs that say "No Referendum!". The other group's signs say "Referendum Now!" BILL and SHEILA picket with the "No Referendum" group: KATIE and JULIE with the "Referendum Now" group. It is October 15, 1956.)

THE "REFERENDUM NOW" GROUP

No Jim Crow. Discrimination must go.

THE "NO REFERENDUM GROUP"

Take it slow. Save the status quo.

(The opposing groups sing It's About A Man's Traditions / It's About A Man's Condition)

THE "NO REFERENDUM" GROUP

IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S TRADITIONS.
IT'S ABOUT WHAT HE HOLDS DEAR.
YOU CAN'T TEAR DOWN THIS GRAAT BOND.
TO LET JUST ONE MAN BELONG.
IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S TRADITIONS,
SO CLEAR, SO FIRM, SO TRUE.
KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
FOR YEARS THEY'VE SERVED YOU.

THE "REFERENDUM NOW" GROUP

IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S CONDITION.
IT'S ABOUT WHAT HE FEELS HERE. *(pointing to their hearts)*
BAN HIM. LOSE A PART OF US.
WE'LL BE LESS, THAT'S OBVIOUS.
IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S CONDITION.
THE TALENTS THAT HE BRINGS.
KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
THESE ARE PRECIOUS THINGS.

THE "NO REFERENDUM" GROUP

IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S TRADITIONS.
THE WAY IT'S ALWAYS BEEN.
LET IN BUT ONE INFIDEL.
WATCH THE ORDER GO TO HELL.
IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S TRADITIONS,
SO CLEAR, SO FIRM, SO TRUE.
KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.

FOR YEARS THEY'VE SERVED YOU.

THE "REFERENDUM NOW" GROUP

IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S CONDITION.
TO BE BETTER THAN HE IS..
HOW TO CLIMB FROM HERE TO THERE.
TO BE PUT DOWN ... THAT'S NOT FAIR.
IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S CONDITION.
THE TALENTS THAT HE BRINGS.
KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
THESE ARE PRECIOUS THINGS.

THE "NO REFERENDUM" GROUP

IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S TRADITIONS.
IT'S THE WAY THAT ALL GREEKS ARE.
WE CAN'T CHANGE IN ONE EYE'S BLINK.
WE NEED TIME TO TALK AND THINK.
IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S TRADITIONS,
SO CLEAR, SO FIRM, SO TRUE.
KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
FOR YEARS THEY'VE SERVED YOU.

THE "REFERENDUM NOW" GROUP

IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S CONDITION.
IT'S ABOUT RIGHT HERE AND NOW.
NOT SOME MORATORIUM.
TO A DAY THAT NEVER COMES.
IT'S ABOUT A MAN'S CONDITION.
THE TALENTS THAT HE BRINGS.
KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
THESE ARE PRECIOUS THINGS.

(Both groups repeat the last two lines, at each other, as they unwind from their circles and exit upstage on their respective sides.)

THE "NO REFERENDUM" GROUP

KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
FOR YEARS THEY'VE SERVED YOU.

THE "REFERENDUM NOW" GROUP

KEEP THEM. GUARD THEM. DON'T DISCARD THEM.
THESE ARE PRECIOUS THINGS.

(KATIE and JULIE remain onstage.)

(As the song ends, a GIRL rushes up to JULIE with a note.)

JULIE

(to Katie, as she reads the note)

Oh my god! It's a telephone message from Nate's mother.
Nate and Tom never came home last night from a voter drive in the next county.
They're missing.

(Sobs)

Oh my god!

(Blackout)

SCENE FOURTEEN

*(The scene is a flashback to the prior night... on a country road
somewhere in Alabama. A dark, bare stage... backlit or strobe lights to
barely make out silhouettes.)*

*(There is the sound of a truck stopping and doors slamming shut.
Voices with strong Southern accents speak.)*

1ST ASSAILANT

Well, well boys. And what have we caught us here.
Looks like a couple of niggers out to make trouble.

2ND ASSAILANT

Yeh! And looky how light that one is. Looks almost white.

1ST ASSAILANT

Can't be. No white folk make trouble for other white folk.

(Pause as assailants move closer)

Hear tell these two's been preachin' votin' and democracy.

Looks like these preachers need to learn how democracy works around here.

(Pause)

Let's teach 'em boys.

*(Nate and Tom are beaten (with ax handles) at center stage. Groans and
cries from NATE and Tom).*

(Suddenly two shotgun blasts ring out behind the beating.)

A MALE VOICE

(yelling from off stage)

Hey! Leave them alone! Leave them alone!

(The ASSAILANTS rush off and the stage goes dark, truck doors slam and stage is quiet except for the sound of truck driving off.)

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Lights come up on the Newland campus Green. Bare stage. The day after the referendum demonstration and Julie's receiving the telephone message... October 16, 1956.)

(KATIE and JULIE are headed across campus. BILL runs to catch up with them.)

BILL

Julie! Katie!

(The GIRLS stop and turn towards Bill.)

BILL

(very distraught)

Oh, Julie. I heard late last night. I'm so sorry.

And Katie. Why Tom?

Why Nate and Tom?

(BILL covers his face and turns away.)

JULIE

Bill? Bill?

(BILL does not respond.)

JULIE

Bill. It's all right.

I just learned. They've found Nate and Tom.

They've been badly beaten, but they're going to be OK.

A redneck (as Nate would say) sawmill operator drove off their assailants with his shotgun, gave the boys first aid and kept them safe overnight.

(BILL looks up and, with a sigh of relief, utters:)

BILL

Thank God.

KATIE

So you see. Everything is put back the way it was.

BILL

No, Katie.

I was awake all night thinking about Tom and a lot of things.
I'll never be the way I was.

*(Bill sings **I Can't See Tomorrow From Here**)*

BILL

I CAN'T SEE TOMORROW FROM HERE.
YET IT SEEMS VERY CLEAR THAT A NEW ERA'S COMING.
WHERE WE MUST JUDGE RIGHT FROM WRONG.
AND NOT JUST GO ALONG, IN LOCK-STEP THAT'S SO NUMBING.

REFRAIN

AS WE LET GO OF OUR YOUTH,
WE MUST SEEK OUT THE TRUTH,
DESPITE HOW HARD OR PAINFUL.
SEARCHING OUT EACH RAY OF LIGHT.
THAT MIGHT PENETRATE THE NIGHT.
I CAN'T SEE TOMORROW FROM HERE.
YET IT SEEMS VERY CLEAR.
YET IT SEEMS VERY CLEAR.

A MAN CAN BE CHAINED IN HIS MIND.
JUST THE WAY OUR OWN KIND, CHAINED THE SLAVE TO SUBMISSION.
THINKING HE MUST GO ALONG.
IF HE WANTS TO BELONG.
THAT'S THE PRICE OF ADMISSION.

REFRAIN

AS WE LET GO OF OUR YOUTH,
WE MUST SEEK OUT THE TRUTH,
DESPITE HOW HARD OR PAINFUL.
SEARCHING OUT EACH RAY OF LIGHT.
THAT MIGHT PENETRATE THE NIGHT.
I CAN'T SEE TOMORROW FROM HERE.
YET IT SEEMS VERY CLEAR.
YET IT SEEMS VERY CLEAR.

(As Bill sings KATIE and JULIE have drifted toward the wings stage right.)

(As Bill finishes, JULIE exits but Katie remains.)

*(BILL looks toward Katie as she sings **You Don't See Me-Verse 2**.)*

KATIE

LOOK CLOSE ... YOU'LL SEE TWO EYES THAT YOU MAKE SHINE AND SPARKLE.... YOU'LL SEE A SMILE THAT GLOWS FOR YOU. YOU'LL HEAR A SIGH THAT COMES UPON ME AT EACH MEETING... EXCITEMENT IN MY LAUGHTER TOO.

CHORUS

YOU SEE ME AS YOUR PAL. A FRIEND... AND GOOD OL' GAL.
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.
YOU SEE ME ALWAYS HERE AND GOOD FUN TO BE NEAR,
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.

WHY IS IT MY LOVE IS SO TRANSPARENT TO YOU?

WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THIS HEART JUST ACHING TO BE TRUE?
YOU SEE ME SHARE YOUR CARES... E'VN OTHER LOVE AFFAIRS.
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.
BUT YOU DON'T SEE ME.

(SHEILA enters from the wings upstage left and moves downstage.)

(BILL looks back and forth between the girls as Sheila sings the chorus of Sheila .)

SHEILA

MY NAME IS SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A .
SHEILA, AND I REALLY LOVE TO PLAY.
SHEILA...AND I ALWAYS GET MY WAY.
SHEILA... SH-E-I-L-A.

(BILL steps toward Sheila and KATIE turns to exit stage right.)

(BILL stops and turns quickly toward Katie.)

BILL

Wait Katie. I do see you.

(BILL rushes to Katie and turns her back-around by the shoulders. Then, taking her hands in his at arms length and looking fondly into her eyes, BILL speaks again.)

BILL

Katie... I DO see you.

(SHEILA gasps, hand to mouth, and storms off upstage left.)

(BILL puts his arm around Katie's shoulder, turns her to the right wings and they exit together.)

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE SIXTEEN

(Lights come up on the Social Room of the Psi Alpha Mu fraternity house. Bare stage with a sign "Psi Alpha House-Party". It is House-Parties Weekend, the Spring of 1957.)

(All actors, some with beverages, are on stage.. KATIE and JULIE are talking upstage left. BILL, NATE and TOM are talking center stage.)

BILL

Well I guess you can't stop progress.
Even though it's not my thing, it looks like rock-'n-roll is here to stay.

NATE

I guess so... At least if you listen to our Social Chairman.

TOM

And I guess a new wave is coming too.
The fraternity non-discrimination referendum not only was put to a vote, but passed overwhelmingly.

NATE

And the Montgomery bus boycott has succeeded.

TOM

(to Nate)

And I am so happy to have you as a brother with me in Psi Alpha.

(to Bill)

And so glad, Bill, that you decided to switch houses and join us.

(Pause)

NATE

(pointing to Bill)

Yeh! But don't you think his skin is a funny color?

BILL & TOM

(To Nate, with Tom pushing Nate)

Get out!!!

(THEY laugh)

*(All sing and shake to **I Wanna Rock With You**)*

ALL

COME ON BABY, LIGHT MY SOUL.
COME ON BABY, ROCK-'N-ROLL.
PRETTY BABY, STRUT YOUR CHARMS.
SHAKE THAT BODY. WAVE THOSE ARMS.
HEY, BABY. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.
BABY. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.

COME ON CUTIE, DROP THOSE SHOES.
COME ON CUTIE, AIN'T THE BLUES.
PRETTY CUTIE, YOU'RE THE MOST.
BURN THE FLOOR UP. JUST LIKE TOAST.
HEY, CUTIE. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.
CUTIE. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.

COME ON SUGAR, GETTIN' HIGH.
COME ON SUGAR, YOU CAN FLY.
PRETTY SUGAR, GET THAT BEAT.
UP THE TEMPO. UP THE HEAT
HEY, SUGAR. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.
SUGAR. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.

(Director may wish to insert a rock-'n-roll dance number here.)

ALL

COME ON BABY, LIGHT MY SOUL.
COME ON BABY, ROCK-'N-ROLL.
PRETTY BABY, STRUT YOUR CHARMS.
SHAKE THAT BODY. WAVE THOSE ARMS.
HEY, BABY. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.
BABY. I WANNA ROCK WITH YOU.

(Dancer/singers hoot and cheer as lights fade)

CURTAIN

*Curtain Calls to strains of **'55**)*