

TRUNCATED SAMPLE SCRIPT

This is a series of excerpted scenes from the full script, which runs to 103 pages--about 100 minutes in performance. Also included in this truncated script is a sampling of the 60-page appendix *How to Produce 'It's A Wonderful Life' as a Radio-On-Stage Show*--featuring casting monologues, a sound effects "cookbook," extensive production advice and detailed technical information.

If you wish to secure the performance rights to the script, pre-recorded music tracks and pre-recorded sound effects, contact Info@RuyaSonic.com

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Adapted for radio from the Frank Capra film

by Tony Palermo

RuyaSonic Radio Dramas
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Los Angeles, CA 90019
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TRUNCATED SAMPLE SCRIPT
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BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

Producers of *It's A Wonderful Life* must give credit to Anthony E. Palermo in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play, and all instances in which the title of the play appears in advertising or publicizing the production, including programs and playbills. The name of the Author must also appear on a separate line, immediately following the title of the play, and must be in type size not less than 30% of the size of type used in the title of the play.

Billing shall be in the following form:

(name of producer)
presents

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

Adapted for radio-on-stage by
ANTHONY E. PALERMO

Original score composed and arranged by
JONATHAN GREEN

Long bio:

ANTHONY E. PALERMO (PLAYWRIGHT) is a radio dramatist, performer, and educator based in Los Angeles. His work is heard on NPR and XM Satellite Radio as well as in audiobooks and on stage with L.A. Theatre Works, California Artists Radio Theater, numerous theatre troupes, and on national tours. His sound effects work on Yuri Rasovsky's *Sherlock Holmes Theatre* contributed to its winning the *Audie Award*--the Oscar of audiobooks in 2006. He directed the 60th anniversary production of Norman Corwin's *On a Note of Triumph*--also recreating Bernard Herrmann's orchestral score. Over the past year, Tony provided live SFX for shows such as Eric Idle's *What About Dick?*, CART's *Wizard of Oz*, LATW's *Broadway Bound* and *The Rivalry*, as well as performing 65 solo shows at the California State Fair. Tony's *Sonic Storytelling Studio* at San Francisco's Exploratorium is a permanent exhibit that has seen thousands of visitors since 2006. His *Sparx Audio Adventures* assembly programs and workshops are popular with schools and colleges across California, the U.S. and the world. Tony also hosts the RuyaSonic Radio Drama Resources website, offering info on writing, directing, scoring, engineering, and sound effects. www.RuyaSonic.com

Short bio:

ANTHONY E. PALERMO (PLAYWRIGHT) is an Audie Award-winning radio performer, dramatist, and educator who has produced dramas and workshops for broadcast, stage, and schools. Tony hosts the RuyaSonic Radio Drama Resources website, offering info on writing, directing, scoring, engineering, and sound effects. www.RuyaSonic.com

NOTE: Up-to-date text of the bios is available at www.RuyaSonic.com/tp2bio.htm You can cut & paste the text into your playbill or program and thus not have to worry about typos.

IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE - for radio-on-stage production

CAST

GEORGE BAILEY	Dreamer/Loan Officer (male)
CLARENCE	Angel, Second Grade (male)
MARY HATCH BAILEY	George's Wife/Librarian (female)
SUPERINTENDENT	Boss of Angels (male/female)
UNCLE BILLY	Absent-minded clerk (male)
MR. POTTER	Warped, old financier (male)
MA BAILEY	George's mother (female)
VIOLET BICK	Easy girl (female)
BERT	Local policeman (male)
ERNIE	Cab driver (male)
NICK	Ornery shareholder/bartender
POP BAILEY	George's father (male)
SAM WAINWRIGHT	Successful businessman (male)
GOWER	Pharmacist (male/female)
MRS. HATCH	Mary's mother (female)
HARRY BAILEY	George's younger brother
ANNOUNCER	Radio announcer (male/female)
MARTINI	Italian café owner (male/female)
CHARLIE	Difficult shareholder (male/female)
COUSIN TILLY	Loan office clerk (female)
YOUNG GEORGE BAILEY	Boy, age 10 (male)
TOLL-TAKER	Toll-taker (male/female)
ZUZU BAILEY	Girl, age 5 (female)
JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (female)
DR. CAMPBELL	Board President (male/female)
MR. WELCH	Irate husband (male)
BANK TELLER	Bank clerk (male/female)
EUSTACE	Loan office clerk (male/female)
CARTER	Bank Examiner (male/female)
PETEEY BAILEY	Boy, age 9 (male/female)
MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (female)
IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR	Impatient neighbor (male/female)
RANDY	Shareholder (male/female)
MRS. THOMPSON	Shareholder (female)
SHERIFF	County Sheriff (male/female)
EDDY	Shareholder (male/female)

1-2 sound effects artists for manual and pre-recorded SFX.
A live keyboardist is optional: Organ and piano.

After the script there is a 60-page appendix on How to Produce 'Wonderful Life' as a Radio-on-Stage Show.

NOTE: To print just the script, specify pages 1-109. To print just the appendix, specify pages 110-167

Visit Tony Palermo's Radio Drama Resources website: www.RuyaSonic.com

Other Materials Available For Your Production

PRE-RECORDED SOUND EFFECTS TRACKS:

I offer 18 pre-recorded sound effects tracks—30 minutes worth—of the more unusual sounds (crickets, wind, jumping in the river splashes, harp glissandos, the 78 RPM record of "Buffalo Gals", 1940s traffic, period telephones ringing, etc.)

While your troupe's Sound Designer could assemble such sounds from various SFX collections, here, they are already edited, ambience is added and sequences are laid out in sync with the dialogue in the script. It will cost you more to do this yourself than to purchase these tracks from me. They are available as downloadable MP3 tracks or as audio CDs. See the SFX section of the appendix to this sample script for a detailed listing of the tracks.

NOTE: sounds generated by the characters, such as doors, footsteps, plates, forks, bells, typing, etc, are NOT included. You will have to produce those manually—and in coordination with your actors' pacing and delivery.

PRE-RECORDED MUSIC TRACKS:

I also offer pre-recorded music tracks—35 minutes worth. These 47 tracks cover scene transitions and underscore the drama—often in sync with the scripted dialogue. The instrumentation is primarily a 1940s theater organ, but also in a few places, Italian accordion, piano, and a jazz combo. This authentic musical underscoring adds greatly to the production. They are available as downloadable MP3 tracks or as audio CDs. See the MUSIC section of the appendix to this sample script for a detailed listing of the tracks.

NOTE: These music tracks are NOT 1940s-style orchestral music cues nor are they Broadway-style musical songs. Instead, the tracks function the way 1940s movie music does, but use mostly organ. You could hire a composer to create a score, but that would cost you more time and trouble—and money—than using the tracks I offer.

SHEET MUSIC FOR THE ORIGINAL SCORE:

Additionally, I offer sheet music that matches the above-described original score--to allow a single, live keyboardist to accompany your show. The instrumentation consists of organ and piano. The score is available as a downloadable PDF document.

NOTE: The accordion and jazz-combo cues would be produced by pre-recorded tracks—including when you purchase the sheet music.

ALSO: Many troupes find it useful to purchase both the sheet music AND the pre-recorded music tracks—since this allows the actors and crew to rehearse the full show without having the accompanist present at every rehearsal.

Contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com for information.

-- INTRO --

1. MUSIC: [MUS-01] "RADIO THEATRE THEME"--ESTABLISH AND UNDER.

2* ANNOUNCER: [CUE] And now, the _____ Radio Theatre...
Starring _____, _____, _____,
and _____, ...
Along with _____, _____, _____,
_____, _____, _____,
_____ on the organ,
sound effects artist _____,
and myself, _____,
in "It's a Wonderful Life!"

3. SFX: CUE THE LIVE AUDIENCE APPLAUSE

-- ACT ONE --

1. MUSIC: [MUS-02] (BED) "WONDERFUL THEME"--SEGUES TO HEAVENLY.

2* ANNOUNCER: [CUE] This is the story of George Bailey--an ordinary man who lives in Bedford Falls, New York. But George Bailey--more than anything--wanted to see the world--the exciting world that lay somewhere beyond his home town. George had big dreams. But also big responsibilities. Of course, sometimes the two don't exactly fit together. Sometimes happiness is not over the rainbow, but right under your nose.

However, our story doesn't begin in Bedford Falls. In fact, it doesn't begin anywhere in this world...

3. MUSIC: [MUS-03] MUSIC CROSSFADES TO "HEAVENLY"

4. ANNOUNCER: ...It begins... in Heaven..., where the Superintendent of Angels is briefing an apprentice angel named Clarence...

5. MUSIC: "HEAVENLY"--FADES UNDER...

SCENE 1 - EXT. HEAVEN - DAY
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)

ENGINEER'S NOTE:

When the Superintendent and Clarence are speaking in Heaven, their voices will have a reverb applied throughout. When Clarence is on Earth, he will be "dry."

6. SFX: TINGLING "STARRY" WIND CHIMES--UNDER

7. CLARENCE: [REVERB] [CUE] Clarence Oddbody--angel, second class--reporting for duty, your honor!

1. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] What? They sent me an Angel--second class? You mean you haven't earned your wings... yet?
2. CLARENCE: Um... No, not yet. But I'm hoping this mission will do the trick! Are you really sending me down to Earth? Gosh! I haven't been to Earth since that time I got...
3. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Yes! You see, there's a man in trouble down there.
4. CLARENCE: Good!
5. SUPERINTENDENT: No, bad, Clarence! At precisely ten forty-five P.M.--Earth time--a man named George Bailey will be thinking about ending his life.
6. CLARENCE: Oh, my! Ending his life? Well, I know that's bad!
7. SUPERINTENDENT: Good, Clarence! I'm glad you understand. So, you must stop him--if you can. Now... let me brief you about George Bailey's case history. You see, when George was a boy...
8. CLARENCE: Oh, that's okay, your honor. All I need is a plan!
9. SUPERINTENDENT: A... "plan?"
10. CLARENCE: Y'see, your honor. I'm reading "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." Mark Twain.
11. SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, I'm familiar with the book.
12. CLARENCE: Well, Tom Sawyer always has a plan.

1. SUPERINTENDENT: (SKEPTICALLY) I see... Well, if you can help George Bailey with your "plan," you just may get your wings. Say... how long have you been waiting for your wings?
2. CLARENCE: Over two hundred years.
3. SUPERINTENDENT: Two hundred years? ... Ulp. Well... George Bailey's going to need a miracle.
4. CLARENCE: Yes! Thank you for your confidence in me, Boss. I'll leave immediately...
5. SUPERINTENDENT: Wait, Clarence! (SIGHS) "Plan" or no--first, some background... Now... when George Bailey was a boy, he and his friends snuck onto mean Mr. Potter's property... and were sliding over a frozen pond on a shovel...
6. WALLA: BOYS PLAYING ON ICE. "PRETTY GOOD, GEORGE!"
"MY TURN!" "HARRY'S TURN." "HERE I GO..."
- 7* SUPERINTENDENT: ...but George's younger brother--Harry--fell through the ice...
8. SFX: ICE CRACKS
- 9* WALLA: BOYS PANIC--THEN, IN SYNC WITH DIALOGUE,
CHEER
10. SFX TRACK: [FX-01] SPLASH FOLLOWED BY SECOND SPLASH--FADE UNDER
- 11* CLARENCE: And George jumped in to save Harry...
12. SUPERINTENDENT: Yes. But as a result, George has a bad ear.
13. CLARENCE: Sure! The icy water, infection... I get it.

1. SUPERINTENDENT: Now look, Clarence. A few months later, Young George was working after school at Gower's drug store. But on this day, Mr. Gower received a telegram informing him that his only son had just died of influenza. Devastated, Mr. Gower was trying to drown his sorrow in whiskey, when...

2. MUSIC: [MUS-04] (BRIDGE) "GOWER'S SAD DRUGSTORE"--FADE UNDER.

SCENE 2 - INT. GOWER'S DRUG STORE - DAY (MAY 1919)
(GOWER, YOUNG GEORGE)

3* SFX: PHONE RINGS (3X)

4. SFX: GOWER PICKS UP HANDSET.

5* GOWER: [CUE] (DRUNKENLY) Gower's drugs.... Mrs. Blaine? ... What?... Well, George should have delivered that medicine by now! ... Wait, here he comes. I'll send it right over. ... G'bye!

6. SFX: GOWER SLAMS DOWN HANDSET.

7* GOWER: George! Did you deliver that prescription?

8. YOUNG GEORGE: Well, uh... no, Mr. Gower. I...

9. GOWER: Why didn't you deliver that right away? The little Blaine girl's sick! You lost it, didn't you?

10. YOUNG GEORGE: No, Mr. Gower, here it is.

11. GOWER: Here?! (ANGRY) Why you...

12. SFX: GOWER SLAPS GEORGE'S FACE (1X)

13* YOUNG GEORGE: (IN PAIN) Ow! Mr. Gower! My ear! My ear!

1. GOWER: You good for nothing... (SFX: SLAP) Lazy loafer.. (SFX: SLAP)
2. YOUNG GEORGE: Ow! You're hurting my sore ear!
3. GOWER: What are you trying to do...? (SFX: SLAP) Ruin me...? (SFX: SLAP)
4. YOUNG GEORGE: Ow...! No, Mr. Gower! (IN TEARS) You put something wrong in those pills. I...
5. GOWER: Shut up! You little...! (SFX: SLAP)
6. YOUNG GEORGE: (SOBBING) Look! I know you're sad... You're upset about your son dying. You've been drinking! But you put something bad in these capsules. I didn't know what to do...
7. GOWER: Huh?... the... capsules?
8. YOUNG GEORGE: Look at them, Mr. Gower! You took the powder from this bottle. It's... poison!
(WHIMPERING)
9. GOWER: Poison? Poison? (REALIZES) Oh, my God!
10. YOUNG GEORGE: Don't hurt my sore ear again. Please!
11. GOWER: Poison? (HUGGING GEORGE) Oh, George, George, George...
- 12* MUSIC: [MUS-05] (BED) "TENDER MOMENT"--UNDER
13. YOUNG GEORGE: (SOBBING) That's why I didn't deliver the medicine, Mr. Gower! I wanted to ask my Pop-- to make sure! But he was busy... He couldn't...
14. GOWER: (SOBS) George, George... Forgive me! George...

1. YOUNG GEORGE: I won't ever tell a soul, Mr. Gower. I know you're sad. I won't ever tell anyone... hope to die...
2. GOWER: (SOBS) George, George...
3. MUSIC: [MUS-06] CROSS-FADE INTO "HEAVENLY"--UNDER.

SCENE 3 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)

4. SFX: TINGLING "STARRY" WIND CHIMES--UNDER
- 5* SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] [CUE] Little Mary Hatch was at the soda fountain. She heard it all, but she, too, never told a soul.
6. CLARENCE: [REVERB] My...! George sure took a beating! But he did the right thing.
7. SUPERINTENDENT: Well, George grew up and he wanted to go to college, but there just wasn't enough money, so he worked four years at the Bailey Building and Loan Association...
8. CLARENCE: "Building and Loan?"
9. SUPERINTENDENT: Yes. George's father was in the building and loan business. He and George's Uncle Billy-- but it was a case of high ideals and low bank account.
10. CLARENCE: Those two always seem to go together.
11. SUPERINTENDENT: Err, yes. Anyway... George worked for his father and saved enough to pay for college. But first, he was going to summer in Europe-- working his way across on a cattle boat.
(FADING UNDER) Full of wanderlust, George wanted to do a little traveling before college...

1* MUSIC: FADE "HEAVENLY" QUICKLY UNDER.

SCENE 4 - INT. BAILEY DINING ROOM - EVENING (JUNE 1928)
(GEORGE, POP, HARRY)

2. SFX: DINNER PLATES/FORKS--UNDER FOR A WHILE.

3* POP BAILEY: [CUE] Another piece of apple pie, George?

4. GEORGE: No. Not for me. I've had enough. Gee, it's hard to believe this is my last night at the ol' "Bailey boarding house."

5. POP BAILEY: We're all going to miss you, George.

6. GEORGE: Aw, I'm going to miss you, too, Pop--and Mother. And everyone in Bedford Falls.

7. POP BAILEY: You've certainly earned your chance, son.

8. GEORGE: Oh, and I'm gonna take it! (NOTICES) But, hey, what's the matter, Pop? You look kinda tired.

9. POP BAILEY: I don't know. (SIGH) I had another run-in with Henry Potter today.

10. GEORGE: Mr. Potter? That ol' money-grubbing buzzard? I thought when you put him on the Board of Directors, he'd ease up on us a little.

11. POP BAILEY: So did I. (SIGHS) He's the richest man in town...

12. GEORGE: ...and the most miserable, if you ask me. I don't understand somebody like Mr. Potter. I mean, he can't begin to spend all the money he has...

13. POP BAILEY: Well, Potter is crippled... spent his life in that wheelchair. He's frustrated. Think about it.

1. GEORGE: But Potter owns about everything he wants in town... everything except the Bailey Building and Loan.
2. POP BAILEY: Maybe, that's why he hates us. To him, we're just a bunch of foolish...
3. HARRY BAILEY: (DISTANT--ENTERING) Hey, George! Can I borrow your tuxedo cufflinks for the dance?
4. GEORGE: Sure! Help yourself, Harry!
5. HARRY BAILEY: Well, where are they? Here?--in your suitcase?
6. POP BAILEY: C'mon, Harry! George won't be needing a tuxedo on a cattle boat!
7. HARRY BAILEY: You never know... Say, where'd you get that beat up old suitcase anyway, George?
8. GEORGE: At the Emporium, Harry! Mr. Gower bought it for me.
9. HARRY BAILEY: A going-away present?
10. GEORGE: Yep! Far away! Y'see, one of these days, that bag will be plastered with exotic travel stickers. Y'know... like Rome... Athens... Baghdad... Samarkand...
11. POP BAILEY: (AMUSED) I guess you're gonna have a pretty full summer, George.
12. GEORGE: Oh....! I'm gonna have a pretty full life!
13. HARRY BAILEY: So, why don't you come to the dance tonight?
14. GEORGE: Your graduation dance? Naw...! I'd be bored to death.
15. HARRY BAILEY: Oh, but what a wonderful death!

1. POP BAILEY: There'll be lots of pretty girls, son.
2. HARRY BAILEY: ...And we're using that new gym floor tonight.
3. POP BAILEY: That was a brilliant idea of yours, George. Putting the pool under the gym saved the high school thousands!
4. GEORGE: Well, Pop, that's just the start--for me. You wait! What I'm gonna do! What I'm gonna see...
5. HARRY BAILEY: Like the tuxedo cufflinks?
6. GEORGE: Oh..., Try upstairs, Harry--my top drawer.
7. HARRY BAILEY: (EXITING) Okay. Yikes! I gotta hurry! Bye!
8. GEORGE: (CHUCKLES) Was I like that when I graduated from high school, Pop?
9. POP BAILEY: Pretty much.... (SIGHS) I sure wish we could send Harry to college with you, George.
10. GEORGE: Yeah, but Harry and I've got that all figured out. He'll take over my job at the Building and Loan, work and save for four years like I did, then he'll go.
11. POP BAILEY: He's pretty young for that job.
12. GEORGE: He's no younger than I was.
13. POP BAILEY: You were just born older, George.
14. GEORGE: How's that, Pop? Y'know, my "trick" ear.
15. POP BAILEY: (LOUDER) I said, "you were born old!"
16. GEORGE: Well then, that's why I've got to hurry now. There's a whole world out there, waiting for me to conquer it.

1. POP BAILEY: Um... George... When you get out of college, you wouldn't consider coming back to the Building and Loan, would you?
2. GEORGE: What...? Come back...? Oh, no. Now, Pop... I just... couldn't! I couldn't face being cooped up for the rest of my life in a shabby little office with all those...
3. POP BAILEY: I see...
4. GEORGE: I... (CATCHES HIMSELF) Oh, I'm sorry, Pop. I didn't mean that... But it's just this... business of nickels and dimes...
5. POP BAILEY: I know... spending your life trying to figure how to save three cents on a length of pipe... I understand, son.
6. GEORGE: Do you, Pop? (SIGHS) Staying here, I'd just go crazy. Y'see, I want to do something... big! Something... important!
7. POP BAILEY: But--in a small way--we are doing something important, George. In that... "shabby little office" we help people to own their own homes. We help their dreams come true.
8. GEORGE: I know. I know, Pop, but... (SIGHS) But... most of my friends have already finished college. I feel if I didn't get away, I'd... I'd bust!
9. POP BAILEY: (SIGH) I guess you're right.
10. GEORGE: Um... You know what I mean, don't you?

1. POP BAILEY: I know that this town's no place for anybody... unless you crawl to Mr. Potter. You've got talent, George--a gift! So travel! Get yourself that education. Then... do what you want, son!
2. GEORGE: Y'know, Pop? Ready for a shock? I think you're a pretty great guy.
3. POP BAILEY: Well, thank you, George. Look, um, why don't you go on over to Harry's dance? See that new gym floor over the pool. I'm sure you'll have a good time.
4. GEORGE: Well... it is my last night in Bedford Falls. I guess I could drop in... Maybe I will, at that... (EXITING) See ya later, Pop!
5. MUSIC: [MUS-07] (BRIDGE) GLISS TO "HEAVENLY"--FADES UNDER.

SCENE 5 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)

6. SFX: TINGLING "STARRY" WIND CHIMES--UNDER
- 7* CLARENCE: [REVERB] [CUE] So... George Bailey went to a dance. Is that important, Boss?
8. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Why, it was at the dance that he fell in the pool with Mary Hatch--and most of the rest of the class of nineteen-twenty-eight.
- 9* CLARENCE: (BEING "CLEVER") So George and Mary went "overboard" at the dance. Heh-heh.
10. SUPERINTENDENT: Ahem. Later, he was walking her home. They were feeling pretty good, Clarence. (FADING UNDER) As a matter of fact... wonderful...

1. MUSIC: [MUS-08] (BRIDGE) LAST 2 BARS OF "BUFFALO GALS" AND
LET ACTORS TAKE OVER SINGING IT.

SCENE 6 - EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

(GEORGE, MARY, IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR, UNCLE BILLY)

2* SFX TRACK: [FX-02] CRICKETS #1--UNDER.

3. SFX: GEORGE & MARY WALK ON SIDEWALK--UNDER.
DISTANT DOG BARKS (2X)

4* GEORGE AND MARY: [CUE] (SINGING--IN UNISON)
"Buffalo Gals, can't you come out tonight?
Come out tonight?
Come out tonight?
Buffalo Gals, can't you come out tonight...
(HARMONIZING) aaaaaannnnnnnd dance by the
light of the mooooooooooooooon." (SFX: DOG
HOWLS ALONG)

5. GEORGE: Hot dog! Eh, Mary?

6. MARY: We sound beautiful, George!

7. GEORGE: Well we don't look beautiful. You should have
seen me scramble to get these dry clothes out
of the locker room!

8. MARY: (CHUCKLES) I didn't know you were the
"football" type.

9. GEORGE: I didn't know you were the royal robe type.

10. MARY: Didn't you, now? (MOCK REGAL) My train, sir!

11. GEORGE: (MOCK CHIVALROUS) Your caboose, milady...
(IN AWE) Hey, you know something, Mary? I'd
almost say you were the prettiest girl in
town. You look wonderful.

12. MARY: Well, why don't you say it?

1. GEORGE: I don't know... Maybe I will. (PAUSE) But what happened to you? How'd you get so... "grown up?"
2. MARY: I'm gaining on you, George. Maybe we'll be in the same class at college.
3. GEORGE: Same class? Hey, how old are you anyway?
4. MARY: Eighteen.
5. GEORGE: Eighteen...! Why it seems only last year you were just... seven-teen!
6. MARY: What? Am I too young...? Or too old?
7. GEORGE: No, no, no. You're exactly... right. Your age sorta fits you. I'm just saying you look a little older... without your... clothes on.
8. MARY: What?
9. GEORGE: I-I mean without your dress on. No! I mean...
10. MARY: What do you mean, George?
11. GEORGE: I... mean... (CHANGING THE SUBJECT) Hey... Look where we are!
-
12. SFX: GEORGE AND MARY STOP WALKING.
13. MARY: (SIGHS) Ah! The old Granville house...
14. GEORGE: Yeah...! I gotta throw a rock! Bust a window!
15. MARY: Oh, no, George! Even though it's deserted, I love this old place. It's full of romance.
8. GEORGE: Romance? Naw! With deserted houses, you make a wish and then try to bust a window.
9. MARY: But it's such a lovely old house. I want to live there someday.

1. GEORGE: In there? Go on! I wouldn't live there if I were a ghost! Now, watch... That window on the second floor... Watch this. Here we go...
- 2* SFX TRACK: [FX-03] (PAUSE) DISTANT WINDOW SHATTERED BY ROCK #1.
- 3* GEORGE: How about that, huh? Pretty good shot, eh? Broke that window!
4. MARY: What'd you wish for, George?
5. GEORGE: Wish? Oh... I don't know... Hmmm... Not just one wish, Mary--a whole hatful of 'em. Y'see... I'm leaving this crummy little town. I want to see the world! Italy! Greece! The Parthenon! The Colosseum! And that's just this summer!
6. MARY: (HUMORING HIM) That's a good start, George.
7. GEORGE: Yeah... And then I'm coming back and going to college--to see what they know, of course...
8. MARY: Of course...
9. GEORGE: And--and then, then I'm gonna build things! I'm gonna build... air fields! And sky-scrapers--a hundred stories high! And bridges--a mile long! And then I'm gonna-I'm gonna... Uhh... Uhh... Whatcha doing, Mary?
- 10* SFX TRACK: [FX-04] (PAUSE) DISTANT WINDOW SHATTERED BY ROCK #2.
- 11* GEORGE: Hey...! You're a pretty good shot yourself! (LAUGHS) So uh... What's your wish?
- 12* MARY: (COYLY SINGING)
"Buffalo Gals, can't you come out tonight...
aaaaannnnnd dance by the light of the moon."

1. GEORGE: C'mon, Mary! What is it you want? Do you want the moon...? All you gotta do is just say the word, and I'll throw a lasso around it and...
2. MARY: Okay! The moon! I'll take it! Then what?
3. GEORGE: Then what? Well... well, then... then you swallow it...! And--and it dissolves and moonbeams shoot out your fingers and the ends of your hair! And then--then, uh... um... Do you think I'm.... uh... talking too much?
4. IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR: (DISTANT) Yes...! Why don't you kiss her?
5. GEORGE: (CALLING OUT) How's that? Say what?
6. IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR: (DISTANT) I said, "Why don't you just kiss her?" ...instead of talking her to death!
7. GEORGE: (CALLING OUT) Kiss her, huh?
8. IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR: (DISTANT) Aw... youth is wasted on the wrong people. (EXITS)
- 9* GEORGE: (CALLING OUT) Well, hey! Hey, just a minute! Hey, you...! Come on back here! I'll show you some kissing that'll... Oh, wait, Mary! Don't run off, I'm just funnin' with...
10. SFX: MARY'S ROBE RIPS--COMES OFF.
11. MARY: (DISTRESSED SCREAM) Oh!
12. GEORGE: Oh! Mary! You're... You're...
13. MARY: (WHISPERING) Over here... in the hydrangeas!
14. SFX: SHAKING FLOWER BUSH--UNDER.
15. GEORGE: In the hydrangeas?
16. MARY: (WHISPERING) Toss me my robe, George.

1. GEORGE: "Toss you your robe?" Oh. Sure... I'll just toss you your...(GETS IDEA) Now, wait a minute...!
2. MARY: What?!
3. GEORGE: Well... this is a very interesting... situation...
4. MARY: Oh...! Give me my robe! Please!
5. GEORGE: (TOYING WITH HER) Now, hold on! I've got to think this through... It isn't every day that a guy has an opportunity like this...
6. MARY: (SCOLDING) George Bailey!
7. GEORGE: ...especially in Bedford Falls!
8. MARY: I'll--I'll tell your mother on you!
9. GEORGE: Oh, but she lives way up the street from here...
10. MARY: George!
11. GEORGE: (TO HIMSELF) Maybe I could sell tickets! Make a little more spending money for the trip...
12. MARY: (SCREAMS) George!
13. GEORGE: I tell you what... I'll make a deal with you, Mary. If you just let me...
14. SFX: [FX-05] UNCLE BILLY'S CAR PULLS UP. IDLES--UNDER.
- 15* UNCLE BILLY: (DISTANT) George! George!
16. GEORGE: Hey, Uncle Billy! Look here! I'm gonna kiss Mary! Watch!
17. UNCLE BILLY: (DISTANT) George! Get in the car! Quick! It's your father!
18. GEORGE: Father?

1. UNCLE BILLY: He's had a stroke!
2. GEORGE: What? What? My father's had a...?
3. UNCLE BILLY: (DISTANT) C'mon, George! Get in! Hurry!
4. GEORGE: (TOSSING HER THE ROBE) Here, Mary. I've gotta go...!
- 5* MUSIC: [MUS-09] (BRIDGE) "TRAGIC" INTO "HEAVENLY"--UNDER.

SCENE 7 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(SUPERINTENDENT, CLARENCE)

6. SFX: TINGLING "STARRY" WIND CHIMES--UNDER
- 7* SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] [CUE] Well, George's father died that night, Clarence. And George didn't go to Europe. But, that Fall--just as he was ready to leave for college--the directors of the Building and Loan had a meeting...
8. WALLA: BOARD OF DIRECTORS--CLAMOR--GETTING LOUDER
9. CLARENCE: A meeting?
10. SUPERINTENDENT: (FADING) They had to appoint a successor to Mr. Bailey...
11. MUSIC: FADE "HEAVENLY" UNDER...

SCENE 8 - INT. BOARD ROOM - DAY (OCTOBER 1928)
(DR. CAMPBELL, MR. POTTER, UNCLE BILLY, GEORGE, WALLA)

- 12* WALLA: BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARGUING--HUSH UNDER.
- 13* DR. CAMPBELL: [CUE] Enough discussion, gentlemen. All those in favor of approving these last loans made by our deceased president say "aye."
14. WALLA: "AYE"
15. DR. CAMPBELL: All opposed?
16. MR. POTTER: No!

1. DR. CAMPBELL: Mr. Potter's dissent is noted. But the motion carries. The loans are approved.
2. SFX: GAVEL (1X)
3. WALLA: AD LIB DISCUSSION--UNDER
- 4* DR. CAMPBELL: (TO GEORGE) Thank you, George. That's all we'll need you for. I know you've got a train to catch.
5. GEORGE: Yes. Is Ernie's taxi out there, Uncle Billy?
6. UNCLE BILLY: (TO EVERYONE) Yes! A taxi is waiting to take George to the train--and college. (TO GEORGE) Hurry, George!
7. DR. CAMPBELL: I'd like the Board to know that George, here, gave up his trip to Europe to oversee things these past months. Good luck to you at college, George.
8. WALLA: AD LIB "GOOD LUCK" "TAKE CARE, GEORGE" ETC.
9. GEORGE: Thank you. So long, gentlemen!
10. SFX: GAVEL (1X)
- 11* DR. CAMPBELL: Now... Proceeding with our agenda, we now come to the real purpose of this meeting... We must...
12. MR. POTTER: No...! Mr. Chairman? Mr. Chairman.
13. DR. CAMPBELL: (SIGHS) Mr. Potter?
14. MR. POTTER: I've waited long enough! I want to get to my real purpose, the dissolution of this...
15. WALLA: BOARD ARGUES--THEN HUSHED BY...
16. SFX: GAVEL (2X)

1. MR. POTTER: [CUE] I said I've waited long enough! Now... This institution isn't needed in this town. It competes with the bank and is a general nuisance to sound business practices, therefore...
2. WALLA: BOARD ARGUES--THEN HUSHED BY...
3. SFX: GAVEL (2X)
- 4* DR. CAMPBELL: That is your opinion, Mr. Potter.
5. MR. POTTER: It's not opinion. It is fact! Now that Peter Bailey is dead, I move that we dissolve the Building and Loan and turn its assets and liabilities over to a receiver.
6. WALLA: BOARD ARGUES--THEN HUSHED BY...
7. UNCLE BILLY: Now wait a minute, Potter...
8. MR. POTTER: No, you wait a minute! ...Peter Bailey was not a businessman. He was a man of high ideals--so-called--but ideals without common sense can ruin this town.
9. UNCLE BILLY: Ruin?
10. MR. POTTER: Of course! It isn't fair to the little people to encourage them to live beyond their means! Like this... Ernie Bishop..., the taxi driver! I happen to know he was turned down for a home loan by the bank, but here...
11. GEORGE: Now, wait a minute, Mr. Potter. I handled Ernie Bishop's loan. You've got the papers in front of you--his income, insurance, his collateral. And I can personally vouch for his character.

1. MR. POTTER: Ah! A friend of yours, George? Humph! (TO BOARD) You see, gentlemen? If you shoot pool with an employee here, you can borrow money. And what's that getting us?: A discontented, lazy rabble, instead of a thrifty working class. All because starry-eyed dreamers like Peter Bailey stirred them up and put impossible ideas into their heads. Now... who'll second my motion to dissolve?
2. WALLA: BOARD ARGUES--THEN HUSHED BY...
- 3* GEORGE: Hold on, Mr. Potter!
4. MR. POTTER: Oh, I meant no disrespect, George, but your father...
5. GEORGE: (CUTS HIM OFF) Now, wait a minute! Why my father ever started this penny-ante Building and Loan, I'll never know. But just remember this, Mr. Potter! That... "rabble"... you're talking about... Well, they do most of the working and paying... and living and dying in this community.
6. MR. POTTER: So..?
7. GEORGE: Well, is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms with a bath...? Anyway, my father didn't think so! People were human beings to him! But to you--a warped, frustrated, old man--they're cattle!
8. WALLA: GASPS.
9. GEORGE: In my book--Mr. Potter--my father died a richer man than you'll ever be!

1. MR. POTTER: I'm not interested in your "book," George. I'm talking about the Building and Loan.
2. GEORGE: No! You're talking about something you can't get your greedy hands on! And it's galling you--that's what you're talking about! ... (CATCHING HIMSELF) Well, I've-I've said too much. I have to leave.
3. UNCLE BILLY: That's okay, George. C'mon.
4. MR. POTTER: That's quite enough, actually.
5. GEORGE: I apologize, gentlemen. Well, you're the Board. You can do what you want. But let me just say that this town needs this measly one-horse institution, if only to have some place where people can borrow a few dollars without crawling to Mr. Potter! (TO BILLY) Come on, Uncle Billy! Let's get out of here.
6. WALLA: ERUPTS.
7. SFX: GEORGE AND BILLY EXIT. DOOR OPENS--THEY WALK THRU--DOOR CLOSES STRONGLY AND WALLA IS SHUT OUT.

SCENE 9 - INT. LOAN OFFICE - IMMEDIATELY
(TILLY, EUSTACE, UNCLE BILLY, GEORGE, DR. CAMPBELL)

- 1* TILLY: [CUE] (STEPS UP) So, what happened, George?
2. EUSTACE: (ENTERING) Yeah, all Tilly and I heard was a lot of yelling!
3. UNCLE BILLY: You won't believe it, Eustace! Boy, oh, boy! You should've heard George!
4. GEORGE: (SKEPTICAL) Oh yeah...? Right now, they're voting us out of business!

1. UNCLE BILLY: Well, after twenty-five years, easy come, easy go! Of course, I don't know what's going to happen to us now...
2. TILLY: ...and your mother, poor thing...
3. EUSTACE: ...and no job for Harry...
4. UNCLE BILLY: ...but I don't care, George, because it was worth it! It was worth it to see you shut Potter's big mouth! (CHORTLES) Ha-ha-ha!
5. TILLY: Yeah, who cares? I can get another job. I'm only fifty-one.
6. EUSTACE: (CORRECTING HER) Fifty-six.
7. UNCLE BILLY: Will you get out of here, George? You already missed your boat trip to Europe. Do you want to miss college too? Ernie's waiting down...
8. SFX: DOOR OPENS. (WALLA ERUPTS) DR. CAMPBELL WALKS IN. SHUTS DOOR--(CUTTING OFF WALLA.)
- 9* DR. CAMPBELL: George! George! They just voted Potter down!
10. UNCLE BILLY: Whoopee! We're still in business! We're still in business!
11. EUSTACE: What a relief!
12. TILLY: There goes my new career!
13. DR. CAMPBELL: But there's one condition, George. They've appointed you to take your father's place.
14. GEORGE: Appoint me?! No! Uncle Billy's your man!
15. DR. CAMPBELL: Sure! You can keep him on--you can hire anyone you like.

1. GEORGE: No! Wait, Dr. Campbell. Get this straight!
Don't you people realize? I've got plans! I'm
leaving! Leaving for college... Right now!
2. DR. CAMPBELL: George, you've got to take it! They'll vote
with Potter otherwise. They said so! (FADING
UNDER) Without you here, Potter would be able
to persuade them to dissolve the whole...
- 3* MUSIC: [MUS-10] (BRIDGE) "OH WELL" SEGUES TO "HEAVENLY"--
FADES UNDER.

SCENE 10 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)

4. SFX: TINGLING "STARRY" WIND CHIMES--UNDER
- 5* CLARENCE: [REVERB] [CUE](SIGHS) Wait, Boss, don't tell
me... George Bailey didn't make it to
college?
6. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] No, he didn't, Clarence. George gave
his college money to his brother, Harry.
Harry went instead.
7. CLARENCE: But what about that girl? The cute one stuck
in the hydrangea bush? You know... Mary?
8. SUPERINTENDENT: Oh, George saw her now and again, but Mary
also went away to college. And George worked
four more years at the Building and Loan,
waiting for Harry to finish school, come back
and take over. George still hoped to see the
world, though. He planned to work in the oil
fields of Venezuela... except... when Harry
came back, he wasn't alone. (FADING UNDER)
There was a girl with him--his wife...
- 9* MUSIC: FADE "HEAVENLY" UNDER...

SCENE 11 - INT. BAILEY KITCHEN - NIGHT (JUNE 1932)
(MRS. BAILEY, GEORGE)

1. SFX: DOOR OPENS--GEORGE ENTERS--DOOR CLOSES.
- 2* MA BAILEY: [CUE] George? Is that you, Dear?
3. GEORGE: (WISTFUL) Oh... Yes, Mother. I just thought I'd... get some air.
4. MA BAILEY: So, how do you like your new sister-in-law?
7. GEORGE: Ruth? Oh, she's swell. Harry's got all the luck.
8. MA BAILEY: She'll keep him on his toes.
9. GEORGE: Well... (SIGHS) Keep him out of Bedford Falls, anyway.
10. MA BAILEY: Now, now! Ruth's father has a good job for Harry--up in Buffalo.
11. GEORGE: Yeah... Buffalo... (SIGHS) And that means...
12. MA BAILEY: Oh... (REALIZES) Then you can't...
13. GEORGE: Yep... Again.
14. MA BAILEY: (PAUSE) I'm sorry, George...
15. GEORGE: (SIGHS) Yeah...
16. MA BAILEY: (BRIGHTENING) Well... Did you know... Mary Hatch is back from college too?
17. GEORGE: (RELUCTANT) Hmm? Oh... yeah. Yeah.
18. MA BAILEY: She's been back three whole days.
19. GEORGE: (SHRUGS) Mmmmm.
20. MA BAILEY: Nice girl, that Mary.
21. GEORGE: (SHRUGS) Mmmmm. I suppose...

1. MA BAILEY: (IMPATIENT) Oh! Stop this moping, George Bailey! It's not like you.
2. GEORGE: Well... What do you want me to do, Mother?
3. MA BAILEY: Give me one reason why you shouldn't go see Mary!
4. GEORGE: Well... how about Sam Wainwright--for one!
5. MA BAILEY: (SCOFFS) Sam Wainwright? Hee-Haw?
6. GEORGE: Sam's crazy about Mary.
7. MA BAILEY: Well, she's not crazy about him!
8. GEORGE: Not? (SARCASTIC) Now, how do you know that? Was it in the newspaper? Did I miss it?
9. MA BAILEY: Mary's got her eye on you, George! She lights up like a firefly whenever she's around you.
10. GEORGE: Firefly?
11. MA BAILEY: You don't want her to be an old maid, do you? Plus... Sam Wainwright is in New York.
12. GEORGE: Oh, is he, now? So "all's fair in love and war?" Is that it?
13. MA BAILEY: Don't be difficult! The right girl can help you find the answers, George.
14. GEORGE: Okay. Okay, Mother. Trying to get rid of me, eh? (MOCK LOTHARIO) Well, I think I'll go find a girl and do some passionate necking!
(GROWLS)
15. MA BAILEY: (SHOCKED) Oh! George!
16. SFX: GEORGE OPENS DOOR.
- 17* GEORGE: (EXITING) Goodnight, Mrs. Bailey. By the way, do you need any books from the library?

1. MA BAILEY: Library?!
2. SFX: GEORGE EXITS--CLOSES DOOR.
3. MA BAILEY: (CALLING AFTER HIM) George! George, you go and see Mary! Do you hear?...
4. MUSIC: [MUS-11] (BRIDGE) "DOWNTOWN BEDFORD FALLS"--FADE UNDER.

SCENE 12 - EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER - JUNE 1932)
(ERNIE, GEORGE, VIOLET, LASCIVIOUS MALE BYSTANDERS)

- 3* SFX TRACK: [FX-06] DOWNTOWN BEDFORD FALLS TRAFFIC--CONTINUE UNDER.
4. SFX: GEORGE'S FOOTSTEPS ON SIDEWALK.
5. ERNIE: [CUE] Hiya, George! Need a lift?
6. GEORGE: Oh, no, Ernie. I wouldn't want to rob you of a fare.
7. ERNIE: You wouldn't be robbing me of any fares, George. The taxi business is on the skids.
8. GEORGE: Well then, it's just like the Building and Loan business. Wanna swap?
9. ERNIE: Actually, George. I need to talk to you. I... (SIGHS) I'm gonna have to turn the deed back to you.
10. GEORGE: Deed? The deed to your house? You've only been there two years, Ernie.
11. ERNIE: Yeah, but with business being so bad, I can't make the payments right now. Me and the missus will just have to move back in with her folks.
12. GEORGE: Oh, Ernie... No, no! I-I'll tell you what. Uh.... Can you just pay the interest?

1. ERNIE: The interest? Well, sure! I could do that, but...
2. GEORGE: Okay, So keep the house. Forget the principal--for a while. You're just hitting a rough patch. That's all.
3. ERNIE: Gosh, George! I-I don't know how to thank you. This means so...
4. WALLA: (SINGLE VOICE) Taxi!
5. GEORGE: Hear that? You're back in business, Ernie!
6. ERNIE: I am? I am! (CALLS OUT) Coming right up!
7. SFX TRACK: [FX-07] ERNIE'S CAB PULLS AWAY FROM CURB.
- 8* GEORGE: (CALLS AFTER HIM) Atta-boy, Ernie!
- 9*. SFX: GEORGE WALKS A FEW STEPS.
- 10* WALLA: AD LIB "C'MON, VIOLET!" "HOW ABOUT IT?" ETC.
- 11* VIOLET: [CUE] Hey! ...Going somewhere, Georgie-Porgie?
12. GEORGE: Oh, hello, Violet. Hi, fellas. (STARTLED) Gosh! You look great, Vi!
13. VIOLET: In this old thing? Oh, I only wear this when I don't care how I look... Right, guys?
14. WALLA: MALE HOOTS OF AGREEMENT.
- 15* VIOLET: (TO MEN) Excuse me, fellas. I think I got a date. (TO GEORGE) So, Georgie, what's goin' on? Where are you headin'?
16. GEORGE: Oh, I was just going down to the library, I suppose.
17. VIOLET: C'mon, Georgie! Don't you ever get tired of just readin' about stuff?

1. GEORGE: (GASP) Well... Come to think of it... Yes!
Okay... Um... What are doing tonight, Vi?
2. VIOLET: Me? Not a thing...
3. GEORGE: Okay. Well, if you're game, Vi, we can make a
night of it! I've got to talk to somebody.
What d'ya say?
4. VIOLET: Sure, George. It's about time! What'll we do?
5. GEORGE: What'll we do? Well... we'll go out... to the
fields... Yeah. Take off our shoes, and walk
through the grass...
6. VIOLET: The fields...?
7. GEORGE: (POSSESSED) Then we can go up to the Falls...
You've got to see them in the moonlight! And
there's a green pool up there, Vi. We can
swim in it!
8. VIOLET: Swim....?
9. GEORGE: Sure...! And then we can.... climb Mount
Bedford. And smell the pines. And watch the
sunrise on the peaks! Come with me! We'll
stay up there the whole night and be the talk
of the town... and there'll be a terrific
scandal! How about it, Vi?
10. WALLA: MALE CHUCKLES--UNDER
- 11* VIOLET: George Bailey... Have you lost your mind?
(LOUDER) "Walk through the grass?" In my bare
feet?
12. WALLA: MALE LAUGHTER--CONTINUE UNDER

- 1* VIOLET: It must be ten miles to the falls! And this is the only thing I have to wear. You expect me to go swimming in this?
2. GEORGE: (EMBARRASSED) Shhhhhhh, Violet. Shhhhh. Okay. Okay.
3. VIOLET: What's with you, George? For a guy who wanted to sail around the world, you don't seem to have been around the block!
4. GEORGE: (EXITING) Fine! Fine! Just forget the whole thing! Forget it...
5. WALLA: MALE LAUGHTER--FADE UNDER
6. SFX TRACKS: FADE DOWNTOWN BEDFORD FALLS TRAFFIC--UNDER
- 7* MUSIC: [MUS-12] (BRIDGE) "FROM VIOLET TO MARY"--FADE UNDER...

SCENE 13 - EXT. MARY'S FRONT WALK - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER - JUNE 1932)
(MARY, GEORGE)

- 8* SFX TRACK: [FX-08] CRICKETS #2--UNDER.
9. SFX: GEORGE'S FOOTSTEPS PACING OUTSIDE--UNDER.
- 10* MARY: [CUE] (DISTANT) George? What are you doing out there?
11. GEORGE: Nothing. Hmmm? Oh! Is that you, Mary?
12. MARY: (DISTANT) I think so... Well...?
13. GEORGE: Well what...? Oh! Me? I was just... passing by.
14. MARY: (DISTANT) Yes, several times! I wondered if you were picketing! ...Or haunting me...
15. GEORGE: (PERTURBED) Now, why would I be...
16. MARY: (DISTANT) ...but your mother phoned, saying you were coming over.

1. GEORGE: My... mother...? Phoned...? The nerve of... Well... I just happened to be passing by, that's all! I didn't have any firm kinda...
2. MARY: (DISTANT) So? Are you coming in--or aren't you?
3. GEORGE: Well.... all right. If you insist! I'll come in... (STEPS UP) for a minute. (DIFFICULT) But I didn't tell anybody I was coming here.
4. MARY: (ON MIC.) Right! You're your own man.
5. GEORGE: Um... So... So, when did you get back?
6. MARY: Tuesday.
7. GEORGE: Ah... Where'd you get that dress?
8. MARY: New York. Do you like it?
9. GEORGE: Well... (EVASIVE) It's all right, I guess. I thought you'd take up in New York... like Sam and the rest.
10. MARY: Oh, I worked there on a few vacations, but I don't know... I got... homesick.
11. GEORGE: (ORNERY) Homesick? You got homesick... for Bedford Falls?
12. MARY: Well, it is home, after all. (SIGHS) No point just standing here on the porch. Come on in.
13. SFX: GEORGE AND MARY ENTER HOUSE. DOOR CLOSSES.
14. SFX TRACK: CUT CRICKETS--WHEN DOOR CLOSSES.

SCENE 14 - INT. MARY'S HALL - IMMEDIATELY
(MARY, GEORGE, MRS. HATCH, SAM)

- 15* GEORGE: I don't understand this. I didn't tell anybody I was coming over here.

1. MARY: So you're leaving?
2. GEORGE: No, no. I wouldn't want to be rude. I'll stay a while. Since I'm here...
3. MARY: So... it's nice about your brother and his new wife, isn't it?
4. GEORGE: Yeah, yeah... Ruth. It's okay.
5. MARY: What's the matter? You don't like her?
6. GEORGE: (TESTY) Well, of course I do. Ruth's a peach!
7. MARY: Oh...! It's just marriage in general you're down on, huh?
8. GEORGE: No, no. Marriage is all right... for some people.... I mean... it's fine for Harry... for Sam Wainwright... And you.
9. MARY: For Sam...?
10. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary?! Who's down there?
11. MARY: (CALLS OUT) It's George Bailey, Mother!
12. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) George Bailey?! (GASPS) What's he want?
13. MARY: (CALLS OUT) I don't know! (TO GEORGE) What do you want, George?
14. GEORGE: Me? Nothing! (CALLS OUT) Not a thing! I was just passing by!
15. MARY: (WHISPERS) Coward!(CALLS OUT) He's making violent love to me, Mother!
16. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) He is?! You tell him to go right back home! Sam Wainwright said he'd call tonight--from New York.

1. MARY: (CALLS OUT) I guess so, Mother. (TO GEORGE)
So, George. How about a little music here?
2. SFX: PHONOGRAPH CLICKED ON.
3. SFX TRACK: [FX-09] (SOURCE) "BUFFALO GAL'S" INST'L 78 RPM--UNDER.
- 4* GEORGE: [CUE] You know, your mother shouldn't...
(NOTICES TUNE). Oh... that. Now, I didn't
over come here just to...
5. MARY: (IMPATIENT) Well, what did you come here for?
6. GEORGE: (ANNOYED) Well, I don't know! You're supposed
to be the girl with all the answers! How
about you tell me why!
7. MARY: (MATCHING HIM) Oh...! Why don't you go home!
8. SFX: PHONE RINGS--(2 SECONDS OF RINGING, THEN
4 SECOND PAUSE)--UNTIL MARY ANSWERS LATER.
9. GEORGE: Okay! Maybe I will go home.
10. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary! The telephone!
11. GEORGE: (ANGRY) Sheesh! I still don't know why I even
came here!
12. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary!
13. GEORGE: (NASTY) Good night!
14. MARY: (ANGRY) Good night!
15. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary! The phone!
16. GEORGE: Y'know, with all this shouting, you'd think
that maybe somebody could...
17. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary! It's Sam! Answer it!
18. MARY: (TO GEORGE) You'd think what, George?
19. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary! Get the phone!

1. MARY: (CALLS OUT) All right, already!(EXITING) I'll get it, Mother! (ANGRY) Oooh! (TO GEORGE) George! On your way out, could you turn off the phonograph?
2. GEORGE: (SARCASTICALLY) Sure! I'd be glad to!
3. SFX: PHONOGRAPH NEEDLE SCRATCHES ACROSS RECORD-- SAVAGELY.
4. SFX TRACK: ABRUPT CUT-OFF OF "BUFFALO GAL'S"
- 5* GEORGE: (SEETHING) Dog-gone crazy song! (EXITING) Let me out of here...
6. SFX: MARY PICKS UP RINGING PHONE NOW.
- 7* MARY: Hello... Hatch residence.... Oh... Sam!
8. SAM: [FILTERED] Hey, Mary! So good to hear your voice!
9. MARY: Is it?
10. GEORGE: (STEPS BACK IN) Excuse me, Mary! Seems I forgot my hat! (EXITING)
11. MARY: (TO SAM) Oh, Saaaam! How nice of you to call! All the way from New York! (TO GEORGE-- TAUNTING) Hee-haw!
12. SAM: What, Mary? Oh, oh yeah... Hee-haw!
13. MARY: You know, Sam, an old friend of yours is here... George Bailey!
14. SAM: What? Old moss-back George? In person?
15. MARY: Yep! Old "moss-back" George.
16. SAM: Hee-haw! Well, put old George on! I wanna say hi!
17. MARY: Wait a minute, Sam. (CALLS OUT) George?

1. MRS. HATCH: (DISTANT) Mary! Sam doesn't want to talk to George!
2. MARY: (CALLS OUT) He does too! He even asked for George.
3. GEORGE: (STEPPING BACK IN) What is it, Mary? Y'see, I'm in a hurry, I've got to get...
4. MARY: Wait! It's Sam Wainwright! He wants to talk to you.
5. GEORGE: Sam Wainwright...? Oh...
6. MARY: (TO SAM) Sam? Here's George!
7. GEORGE: (TO SAM ON PHONE) Um... Hi, Sam. (HALF-HEARTED) Hee-Haw!
8. SAM: Hee-Haw! Some pal you are! What are you doing there? Trying to steal my girl?
9. GEORGE: (LASHING OUT) Steal your girl? Hey...! Nobody's trying to steal any girl. (TO MARY) Um... Mary, here's Sam again...
10. SAM: No! Wait a minute, George. Wait! I want to speak to both of you! Put Mary on the extension upstairs.
11. GEORGE: (TO MARY) Um... He wants you to get on the extension upstairs.
12. MARY: I can't. Mother's on the extension.
13. MRS. HATCH: [FILTERED] (GASP) I am not!
14. MARY: (TO GEORGE) George, just put your head a little closer. We can both hear.
15. GEORGE: Both? (SIGH) Um... Okay. (THEY COZY UP)

1. MARY: There! Alright. (TO SAM) Sam? We're both on the line.
2. SAM: Good! Now... I have a plan that's going to make us all rich! George--remember one time in Martini's Tavern, you told me about making plastics out of uh... chili beans?
3. GEORGE: Chili beans?
4. SAM: Soybeans! I mean soybeans!
5. GEORGE: Oh, yeah, yeah... soybeans. Okay.
6. SAM: Well... my father's investing in it, George. We're going to open a factory--outside Rochester. What do you think of that?
7. GEORGE: Rochester...? A factory...? Wait, why don't you put it here, in Bedford Falls. The old tool machinery works closed down. You could get that building for a song! Plus, there's lots of labor here, too!
8. SAM: Now you're talking, George! But here's the point... Mary, you listen to this too. If you've got any money... put every dime into our stock.
9. GEORGE: Stock?
10. SAM: C'mon, George! We might even have a job for you! That is--if you're not still married to that broken-down old Building and Loan. Here's your chance to get in on the ground floor!
11. MARY: (TO GEORGE) Ground floor!? That's wonderful.
12. GEORGE: Um... We'll have to see, Sam.

1. SAM: (TO MARY) Oh, Mary...? Are you still listening?
2. MARY: Yes, Sam. I'm here.
3. SAM: Tell George this is the chance of a lifetime, you hear? The chance of a lifetime!
4. MARY: (TO GEORGE) He--he says... it's the chance of a lifetime...
5. GEORGE: Give me that phone!
6. MARY: (TO SAM) Here's George again...
7. SFX: GEORGE SLAMS DOWN PHONE HANDSET--ANGRILY.
- 8* MARY: George!
9. GEORGE: (INTENSE) Now you listen to me, Mary! I don't want any plastics! Any job! Any "ground floors!" And I don't want to get married! Ever! To anyone! Do you understand me?
10. MUSIC: [MUS-13] (BED) "WRENCHING" ENTERS--UNDER.
11. MARY: (SOBS) Oh, George....
12. GEORGE: I want to do what I want to do! And--and you're not gonna trick me into any...!
(UPSET) Any....
13. MARY: (UPSET) George...
14. GEORGE: Mary... Oh, Mary! (WHISPER) I... (SIGH) I...
15. MARY: (WHISPER) I know...
16. MUSIC: [MUS-14] (BRIDGE) "HEAVENLY"--FADE UNDER.

SCENE 15 - EXT. HEAVEN - SECONDS LATER
(CLARENCE, SUPERINTENDENT)

1. SFX: TINGLING "STARRY" WIND CHIMES--UNDER
- 2* CLARENCE: [REVERB] [CUE] So George and Mary got... what do they say... "hitched?"
3. SUPERINTENDENT: [REVERB] Ahem. Yes, Clarence. They were married that October.
4. CLARENCE: (TEARING UP) I-I always cry at weddings.
5. SUPERINTENDENT: (FADING UNDER) And the two headed off for their honeymoon in Ernie Bishop's taxicab...
6. MUSIC: [MUS-15] (BRIDGE) "WEDDING MARCH TAXI"--FADE UNDER.

SCENE 16 - INT. ERNIE'S CAB - SECONDS LATER (OCTOBER 1932)
(ERNIE, GEORGE, MARY)

- 7* SFX TRACK: [FX-10] INTERIOR OF CAB DRIVING--UNDER
- 8* ERNIE: [CUE] Here, ya go, newlyweds! Bert, the cop, sent this bottle of bubbly. But don't tell anyone. Prohibition's still on!
9. MARY: (JOKING) "Mumm's" the word, Ernie!
10. ERNIE: (LAUHGS) So... Where are you two heading on this deluxe honeymoon?
11. SFX: GEORGE PULLS OUT ENVELOPE OF CASH--RUSTLES IT.
12. GEORGE: See this fat wad of cash? (TO MARY) Count it, Mary. (TO ERNIE) It's our kitty.
13. ERNIE: So....?

1. GEORGE: So.... We're shooting the works, Ernie! A week in New York! A week in Bermuda! It'll be the highest hotels... richest caviar... the hottest music... and... the prettiest wife!
2. ERNIE: (LAUGHS) Congratulations, George! You're finally getting out of Bedford Falls! Then what?
3. GEORGE: (TO MARY) Gee... I don't know. Um... Then what, dear?
4. MARY: The moon! Who cares!?
5. GEORGE: That's right! Hey, you know what, Mrs. Bailey? I haven't kissed you nearly enough!
6. MARY: Well then, c'mere, you... (THEY KISS)
7. ERNIE: Slow down, lovebirds...! Hey! Any fond farewells, George? Here's Genesee Street...
8. GEORGE: So long, Bedford Falls! So long, old Building and Loan! So long, Uncle Billy! And Mr. Potter! And-and everyone else! We're sneaking out and we won't be coming back! ...Ever!
9. WALLA: BANK PANIC--UNDER, THRU END OF SCENE.
- 10* ERNIE: (PAUSE) Hey... George! There's something going on here! Look at that crowd! Over there--in front of the bank! Looks like the door's locked!
11. GEORGE: What? What?... Pull over, Ernie.
12. MARY: What is it, George?
13. ERNIE: That's what you call a bank run!

1. SFX TRACK: QUICK FADE OUT OF CAB DRIVING AS...
2. SFX TRACK: [FX-11] CAB PULLS OVER.
3. MARY: A bank run?
4. ERNIE: Yeah! If you've got any money in the bank, you'd better pull it out in a hurry!
5. MARY: Oh, George! No! Let's not stop. Please!
(TO ERNIE) Ernie! Just go straight to the train station. (TO GEORGE) George!
6. SFX: (OPTIONAL) CAB DOOR OPENS--GEORGE GETS OUT--
CAB DOOR SHUTS.
- 7* GEORGE: Wait a minute, honey. I gotta see what this is... (EXITING) I'll be back in a second...
8. MARY: (CALLS AFTER HIM) No! No! George, please!
George! Don't go! (TO ERNIE) Ernie! Stop him!
- 9* MUSIC: [MUS-16] "ACT 1 OUTRO"--UNDER AND...
- 10* SFX: CUE THE LIVE AUDIENCE APPLAUSE.
- 11* MUSIC: LET "ACT ONE OUTRO" FINISH.
- END OF ACT ONE --
- 12* ANNOUNCER: [CUE] We'll return in a moment to our _____ Radio Theatre presentation of "It's a Wonderful Life," starring _____, _____, _____, ... and myself, _____.

SAMPLE SCRIPT HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT

The full script runs to page 103--making the play about 100 minutes total. (Intermissions not included.)

APPENDIX

How to Produce *Wonderful Life* as a Radio-On-Stage Show

by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

**THIS APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED IN SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.**

Here are nearly 60 pages about how to mount a professional radio-on-stage production of my adaptation of *It's a Wonderful Life*. You'll find everything from concepts to details—thematic approaches to the material, to casting monologues, a sound effects cookbook, pre-recorded track listings, audio gear resources, down to instructions for “working” a microphone. Additionally, there's a history of how radio-on-stage shows were produced in the Golden Age of 1940s radio and how you can blend the various styles to fit your troupe's resources and likings.

NOTE: To print just the script, specify pages 1-109. To print just the appendix, specify pages 110-167

Section (pages)	Description
DIRECTION (1-7) print pages 111-117	Writer/Director's notes on how to approach the drama.
CASTING (1-8) print pages 118-125	Casting list, Doubling roles, Audition list, Casting monologues
SFX (1-8) print pages 126-133	Live Sound Effects Cookbook
SFX (9-12) print pages 134-137	Pre-recorded sound effects listing and advice
MUSIC (1-7) print pages 138-144	Pre-recorded music cue listing and advice, keyboardist tips.
PRODUCTION (1-13) print pages 145-157	Production design background and advice, radio director's gesture cues
ENGINEERING (1-10) print pages 158-167	Engineering advice, microphone school for cast and crew, Audio setup, technical checklist, mic & stand resources

For additional information on how to produce and perform radio drama see my Radio Drama Resources website: www.RuyaSonic.com

**APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.**

Writer/Director's notes

By Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

My adaptation of *It's A Wonderful Life* brings this beloved tale to the stage--as a particularly imaginative 1940s style radio-on-stage production. While you can merely perform the show in a recording or broadcast studio, my adaptation is designed as a live theater crowd-pleaser, with the pizzazz and delight of such golden era live radio shows as the *Lux Radio Theater* or *Theater Guild on the Air*.

This style of production features a stage full of actors reading from authentically-formatted radio scripts in front of microphones, while live sound effects artists perform the door knocks, bell ringing, fights, etc., accompanied by an organist—with occasional piano and other source music.

My script includes an extensive 50-page section on “How To Produce Radio-On-Stage” shows, dealing with everything from the dramatic themes, to the look of the set, the audio gear, the sound effects, options regarding the musical accompaniment, and instruction for how to work a mic, blocking and more.

Troupes will be especially interested in the SFX "cookbook" explaining how to make or find the live sound effects (doors, slaps, champagne cork, ice breaking, car door, etc.) In keeping with 1940s radio dramas, some sounds (crickets, windows breaking, jumping in the river, cars, clocks, etc.) are rendered as pre-recorded tracks--which I provide as downloadable MP3 files.

I also offer pre-recorded music tracks--featuring a period-correct radio-theatre organ, upright piano and accordion--to provide the classic radio underscoring. However, if you have a live accompanist, they can listen to the tracks and learn to duplicate the radio style for the many musical bridges, stings and beds called for in the script. (NOTE: The music tracks are in the process of being recorded and will be available for downloading around November 10th 2008.)

While several playwright's offer versions of *Wonderful Life* for radio, I am not just a stage playwright, but a professional *radio* dramatist and performer who brings the experience of doing over 900 radio shows (on-air and on-stage) to my adaptation. My experience is particularly useful here, since I wrote and produced the hit radio-on-stage *Wonderful Life* adaptation for a 6-week run at the 680-seat Pasadena Playhouse in 2005. Our cast included such stars as Michael Richards, Joe Mantegna, Alfred Molina, Stephanie Zimbalist, Sharon Lawrence, Jamie Farr, Orson Bean, Susan Sullivan and others. If you are looking for a proven and authentic radio drama version of *Wonderful Life*, you've tuned into the right frequency.

With this in mind, I've created a version that is both faithful *and* fresh. Rather than merely present "the film *cloned* for the stage", my adaptation fully explores the themes in Capra's original, but also features the radio drama hijinx that theater audiences so enjoy. There are plenty of opportunities for the audience to marvel at the tricks used to convey the frozen pond, the board meeting, one- and two-sided phone calls, George getting punched out, walking in the snow, cash registers, knitting needles, Jimmy the Bird, etc.

The dialogue is not word for word from the film, but has been sharpened for the radio medium and tweaked to underline psychological shadings that reinforce Frank Capra's themes. This fantastical story is particularly well suited to the medium of radio--where the audience's imagination provides an unlimited special effects budget. Please take note of my intentions when producing this script.

Thematic Approach

In order to present this play as something deeper than a nostalgia trip or mere rerun of Frank Capra's film, you must understand the themes working beneath the surface. While my adaptation abounds in exuberance and comedy, it is tempered with a thorough plumbing of the depths of sorrow, regret, sacrifice and redemption undergirding the story. Take note as I explain the subtext of the story and how my adaptation uses it to make the drama come alive.

George Bailey's Rise and Fall (and Rise)

It's a Wonderful Life is an Americanized version of Charles Dickens' *Christmas Carol*--only here, it is George Bailey's kindly Bob Cratchit-like character who meets the otherworldly visitor that re-educates him via a frightful "Christmas Yet To Come." If you can see how Frank Capra echoes Dickens, you can make the story resonate with audiences better—and come off as an engaging theatrical experience. So, if *Wonderful Life* seems to be a delightful 1940s romp, a “trials and tribulations of George Bailey,” dig a bit deeper to find Dickens' *Carol* beneath the Americana. While the miserly Mr. Potter is the obvious Scrooge stand-in here, it is George Bailey who takes on many Scrooge-isms as the story progresses.

For example: George was a dreamy youth, as was the young Scrooge, who was fascinated by the exotic worlds of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Ali Baba*. But for all George's longing for adventure, he--like Scrooge--winds up a money-lender. Both are tormented by desire and fear. For George, his desire to escape the humdrum life of Bedford Falls and see the big world out there and George's fear of being trapped in small town America forever.

But the more George sacrifices his dreams, the more frustrated and resentful he becomes, finally cracking under the pressure of the missing \$8000, which would mean prison--a horrible fate for wanderlust-y George. After a lifetime of sacrifice, George decides to sacrifice no more. He snaps, becoming a monster who abuses his family and friends, strangers and even leading him to suicide, the ultimate selfish act. He has given in completely to his dark side.

Mr. Potter, George's Evil Twin

George is unconsciously similar to his nemesis, Mr. Potter--someone George can't stand--but whom fate has shackled him to, because there's a lesson here for George. He and Potter are ambitious, imaginative men, but both have been frustrated by life. Potter is physically crippled, while George is crippled by circumstance. George can no more run away from Bedford Falls than can Mr. Potter in his wheelchair. Potter lives for money and George finds himself wishing to *die* for money--the insurance payout that will cover the \$8000 shortfall. Both are shrewd businessmen--neither losing his head in the bank panic, but both really love being in control--of their own lives and controlling/aiding the lives of their fellow citizens.

This doppelganger aspect is important--and I underline it in my adaptation--with Potter thoroughly understanding George's fears and desires--and stating them bluntly to George. But Potter is mistaken in his cynicism. His way of greed and control will never alleviate his suffering or fear of being out of control. In the story, Potter functions like the ghost of Jacob Marley in Dickens' *Carol*--he shows the hero where he'll end up--unloved, damned in a personal Hell--if he gives in to selfishness.

Throughout my script, Potter recognizes himself in George and seeks to tempt George to the dark side of money and power. Their many confrontations are actually George arguing with his own dark self. George

thinks he can defy his "inner-Mr. Potter," but it is only when he fully gives *into* it, that he can transcend Potter's fate. The fascinating irony of *Wonderful Life* is that George's road to Heaven must first go through Potter's Inferno. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is a similar tale of a mortal man on a fantastical journey through an allegorical darkness full of grotesques, yet who finally emerges into the light of humility and selflessness. One reason the Capra film has such an emotional effect upon people is that George's dilemma resonates so fully with themes that are central to Western culture.

George's Dark Night of the Soul

In *Wonderful Life*, George's journey is led by Clarence, the apprentice angel, who ironically, one-ups Mr. Potter's temptations by granting George's most selfish desire--to escape from Bedford Falls--by having *never been born*. George attempts suicide, but Clarence *makes it happen*, drawing his inspiration from Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*--where a dream-chasing adventurer with big plans decides to fake his death and thus, see Aunt Polly and everyone in town mourn him at his funeral. Capra didn't have Clarence quote from *Tom Sawyer*, but the themes are threaded throughout *Wonderful Life*. George is both Tom Sawyer *and* Ebenezer Scrooge--the American everyman at a crisis point.

George gets his death-wish, but the funeral he sees is for everyone he ever loved! His non-existence transforms the quiet little Bedford Falls into a nightmarish "Pottersville"--awash in insanity, passion, violence, greed, treachery, sickness and old age. Pottersville is a fallen world of broken marriages, broken dreams, strip clubs, bars, prizefights, tough cops and rampant vice. George gets to experience what his hometown would be *without him*. He sees that the life he led--the one of dreams denied and tribulations, the one he was never fully happy with--made a big difference to those around him.

This dystopia sequence was the entirety of the Philip Van Doren Stern short story "The Greatest Gift,"--the source material that Frank Capra and his writers reworked into the very different *It's a Wonderful Life*. However, both Van Doren Stern's and Capra's nightmare scenarios are clearly derived from Dickens' "Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come" sequence in *A Christmas Carol*. In *Wonderful Life*, we see a collection of Dickensian lowlifes--from Nick's Bar, to a rum-head Mr. Gower, to a nasty Violet being roused for jack-rolling a sailor—but both stories turn on a soul-shattering graveyard revelation.

In the alternate universe of Pottersville, several characters are dead because George wasn't around to save or aid them. I handle this by having Clarence tour George through Pottersville's cemetery--what would have been the "Bailey Park" housing development. This is a tender moment--a change of pace between George's rough handling at Nick's Bar and the upcoming lynch mob scene. This haunted moment—right out of Dickens' *Carol* is full of the supernatural aspect, but it's purpose is to drive home the point of how much George matters to the world.

Amidst the crumbling tombstones, an incredulous George asks, "Cemetery...? Where are the houses? The people I knew?" Clarence replies gently, "Oh... they're here. George. They're here... The little Blaine girl... Martini... your father... and over here... Harry Bailey"—whose death brings with it the death of hundreds on a troop transport that Harry had saved in WW II. Ironically, George's long wished for escape from Bedford Falls comes at a great cost to not only his town, but to America, and by extension, the World. Those troops--and Harry--died for *George's sin*--of selfishness. Harry is George's own "Tiny Tim" and it is Harry's death--echoed in the deaths of the troops--that is the real turning point for George.

It is here that George is faced with the horror of his selfishness in wanting to have never been born. The other things he's seen in Pottersville seem to be mistakes or misunderstandings but not what he sees in the cemetery. While the harshness exhibited by the Pottersville versions of Nick, Bert, Violet, Ernie and even George's mother are just *attitudes*--something that could be changed if George could reason with them--

the needless deaths seen in the cemetery plunge George into confronting what his selfishness has wrought. It's the pivotal moment in George's salvation--and oddly, a scene that is missing entirely or merely whisked through in other adaptations of *Wonderful Life*. The film version has visuals of desolation and windy snow, but other radio and radio-on-stage versions don't sufficiently marshal radio's dramatic arsenal of words, music, and sound to give this scene the gravitas, sorrow, and bitter irony that it deserves.

However, this cemetery scene is not the final straw for George. He must see one more "death" attributable to his selfishness. Trying to escape the sad realization of the graveyard, he seeks shelter in his greatest joy from his old Bedford Falls life. George must see what's become of Mary in Pottersville. Here, she's a timid and stunted old maid, working at the library--where she only *reads* about life, but doesn't *live* it (Fittingly, she's a sad parody of George's own frustrated life before he married her.) Desperate for one last thread to hang onto, George accosts Mary outside the library, pleading with her to recognize him--and give him refuge from the immense guilt he's now feeling.

But Mary doesn't know him and panics, calling in a crowd of bystanders that quickly become a lynch mob chasing after George. Having given up *living* his own life, George is now running *for* his life, being pursued by the mob and shot at by Bert, the Cop. Pottersville can no more abide George than he can abide it. In my adaptation, the mob pursuing George is frightening--and ugly--and an evocative use of radio drama's walla-walla crowd sound effect.

Eluding the mob, George once again finds himself standing at the bridge--where it would seem the only way for him to escape Pottersville is to commit suicide. I have Clarence ask him if he's going to *really* kill himself this time, but George has been chastened by the intense suffering. He has learned his lesson: "Don't despair! Life could be worse!" But what's more he learns that suffering is a necessary step on the road to happiness. It is there to purge him of ego and selfishness. Sacrifice isn't something to avoid or resent--it must be *embraced!* This aura of *necessary* sacrifice permeated American culture during World War II--and may find new resonance with modern audiences since we are again plagued by war and economic hardship. This willful surrender to aiding your fellow man is also a deeply philosophical paradox and I address it dramatically in my adaptation.

The Frank Capra Hero

In many of Frank Capra's films, there is a Christ figure--and a crucifixion. You can see this hero in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town*, *Meet John Doe*, and of course, *It's a Wonderful Life*. These martyrs must suffer before they can find salvation. Capra was a Catholic and the theme of Christ suffering on the cross is as central to Capra's art as the plucky optimism of his wisecracking down-home characters. On the cross, as long as Christ held onto his mortal side--the fear of pain and death, the desire to escape his fate--he writhed and suffered. But at a pivotal point in his ordeal, Christ lets go of his resistance to his fate and gives himself up to his duty: sacrificing himself for mankind. This decision to surrender himself *willingly* is what allows Christ to transcend his mortal self and become one with the Divine. His humility is key. And that lesson permeates Capra's films.

In *Wonderful Life*, George has been writhing on his *own* cross--from his frustrations at being "trapped" in Bedford Falls, to fear of bankruptcy and prison over the missing \$8000, to the incredible guilt engendered by the visit to Pottersville.

Throughout my adaptation, I emphasize George's suffering by having him boast of his dreams and then immediately see them dashed--to better set up his later turn to darkness. In Capra's film, James Stewart brought this out through a very emotional performance--desperation in his eyes, kicking chairs, and

grabbing people. Here, I've built George's descent into despair as part of the slimmed-down text, so a variety of actors playing George can hit the "right notes" without directly quoting Stewart's portrayal.

George has suffered throughout the story--because he's always seen Paradise as being somewhere "over the rainbow"--in traveling, in building bridges or skyscrapers; in doing "something big." George's heaven was always *somewhere else*.

On the Bedford Falls toll-bridge, I have Clarence quote a bit of gospel, telling George, "The kingdom of Heaven is spread upon the Earth ...and men do not see it." George realizes that *his* Heaven was Bedford Falls all along! It was there, amidst the frustrations and troubles and his serving his family and community. Now, conscious of his life's *real* adventure--selfless service--George is willing to embrace both the joys AND the sorrows of his previously "unbearable" life. George must let go of his dream of finding happiness "somewhere else" and learn to participate joyfully in the sorrows of the world he is in. And with that realization, George is reborn--resurrected--and with his attitude changed, his life becomes truly wonderful.

This is precisely what happened to Scrooge after his graveyard conversion. He becomes as giddy as a schoolboy and as generous as he'd been miserly--before his salvation. Both Scrooge and George are now joyful lunatics, running through town, shouting "Merry Christmas" to one and all. George now says "yes" to everything--to the reporters, the sheriff, the bank examiner, prison, etc. And at this point, the universe reciprocates George's willingness by having the money rain down like manna from Heaven--in the contributions of his friends to the rescue fund. While the bushels of money may seem crass and materialistic, they are actually tokens of love and thanks and goodwill--earned fully by George for his lifetime of service and sacrifice.

As much as *Wonderful Life* echoes the patriotic lessons of World War II, it is also as profoundly a spiritual tale of death and resurrection as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, or Christ's story or Dickens' *Christmas Carol*.

These psychological, philosophical, and religious undercurrents are threaded through Capra's film and I have explored them in my adaptation—but not as overtly as in this essay. Metaphor and language and character are used the script to “feather in” the theme of this battle for George’s soul. And it is the dramatic battle that lifts my *Wonderful Life* adaptation beyond a mere nostalgia-trip for fans of the film. The play must work on its own as drama in order to truly reach a live theatre audience, emotionally and symbolically through playing the subtext and not just the dialogue, sound effects, and music. Otherwise, one could merely show the film version.

That being said, my adaptation is still comical and full of invention in exploiting the radio-on-stage medium as Capra's film, while also paying attention the themes and emotional nuances of the story.

Music

In radio drama, sound effects are motion and music is *e-motion*. Effective underscoring has a powerful effect on audiences. In scoring *Wonderful Life*, my accompanist/composer, Jonathan Green played a radio theatre-style organ--employing the unique registrations (organ drawbar settings) that made 1930s-1940s radio dramas so distinctive. This is no synthesizer, but the authentic sound and style used in radio drama's heyday. Most of the show consists of bridge cues that shuttle us between Heaven and Bedford Falls, while commenting on the drama. These cues immediately make it clear where we are in the story--which is important with so many scene changes. They let the audience know that time and tone have changed--from Mr. Gower's store to the old Granville House to Ernie's cab to George emotional state as

he loses his last chance at college or is peering into the oblivion of the river. In Martini's Tavern, an Italian accordion plays while George prays for help. In several cues, Jonathan uses beat-up upright piano sounds to render young Janie's shaky practicing and the bluesy barrelhouse atmosphere of Nick's Bar. In the finale, "Auld Lang Syne" is played on Janie's piano and then on the organ as an encore sing-along for the cast and audience.

Troupes that wish to have their own accompanist perform live can listen to the pre-recorded music tracks (available for a fee—contact Sales@RuyaSonic.com) and learn how to play in the radio drama style. The script even includes listing of the organ registrations (drawbar settings) that your keyboardist could use to reproduce the correct timbre of radio drama organs--if they are using a Hammond organ or some simulator. Currently, we do not offer a printed score, but will do so in the future.

Sound Effects

Part of the fun of seeing a radio-on-stage production is to witness the inventive ways that sound effects are produced. My script includes an extensive 12-page "SFX Cookbook" that details what you must find or make to produce the sounds required and how to play the live and pre-recorded sounds for maximum crowd-pleasing effect. In addition to being a radio writer and director, I'm a world-renowned radio sound effects artist, whose mentors worked with Orson Welles and Jack Benny. As such, I utilize SFX extensively in the script to bring both realism and magic to the production.

Bells are central to this story and I use plenty of them as sound effects. The bells serve as punctuation and as a metaphorical "wake up call" to George--who's been lost in his dreams--and later his nightmares. The bell sound effects begin with heavenly chimes and work their way through the many phone calls, door bells, cash register ka-chings, and finally to Zuzu's little Christmas tree bell as Clarence finally gets his wings.

There is also a great deal of background walla-walla to paint the ice pond, boardroom, bank run, bars, mobs and party. In many scenes, the sound effects, voices, and music are layered together in a complex pattern that enhances the storytelling. Again, being a SFX artist I make full use of the power of sound to underscore the drama and grab the audience.

For example: In the courtship scene, Mary plays a noisy 78 RPM novelty record of "Buffalo Gals" that must compete with the telephone ringing, Mary's mother calling out, and George and Mary bickering. As the tension mounts and the courtship unravels, the cacophony heightens the drama--and when the two lovers break up, George noisily scratches the record in anger, as he tries to escape. This approach differs markedly from the film version, but the tension contributed by the layering of voices, music, and SFX echo the turbulence going on within George and Mary—and for all the noise, the scene ends with Mary *whispering* "I know...". The sonic contrast underlining the peace and quiet that the lovers find in each other. Sound Effects are not merely noises to represent the reality of doors and cars and crickets. They can serve to produce a dramatic effects as they do here.

Similarly, the sound effects of "Jimmy the Bird" (a repeated squawking voice and a small umbrella being "flapped") lend humor to the establishment of Carter, the bank examiner--a scene that could have just been dull plot mechanics. There's even a *silent* sound effects gag, where Mary is knitting in bed--which the SFX artist "performs," as the audience looks on in bewilderment at the silence of knitting--only to be delighted when, as Mary informs George that she's expecting, the SFX artist raises the knitting needles to reveal a blue baby-bootie. This is entirely a radio-on-stage gag—one that wouldn't be heard over the air—and it's inclusion here is an inside joke to both the audience in the theater and an especially inside joke to sound effects artists, who are often asked to perform such "impossible" SFX cues.

Sounds such as doors and dinner dishes, footsteps, the scratching record, cracking ice, and champagne toast will be produced by the on-stage SFX artist or crew. Other sounds such as wind, clock ticking, Clarence's river splashing, cars, and harp glissandos can be rendered by the live sound effects team or triggered from pre-recorded SFX tracks. I offer my own professionally designed SFX tracks for a one time fee—which can be downloaded as MP3 files. In the support materials regarding sound effects, I explain how the SFX crew can double along with pre-recorded tracks to aid the sound and present a better illusion of radio artistry.

Directorial Approach

Please be conscious that there is a ritual aspect to the production of *Wonderful Life*. I've seen audiences in tears as George despairs while trapped in Pottersville. His plea to live again is a highly emotional peak for the star and audience. There are a number of metaphors I use in my interpretation of this material to fully evoke this ritual of sacrifice, death and rebirth and you should consider them in setting a tone for your production. First, I suggest you seek to convey an edge-of-the-seat quality by urging a vigorous delivery and slightly fast tempo.

Radio productions are a bit faster than real life—there's no place for traditional stage pauses because the listening audience may assume "dead air" means the transmission has been interrupted—and may "touch that dial." On-stage, a similar fast tempo can aid in overcoming the stasis inherent in having actors stand at microphones reading from scripts. Also, if you are a community theatre troupe with amateur actors, a faster delivery will allow these players to coast over anything lacking in their acting skills.

Thematically, a fast tempo also has a purpose. This is a Christmas-themed show, of course. And Christmas celebrates the pending birth of a child and always carries anticipation and mystery, as does the unwrapping of a Christmas gift, and so too, the best ghost stories--which is what *Wonderful Life* really is. With that in mind, there should be surprise everywhere and you should endeavor to keep the audience always guessing "what's next," even though the storyline is familiar.

The second metaphor to pursue is the contrast of delight amidst awfulness--the bustling crowds despite the repeated crises—especially the use of walla-walla. The more exuberant and noisy—but at a controlled volume level—the better. Thematically again, there's a defiant mysticism about celebrating life on the shortest day of the year. The idea that hope can spring from such bleak surroundings is at the heart of Christmas--and Capra's fable.

Lastly, try to impart a gusto from the many "little people" of Bedford Falls and their grotesque counterparts in Pottersville. The actors will enjoy being able to portray characters who are sweet and then later sour. Have them do so with urgency—to underline the contrasting worlds on display here. George's loony joy at the end seems that much higher for all the frustration and suffering that preceded it.

Encourage cast and crew to dive headlong into their roles and leave behind the film's familiar portrayals. This adaptation is a re-invention of the film--for radio-on-stage and as a stand-alone dramatic experience.

Preparation

The only other advice I could give regarding producing the program would be ...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.

CASTING

_____	GEORGE BAILEY	Dreamer/Loan Officer (male)
_____	CLARENCE	Angel, Second Grade (male)
_____	SUPERINTENDENT	Boss of Angels (male/female)
_____	MARY HATCH BAILEY	George's Wife/Librarian (female)
_____	ANNOUNCER	Radio announcer (male/female)
_____	MR. POTTER	Warped, old financier (male)
_____	UNCLE BILLY	Absent-minded clerk (male)
_____	SAM WAINWRIGHT	Successful businessman (male)
_____	VIOLET BICK	Easy girl (female)
_____	POP BAILEY	George's father (male)
_____	MA BAILEY	George's mother (female)
_____	DR. CAMPBELL	Board President (male/female)
_____	GOWER	Pharmacist (male/female)
_____	NICK	Ornery shareholder/bartender (male/female)
_____	ERNIE	Cab driver (male)
_____	BERT	Local policeman (male)
_____	MARTINI	Italian café owner (male/female)
_____	YOUNG GEO. BAILEY	Boy, age 10 (male/female)
_____	PETEY BAILEY	Boy, age 9 (male/female)
_____	JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (female)
_____	ZUZU BAILEY	Girl, age 5 (female)
_____	COUSIN TILLY	Loan office clerk (female)
_____	MRS. HATCH	Mary's mother (female)
_____	TOLL-TAKER	Toll-taker (male/female)
_____	CHARLIE	Difficult shareholder (male/female)
_____	MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (female)
_____	EUSTACE	Loan office clerk (male/female)
_____	MRS. THOMPSON	Shareholder (female)
_____	MR. WELCH	Irate husband (male)
_____	CARTER	Bank Examiner (male/female)
_____	IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR	Impatient neighbor (male/female)
_____	SHERIFF	County Sheriff (male/female)
_____	BANK TELLER	Bank clerk (male/female)
_____	RANDY	Shareholder (male/female)
_____	EDDY	Shareholder (male/female)
_____	RADIO DIRECTOR	(NON-SPEAKING PART)

Regarding casting, I've produced the show with a cast of 7 men and 4 women and also 8 men and 3 women.. However, plenty of roles can be played by either men or women--as is indicated--so you may mix and match as needed.

Please note, that unlike some playwrights, I have no problems with you changing genders of characters (or deleting scenes.)

Here's one way of splitting up roles.

ACTOR-- GEORGE BAILEY	Dreamer/Loan Officer (male)
--ACTOR-- CLARENCE	Angel, Second Grade (male)
--ACTRESS-- MARY HATCH BAILEY	George's Wife/Librarian (female)
--ACTOR OR ACTRESS-- SUPERINTENDENT CARTER	Boss of Angels (male/female) Bank Examiner (male/female)
--ACTOR-- ANNOUNCER UNCLE BILLY TOLL-TAKER	Radio announcer (male/female) Absent-minded clerk (male) Toll-taker (male/female)
--ACTOR-- MR. POTTER OFFICER BERT EDDY	Warped, old financier (male) Local policeman (male) Shareholder(male/female)
--ACTOR-- ERNIE GOWER DR. CAMPBELL MARTINI CHARLIE	Cab driver (male) Pharmacist (male/female) Board President (male/female) Italian café owner (male/female) Shareholder (male/female)
--ACTOR-- POP BAILEY YOUNG GEORGE BAILEY EUSTACE MR. WELCH PETEY BAILEY RANDY	George's father (male) Boy, age 10 (male) Loan office clerk (male/female) Irate husband (male) Boy, age 9 (male/female) Shareholder (male/female)

--ACTOR--

SAM WAINWRIGHT	Successful businessman (male)
HARRY BAILEY	George's younger brother
NICK	Ornery shareholder/bartender
SHERIFF	County Sheriff (male/female)

--ACTRESS--

VIOLET BICK	Easy girl (female)
MRS. HATCH	Mary's mother (female)
ZUZU BAILEY	Girl, age 5 (female)
MRS. DAVIS	Shareholder (female)

-- ACTRESS--

MA BAILEY	George's mother (female)
COUSIN TILLY	Loan office clerk (female)
JANIE BAILEY	Girl, age 8 (female)
BANK TELLER	Bank clerk (male/female)
IMPATIENT NEIGHBOR	Impatient neighbor (male/female)
MRS. THOMPSON	Shareholder (female)

CASTING MONOLOGUES: "It's A Wonderful Life"

Not all roles are represented here, but auditions using these monologues should indicate which actors are best suited for all the roles in the play.

To prepare for the audition, select a character or two and read their lines to yourself several times, both silently and aloud. Try several interpretations or styles of delivery. Since radio actors can often play several parts, try auditioning using different voices or accents for the various roles.

ANNOUNCER: This is the story of George Bailey--an ordinary man who lives in Bedford Falls, New York. But George Bailey--more than anything--wanted to see the world--the exciting world that lay somewhere beyond his home town. George had big dreams. But also big responsibilities. Of course, sometimes the two don't exactly fit together. Sometimes happiness is not over the rainbow, but right under your nose. However, our story doesn't begin in Bedford Falls. In fact, it doesn't begin anywhere in this world...

SUPERINTENDENT ANGEL: Now look, Clarence. A few months later, Young George was working after school at Gower's drug store. But on this day, Mr. Gower received a telegram informing him that his only son had just died of influenza. Devastated, Mr. Gower was trying to drown his sorrow in whiskey, when...

GEORGE BAILEY 1: What did I wish for, Mary? Oh... I don't know... Hmmm... Not just one wish, a whole hatful of 'em. Y'see... I'm leaving this crummy little town. I want to see the world! Italy! Greece! The Parthenon! The Coliseum! And that's just this summer!

GEORGE BAILEY 2: Now, wait a minute! Why my father ever started this penny-ante Building and Loan, I'll never know. But just remember this, Mr. Potter! That... "rabble"... you're talking about... Well, they do most of the working and paying... and living and dying in this community. Is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms with a bath...? Anyway, my father didn't think so! People were human beings to him! But to you--a warped, frustrated, old man--they're cattle!

MARY HATCH BAILEY: (CONCERNED) What's the matter, George? You haven't said a word since you came home! Zuzu's got a little temperature. The doctor said it was nothing serious. (PAUSE) Why are you shouting? George! Whatever's wrong with you? Must you torture the children too?

VIOLET BICK: George Bailey... Have you lost your mind? (LOUDER) "Walk through the grass?" In my bare feet? It must be ten miles to the falls! And this is the only thing I have to wear. You expect me to go swimming in this? What's with you, George? For a guy who wanted to sail around the world, you don't seem...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.
The full casting monologue section runs 4 pages.

Live Sound Effects for *It's a Wonderful Life*
by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

TINGLING WIND CHIMES
ICE CRACKING
PHONE RINGS
PHONE HANDSET PICKED UP/HUNG UP
PHONE BEING DIALED
FACE SLAPS
DINNER PLATES/FORKS
FOOTSTEPS ON SIDEWALK
FOOTSTEPS ON WOODEN FLOOR
DOG BARKS/HOWLS
MARY'S ROBE RIPS
SHAKING FLOWER BUSH
GAVEL
DOOR OPENING/CLOSING/SHUT
BELL (ATTACHED TO DOOR) RINGS
CREAKING DOOR OPENING
DOOR LOCKING
PHONOGRAPH CLICKED ON
NEEDLE SCRATCHES RECORD
ENVELOPE OF MONEY RUSTLED
CAB DOOR OPENS/SHUTS
FLAPPING BIRD WINGS
KNITTING NEEDLES QUIETLY KNITTING
TYPEWRITER (KEYS AND BELL)
SQUEAKY WHEELCHAIR
NEWSPAPER FLEXED/HANDED OVER
FOOTSTEPS IN SNOW
MODEL BRIDGE BEING DESTROYED
GEORGE HANDS INSURANCE POLICY OVER
BARROOM GLASSES CLINKING
PUNCH
BODY DROP
THUNDER ROLL
CASH REGISTER KA-CHING & BELL
DRINKS BEING SET DOWN ON BAR
BOTTLE BEING SLAMMED DOWN ON BAR
SCUFFLES
CRASH OF TRASH CAN
WOMAN STAGGERS IN HIGH HEELS
FRANTIC POUNDING ON DOOR
POLICE WHISTLE
GUNSHOTS
SEARCHING A POCKET
CHAMPAGNE CORK POP
BOOK OPENED
SMALL TEA BELL RUNG

Sound Effects Cookbook for *It's a Wonderful Life* by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

For photos of the sound effects area for *Wonderful Life*, see www.ruyasonic.com/radio...
(WEB-LINK HAS BEEN TRUNCATED IN THIS SAMPLE SCRIPT)

TINGLING WIND CHIMES:

Shake a small wind chime. Think "twinkling stars." Hang it on a stand near the SFX table mic, so you can finger it to keep it tinkling under the Heaven scenes. Search the web for solid aluminum chimes similar to *Cupids Love wind chimes* or *Farm Tractor wind chimes*.

ICE CRACKING:

Use your hand to grasp/crush a thin-walled 16oz plastic water bottle. Use an empty bottle, without a cap. Blow into it to re-inflate. One bottle should last for several shows.

PHONE BEING DIALED:

Use an old rotary dial phone--a Western Electric model #500 or #302 phone will do. See Wikipedia for info on those two models. To purchase one, try flea markets or e-bay. Beware of modern reproductions with pushbutton numbers inside a fake rotary dial.

PHONE RINGS:

Ring Rhythm: 2 seconds, then pause for 4 seconds and repeat.

Take two "handbells" (the kind where the clapper is held on with a small spring) and ring them.

Search the web for *Kidsplay Chromatic Add-On Handbells*.

OR wire up an electric "delivery bell." Search Google for: *Heath Zenith 2-1/2" Wired chime Model# 172C-A*. It's available at many hardware stores. This bell can run on a 6-volt lantern battery or from AC power--via a transformer. Use a quiet pushbutton.

OR ring an old rotary dial telephone using a "Tele-Q" ringing generator from Production Advantage www.productionadvantageonline.com. This is useful for other stage plays because it will ring old or new (wired) phones.

PHONE HANDSET PICKED UP/HUNG UP:

Rattle telephone handset on cradle. You must rattle it more than would be necessary to really answer it. This way the audience can better tell what's that a phone is being answered. For hang ups use the rhythm: "ba-DUMP."

FACE SLAPS:

Slap one hand on another or slap hand on a fist-sized piece of wood covered with thin layer of leather. Experiment to position it properly at the SFX mic. Try to avoid a breeze from your hand causing a thud into the mic.

DINNER PLATES/FORKS:

Scrape a fork on small dessert plate. You may wish to drop the fork on a particular line of dialogue--for dramatic emphasis. Have two or three different sized plates/saucers and several forks--so you can quickly grab one on a crowded SFX table.

FOOTSTEPS ON WOODEN FLOOR:

Use conventionally heeled shoes on a wooden "walkboard"--an 18"x18" piece of 3/4" plywood, backed with rubber shelf liner matting (stapled on), so it won't slide on the stage floor.

Men walk with a heel-toe sound. Use just the heels to portray women walking in high-heels.

FOOTSTEPS ON SIDEWALK:**VIOLET STAGGERS UP IN HIGH HEELS:**

Use conventionally heeled shoes on a piece of rough stone tile affixed with construction adhesive to an 18"x18" piece of 3/4" plywood. Building supply stores sell rough "travertine" tiles in 1/2" thickness. See instructions above for how men and women walk and apply it also to the sidewalk surface.

To make the drunken Violet stagger up on the sidewalk, use your heels and step in irregular rhythms. Think "drunk."

DOG BARKS/HOWLS:

To bark, say "row-row-row" but inhale as you say it.

To howl, say "raaaaaar" but inhale as you...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.

The full appendix runs 60 pages.

The full How-To SFX section runs 12 pages.

Pre-recorded Sound Effects for *It's A Wonderful Life* By Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

Certain sound effects are either hard to produce live or hard to mic well, or both. In *Wonderful Life* these difficult sounds include crickets, cars, water plunging/splashing, glass breaking, ticking clocks and wind. For these particular sounds, you should rely on pre-recorded tracks--for a variety of reasons.

My SFX mentors worked with Orson Welles, Jack Benny, Jack Webb and other radio greats and in the Golden Age of radio drama, these network SFX artists always used a mix of live sounds and pre-recorded ones. There was no SFX purism preferring live over pre-recorded sounds; they used whatever worked to best achieve the effect the script called for.

Usually, background ambiances, such as jungles, factories, weather, interiors of cars, etc. were pre-recorded. Actions, such as fights, doors, feet, guns, etc, were done live. Using a mix of live and pre-recorded sounds served both the budget and the realism of the shows--and this was true for both studio shows and those done with live audiences.

For modern productions of *Wonderful Life*, some theatre troupes may seek to use live SFX for everything (including crickets, water, cars, etc.) but that would NOT be authentic. It would also sound poor. For example: water SFX are notoriously hard to mic. Also, you would need many SFX artists to do a convincing field of crickets. And if one SFX artist was busy doing wind ambience, would the other be able to do walking in snow and gunshots and a scuffle? Here, pre-recorded SFX allow for a smaller crew.

I understand that pre-recorded sounds lack the magic and fun of live SFX, but there are ways to make pre-recorded SFX entertaining for live audiences. Here's a suggestion for bringing magic to "canned" sound effects.

Real Sonic Sorcery

In the heyday of radio drama--for both studio and live performances--the SFX crew consisted of one or more artists doing the live SFX, with another artist playing 78 RPM sound effects records from a "sound truck"--a wheeled console/cabinet consisting of multiple turntables--some with two (or even four) tone arms, a mixer for crossfading between turntables/tonerms, and a speaker. The sound truck man would work side by side with the live SFX artists. On some shows, one artist would do both the live SFX and sound truck duties.

I suggest putting your sound truck on-stage and have the SFX artists trigger the pre-recorded SFX using it. This increases the precision of coordinating SFX with dialogue. Plus, being on-stage, next to the live SFX table allows the SFX artists to easily "assist" the pre-recorded tracks with live SFX.

The Glass Half-Fool

For example, in one scene, George and Mary throw rocks to break windows at the old Granville house. However, live glass-break SFX can be dangerous and...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.

Pre-Recorded Sound Effects Cue List for *It's A Wonderful Life*

Use a pencil--not a pen--to write in the mixer volume settings for each cue. Note: that these settings may change over the course of rehearsals and performances. You may need to adjust your mixer settings before triggering each cue.

Track	Volume	Page-Cue	Description
01		P04-C10	Splashes into ice pond
02		P13-C02	Crickets #1
03		P15-C02	Distant window shattered by rock #1
04		P15-C10	Distant window shattered by rock #2
05		P17-C14	Car pulls up, idles--under
06		P27-C03	Downtown Bedford Falls/Traffic
07		P28-C07	Ernie's cab pulls away from curb
08		P30-C08	Crickets #2
09		P33-C03	"Buffalo Gals" 78rpm record
10		P38-C07	Interior of cab driving #1
11		P40-C02	Cab pulls over
12		P52-C06	Potter's clock ticking in background #1
13		P71-C01	Potter's clock ticking in background #2
14		P78-C03	Clarence jumps in river, splashes around
15		P78-C06	George jumps in river, splashes around
16		P81-C13	Magical harp glissando--up
17		P86-C04	Wind #1
18		P87-C04	Downtown Pottersville/Traffic
19		P88-C09	Interior of cab driving #2
20		P92-C03	Wind #2 (Cemetery)
21		P96-C02	Wind #3
22		P96-C11	Magical harp glissando--down

All tracks have 8 seconds of silence tacked onto the end, to allow you time to pause the playback device before the next track would begin to play.

NOTE: This list assumes you'll have someone dedicated to triggering just the pre-recorded SFX. However, if you are also using the pre-recorded music cues, you may want to combine the two sets of cues on your playback devices (CD, SD, MD or computer using MP3s). For that, you'd want to have the cues sequenced in Page-and-Cue order. A list of cues combined this way can be found later in this section, just after ...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.

Using Pre-Recorded Sound Effects Tracks for *It's a Wonderful Life* by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

NOTE: A specially prepared collection of sound effects tracks is available from Sales@RuyaSonic.com. The tracks can be downloaded as MP3 files from a special web page--and burned to CD or triggered from a computer or MP3 player.

Most of the sounds for “It’s A Wonderful Life” are produced using live SFX devices, however, as in the golden era of radio drama (1930s-1960s) pre-recorded tracks were used for sounds that were difficult to produce manually. Some sound effects artists perform the live sound effects AND trigger the pre-recorded ones from a playback device on the SFX table. Others leave pre-recorded SFX to an off-stage technician.

The live sound effects are to be rendered by sound effects artists— doors, Potter’s squeaky wheel chair, the cash register, scratching record player, etc.

The pre-recorded sound effects are to be triggered from a playback device—CD player, computer, MP3 player, sampler keyboard, etc. These sounds include crickets, cars, splashing water, clocks, harp glissandos, traffic and wind.

Review the Pre-Recorded SFX Cue List where you will find each pre-recorded SFX track listed by the page and cue number where it occurs in the script (EXAMPLE: “P15-C10” indicates “Page 15, Cue 10”). Mark your script with the Track number (1 to 22) to be played at that point. Leave space to also mark a volume level for each track—in pencil—as the director may change levels over the course of rehearsal. Go through the script and listen to each SFX track. Know the SFX cues well, so you don’t cut them off too early. In some cases, you will have to fade them out or crossfade between two tracks (a cab driving and a cab pulling over).

Please note that some SFX tracks will be played at the same time as the music cues—and thus will require balancing the volume levels, as well as considering the level of the actors’ voices.

In some cases, the director may wish to have the SFX artists “double” some pre-recorded sounds live—for example, the window breaking or water splashes. They may even fake doing the glass and water effects while the bulk of the sound is produced via the pre-recorded tracks. However, doubling is very effective in creating sonic illusions for audiences.

Ideally the playback device will not...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.

Music for *It's a Wonderful Life*
by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

LIVE VS. PRE-RECORDED MUSIC:

Some troupes may use the pre-recorded radio-theatre organ and piano music cues I offer (contact: Sales@RuyaSonic.com for more information) or they may opt for a live keyboardist. The music cues can be “beds”--which play underneath dialogue, or “bridges”--which play between scenes and fade under the new scene’s dialogue, or as “source” music which is supposedly played by either musicians or a phonograph within the scene--often a bar or party. The engineer’s task here is to mix the music with the voices and sound effects so the volume level of the three elements is properly balanced. Generally, the music will need to fade as the dialogue begins—unless the script indicates otherwise, such as LET CUE FINISH, or PLAYS UNDER ENTIRE SCENE, or MUSIC CUTS ABRUPTLY at a certain line of dialogue.

If your troupe chooses to use the pre-recorded music tracks, a technician will be triggering those tracks from a playback device--an audio CD player, MP3 player, or computer. The audio tech will need to be able to clearly hear the actors’ dialogue and sound effects, so as to trigger their music cues at the appropriate time. However, since the actors’ voices and sound effects are going through a mixer to the P.A. system, the technician should use either headphones or a small monitor speaker to listen to the show as it is performed. This is in contrast to most stage play productions, where the control booth is located at the back of the theater and hearing the dialogue from on-stage can be difficult. Elsewhere in this document I suggest having the pre-recorded music triggered on-stage by a technician seated at a fake organ shell. You should seriously consider that option.

Some cues are triggered quickly in succession, such as where one scene ends with musical punctuation and the next begins with its own musical motif--for example, the many transitions from Bedford Falls to Heaven. You may find it useful to employ TWO playback devices--both loaded with the exact same tracks--and trigger one after the other or even crossfade between the two.

Some theaters use slow-to-engage DVD players to trigger music or sound design tracks, but you should make sure the playback devices can quickly play the tracks as scripted. I recommend using DJ-style devices since they respond instantly to button pushes. If your playback devices take a while to actually play the tracks, you should notate on the script exactly when to trigger a track to have it play in sync with the actors’ dialogue reaching the point where the cue should play. This could be earlier than indicated in the script.

You may want to investigate using a...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.

Pre-Recorded Music cues for *It's A Wonderful Life*

Use a pencil--not a pen--to write in the mixer volume settings for each cue. Note: that these settings may change over the course of rehearsals and performances. You may need to adjust your mixer settings before triggering each cue.

Track	Volume	Page/Cue	Description
1.		P01-C01	(BED) "Radio Theatre Theme"
2.		P02-C01	(BED) "Wonderful Life Intro"
3.		P02-C03	(BED) "Heavenly"
4.		P05-C02	(BRIDGE) "Gower's Sad Drugstore"
5.		P06-C12	(BED) "Tender Moment"
6.		P07-C03	(BRIDGE) "Up and Segue into "Heavenly"
7.		P12-C05	(BED) "Heavenly"
8.		P13-C01	(BRIDGE) Last 2 Bars of "Buffalo Gals" setup
9.		P18-C05	(BRIDGE) "Tragic" into "Heavenly"
10.		P24-C03	(BRIDGE) "Oh Well" segues to "Heavenly"
11.		P27-C04	(BRIDGE) "Downtown Bedford Falls"
12.		P30-C07	(BRIDGE) "From Violet to Mary"
13.		P37-C10	(BED) "Wrenching"
14.		P37-C16	(BED) "Heavenly"
15.		P38-C06	(BRIDGE) "Wedding March Taxi"
16.		P40-C09	(BED) "Act 1 Outro"
17.		P41-C01	(BED) "Wonderful Life Act 2 Intro"
18.		P41-C04	(BED) "Heavenly"
19.		P49-C17	(BED) "Time Passing"
20.		P52-C01	(BRIDGE) "Bride" to "Heavenly"
21.		P56-C06	(BRIDGE) "Indignant" to "Sleepy"
22.		P57-C10	(BRIDGE) "Baby" to "Heavenly"
23.		P58-C07	(BED) "War Montage"
24.		P63-C16	(BRIDGE) "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" - ends sourly
25.		P65-C07	(BRIDGE) "Lost" to "Heavenly"
26.		P66-C11	(BRIDGE) "Desperate" -- Let it Finish
27.		P66-C12	(SOURCE) Janie Piano Practice - #1 - "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"
28.		P67-C02	(SOURCE) Janie Piano Practice - #2 - "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"
29.		P69-C16	(SOURCE) Janie Piano Practice - #3 - "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"
30.		P70-C17	(BRIDGE) "Troubled"
31.		P73-C12	(BRIDGE) "Cruel" to "Heavenly"
32.		P75-C01	(SOURCE) "Santa Lucia" on accordion--gets abruptly stopped
33.		P76-C07	(BRIDGE) "Alone" to "Heavenly"
34.		P76-C13	(BRIDGE) ACT 2 Outro --ends in suspense chord
35.		P78-C01	(BED) "Act 3 Intro/"Dire Bridge"
36.		P83-C01	(SOURCE) "Juke Joint Jingle Bells"--under entire scene
37.		P87-C03	(SOURCE) "Pottersville Streetscene"--under entire scene
38.		P88-C08	(BRIDGE) "I Know That Girl"
39.		P89-C05	(BRIDGE) "Empty Granville House"
40.		P90-C10	(GLISSANDO UP) "Magical Help"

41.		P90-C16	(BRIDGE) "Escape" to "Mean Mother"
42.		P92-C02	(BED) "Shattered" to "The Cemetery"
43.		P94-C10	(BRIDGE) "Lightly" to "Old Maid"
44.		P96-C01	(BED) "Lynch Mob" to "Redemption"
45.		P98-C04	(BED) "Organ Hark The Herald Angels Sing"
46.		Q101-C12	(BED) "Piano Auld Lang Syne" – Janie playing
47.		Q101-C12a	(BED) "Piano Auld Lang Syne" – Regular playing (OPTIONAL)
48.		Q103-C01	(BED) "Organ Auld Lang Syne" – Chorus only
49.		Q103-C02	(BED) "Organ Auld Lang Syne" – Verse & 2 choruses (OPTIONAL)

All tracks have 8 seconds of silence tacked onto the end, to allow you time to pause the playback device before the next track would begin to play.

NOTE: This list assumes you'll have someone dedicated to triggering just the pre-recorded music tracks. However, if you are also using the pre-recorded SFX cues, you may want to combine the two sets of cues on your playback devices (CD, SD, MD or computer using MP3s). For that, you'd want to have the cues sequenced in Page-and-Cue order. You can just copy both sets of cues to a folder or CD burning queue and then sort them by name--which begins with page # and cue #.

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Advice for Live Keyboardists for *It's a Wonderful Life* by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

If your troupe chooses to have a live keyboardist accompany the drama, I would suggest you primarily use an organ since this is what was used for most Golden Age radio dramas. The organ was a “one man orchestra” capable of producing a wide variety of timbres. It was particularly well-suited for underscoring radio dramas because of its ability to sustain notes under the dialogue. The percussive piano would tend to steal focus from the actors’ voices.

However, there are portions of this adaptation of *Wonderful Life* that call for pianos--but only as “source” music occurring in the location a scene is set in. One for 8-year old Janie Bailey practicing “Hark The Herald Angels Sing,” a bluesy, barrelhouse piano played in Nick’s Bar, and “Auld Lang Syne” played on Janie’s piano in the party scene at the end. All these scenes call for a slightly out-of-tune piano sound, since neither the modest Bailey household nor the roughneck bar would have fancy grand pianos. On more scene--Martini’s Italian Tavern--uses an accordion, but that can be rendered with a piano if you have no real accordion, or accordion sound on your keyboard.

In reproducing the sound of organs used in Golden Age radio shows, please note that they ranged from Thomas to Hammond to small Wurlitzer organs. Many modern synthesizer/sampler keyboards can emulate these sounds. However, most synth organ emulations are of the familiar Hammond B-3 model, and that instrument was only introduced in 1955, so its characteristic sounds wouldn’t have been used in a 1940s radio drama. However, it is possible to set a B-3, or modern clone to emulate the organs used in Golden Age radio. This would involve setting the drawbars for the two manuals in unusual registrations. (For information about organ registrations and drawbars see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammond_organ#Drawbars) Native Instruments’ “B4” is a marvelous computer-based Hammond organ emulation that runs on PCs or Macs. You could use this as a sound source to be triggered from any MIDI keyboard. It has the ability to set your drawbars to the unique registrations used by vintage radio drama and theatre organists.

See: <http://www.native-instruments.com/index.php?id=b4ii> for more info.

To hear a modern example of Golden Age organs--played in the radio drama style, listen to the short MP3 clip *Life’s Little Ups & Downs* at www.ruyasonic.com/downloads.htm

In seeking to accompany your troupe’s production of *Wonderful Life*, you may want to listen to...

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Radio Soap Opera Organ Registrations

Registration	Name
00 8703 004 (Vibrato 3, Chorus 3 - fast Leslie)	Soap Opera #1
60 2584 878	Soap Opera #2

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Theatrical Organ Registrations

Here are typical drawbar settings used to reproduce the sound of theater-organs, which are far closer to the timbres of radio drama organs than the familiar rock, jazz and gospel settings in use since the 1950s.

Upper Manual	
Registration	Name
-- ---- ---	Cancel
00 8740 000	French Horn 8'
00 8408 004	Tibias 8' & 2'
00 8080 840	Clarinet 8'

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Producing *It's A Wonderful Life* as Radio-on-Stage by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

STAGE SETUP: Production Concepts

Below are several ways old time radio was presented. You can pick and choose the elements that fit your vision and budget. I also include logistical info regarding how you can stage the show as a *radio-on-stage* production.

Radio Reality Ain't What It's Cracked Up to Be

Theatre troupes seeking to present my radio adaptation of *It's A Wonderful Life* as an authentic piece of 1940s Hollywood radio drama need to understand just how shows were actually produced in the fabled Golden Age. Sure there were actors reading from scripts in front of microphones, live sound effects artists, and an organist, orchestra or pre-recorded score. But there were also directors “throwing cues” (from a booth or on-the-floor), sound trucks, headphones for the SFX artists, sponsors watching the shows from their own booth, assistants with stop watches running up to actors at the mic to cut dialogue and fit the show into the time-slot, and more. Your production can use as many of these authentic elements as you choose.

However, authenticity can be a trap. As we say in the radio sound effects world, “Reality ain't what it's cracked up to be”--meaning that mistaken notions of authenticity can harm your production. I've seen modern stage depictions of “old time radio” chock full of errors--such as applause signs, using the film term “foley” instead of Sound Effects, actors tossing script pages to the floor, the absence of somebody throwing cues, etc. Here's a primer on classic radio-on-stage productions that may spare you from anachronisms, bogus “realism,” and unnecessary art direction/prop expenses. Once you grasp the concepts of radio drama production, you can mix and match elements to create your own crowd-pleasing show.

Hollywood Radio-On-Stage Productions:

A typical 1940s radio-on-stage show--such as for the *Lux Radio Theater* or the *Theater Guild on the Air* programs--took place in a large, legitimate theater (seating 600-1000) or a fancy movie house. These live audience shows were hour-long adaptations of recent Hollywood films--often with just one or two lead actors reprising their film roles. The broadcasts mostly served to promote upcoming films starring those actors. The live audience functioned more as a sound effect. Applause was there to validate the egos of the film studios, producers, and movie stars.

For radio dramas such as *It's A Wonderful Life*, these radio-on-stage productions in large theaters made no attempt to recreate the look of a radio studio--no control room windows, no acoustical tile, no overhead boom mics, no “On-Air” signs, etc. Instead of any kind of “radio-land” set, all they used were a few boxy-shaped microphones in front of long velvet drapes--which served to acoustically deaden the room. The actors were elegantly dressed, even if the characters they portrayed were pirates or coal miners. There were no fedora-wearing actors with turned-up shirtsleeves, no gum-chewing actresses, no cigar smoking by the SFX artist, no Damon Runyon version of the 1940s. The look of these shows resembled our modern Oscar ceremonies. The intent of these shows was *glamour*, and not a showcasing of the technical aspects of radio production. As such, the sound effects were often minimal and presented without much fanfare--or visibility.

In this kind of *Hollywood radio-on-stage show*, there were 3-4 microphones on stands--positioned Down-Stage Center running Right to Left. Since the focus of these shows was on the movie stars, the sound effects elements were downplayed. With that in mind, the SFX table would be unobtrusively located Stage-Right or Stage-Left. Next to the SFX table, a “sound truck,” a wheeled console with several turntables and a speaker, played pre-recorded sound effects from 78 RPM records. An orchestra or organist might be Up-Stage or in the pit in front of the apron. A group of vocal “extras”--called the “mumble chorus” would be seated Up-Stage, headed by a “conductor” for the “walla-walla” crowd scenes.

This *Hollywood radio-on-stage* setup is one that most modern troupes could easily reproduce in any theater space. It is totally authentic for *Wonderful Life*--which was presented this way in the 1947 Lux Radio Theater production. However, I believe this style of presentation requires some tweaking in order to provide a more satisfying experience for modern theater audiences. Those tweaks can be borrowed from the production styles detailed below.

Radio-Studio-Theater Productions:

The weekly radio comedy and variety shows, such as the *Jack Benny Program* and the *Fred Allen Show*, were broadcast from *radio studio-theaters*--seating 150 to 300. Modern sit-coms and *Jay Leno*-style talk shows are based on this model. These radio shows used a setup similar *Hollywood Radio-On-Stage* with a smaller stage, drapes, mics, SFX, sound truck, etc., but the walls surrounding the audience itself had acoustical tile or drapes. There was an “On-Air” sign--but no “Applause” sign. Along the *side* walls were glassed windows into the control room and a box for the commercial sponsors—much like an opera box or skybox at today’s arenas.

In radio sitcoms such as the *Jack Benny Program* or *My Favorite Wife*, sound effects artists were prominently featured, often with elaborate props that were visual as well as aural. The studio audience was active and well-mic’d. They gave the performers instant feedback as to how well jokes went over--and most importantly, their laughter assured advertisers that the show they were sponsoring was actually funny. If somebody screwed up on-stage, it was all part of the show.

Using the *Radio-Studio-Theater* model of production allows...

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Small Radio-Studio Productions:

The typical radio genre shows--crime, suspense, westerns, soap operas, horror-- were done *without* audiences present. Here, audience reactions would detract from the realism of the shows. Modern crime and doctor TV shows resemble this model--the realism is key. In the Golden Age of radio these kinds of genre programs were produced in small radio studios with acoustical tile everywhere, some drapes, and large control and advertising client box windows placed behind and beside the performers. The sound truck and live SFX devices were sprawled across the studio--often taking up a great deal of space--while the 4-8 actors were off to the side, huddled around 1 or 2 mics. The cast would provide their own “walla” crowd sounds--often from their seats, several feet from the mics. Here, actors and crew could be dressed

informally—some in suits, others with rolled up shirtsleeves and collars loosened—and SFX men in bow ties or long ties tucked into shirt front, ladies in dresses—usually never in slacks.

To achieve this studio look, you can use white pegboard for the walls, above dark wainscoting, a talk-back speaker, an illuminated On-Air sign, a large vintage clock--with second hand, an armoire-style SFX closet, a 6-foot long SFX table and “sound truck,” wooden folding chairs, and a large window into a control room, peopled by a silent “director” and “engineer.” You can add a water cooler, or small table with coffee and donuts, etc.

While it is possible to present your show using...

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STAGE SETUP: Logistics

Here are some technical and logistical issues you should consider in producing for radio-on-stage.

MICROPHONES:

Use *real* microphones hooked up to a P.A. system. Some troupes think dummy mics and loud stage voices will carry, but with the amount of music and sound effects in a radio show like *Wonderful Life*, the actors' voices will need to be balanced with the other sounds. I've done over 900 radio dramas--many of them as radio-on-stage productions--and they could NOT be done without mics for actors, let alone sound effects.

Actors will have to learn to use regular voices and realistic whispers for this show. It will take a while for them to get used to doing drama over a P.A. system. Try to rehearse at mics stands (optionally) with mics and amplification in order to quickly familiarize the cast and crew with this unusual form of theatre. See the Engineering section for information about setting up the P.A. system.

Well-heeled troupes may wish to use the large vintage microphones of the 1930s-40s (the boxy RCA 44BX or capsule-shaped RCA 77DX) but these...

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CHAIRS FOR OFF-MIC ACTORS:

Place a row or two of chairs Up-Stage--for actors to sit on when they aren't on-mic. The chairs should be quiet when sitting down or getting up--beware of creaking chairs, swivel chairs, or padded chairs that emit "whoosh" sounds. There is no need for actors to be off-stage at any point in the show, so no doors or exits are required. (However, if you use a radio-studio type of set, you may want to have the actors enter at the opening of the show as if they're coming in the studio door.) The seated actors will serve as the "mumble chorus" to provide walla-walla crowd noises. And the distance they will be from the mics will serve to keep their volume balanced in the audio mix.

"RADIO" COSTUMING:

Whether you choose to have a contemporary look for your actors or put everybody in 1940s garb, it is handy to allow actors to use various character-based hats, aprons, or shawls when they are at the mic--to help the live audience understand if the actor is portraying a cop, bartender, taxi driver, vamp, etc. This is especially true if your...

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ITEMS NOT RECOMMENDED:

Some radio-on-stage productions put actors' scripts in 3-ring binders, however this makes for noisy page turning, physically limits how many actors can share a mic, and is not authentic to Golden Age radio shows.

Similarly inauthentic is the practice of throwing script pages on the floor once the lines for that page have been read. This will distract the audience and make a mess of the stage--and require massive re-sorting of scripts for subsequent performances.

Some troupes use music stands to hold the actors' scripts while they're at the mic, however stands tend to clutter the set and can block the audience's view of the actors' faces.

A similar clutter would be the use of headphones on *actors*. Not only is it inauthentic to radio production--in the studio OR on-stage--the wires across the floor makes it difficult and even dangerous for actors to cross to mics. Please note that SFX artists and musicians *do* need headphones. If your show has an on-stage "Radio Director" character to throw cues and coordinate the ensemble work, they would also be wearing headphones.

Stools or chairs at microphones may be necessary if your actors cannot stand up for however long their scenes are, but these also clutter the stage, inhibit vocal performance, and make blocking difficult.

It is also not recommended for actors to be off-stage when they are off-mic. A typical radio show has so many scenes and characters that the endless entrances and exits will steal focus from actors who are actually on-mic. The best way to handle off-mic actors is to have them sit Up-Stage on a row of chairs.

SOUND EFFECTS:

Use a 6-foot table for sound effects at Stage-Right or Stage-Left--as far Down-Stage as the actors' microphones. Sometimes the SFX artist must make eye contact with an actor (to coordinate say, picking up a telephone or knocking on a door.) This is impossible if the SFX table is Up-Stage of the actors at their mics.

You will need several mics for the live SFX. I suggest one to be...

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MUSICIAN/MUSIC TRIGGERING:

Throughout the show there are music cues to bridge between scenes or play beneath the dialogue. These can either be the pre-recorded tracks I offer or you may use a live keyboardist.

An organ would be the most authentic way to accompany this show, but the expense of renting a real Hammond B-3 organ may be beyond your budget. I suggest you use a modern synth/sampler keyboard, but house it in a wooden enclosure built to resemble a church organ's façade.

Another idea is to use...

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For photos of the my SFX rig and the Organ/Trigger Shell, see
www.ruyasonic.com/radio...

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LIGHTING:

Atmospheric lighting is up to you, but make sure the performers have sufficient light to be able to read their scripts at the microphones. This often requires there be light provided above/just behind the mics. One way to provide enough light is to...

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NOTE: Please take care that audio equipment not share power outlets with dimmer packs for the light system, otherwise electrical hum may come through the audio system. You may also want to locate the SFX table on the side of the stage that is quietest—away from fans for the dimmers.

Radio-on-Stage Advice to Cast & Crew

By Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

MICROPHONE TECHNIQUE:

Microphones will be set up at various heights to accommodate a variety of actors. You will generally be assigned a “home” mic and use it whenever you have lines and that mic is free.

In drama, mics are used differently than they are for singing or public speeches. In radio drama, we do NOT...

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When a line of dialogue indicates (ENTERING) , the actor should begin speaking a bit back from the mic as they step up to it. For (EXITING) they should back away from the mic and finish speaking at about 2 feet away. The sound effects artist will watch their approach and time his footsteps to mimic these entrances and exits. The dialogue instruction (FADING) means to step back a bit from the mic as you deliver the line and reduce your volume--as if this were a film and we were dissolving to a new scene. When the script indicates...

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SCRIPT TECHNIQUE:

Radio actors in the 1940s would have their scripts either stapled in the upper left-hand side, or loose--either lying flat or slightly center-creased, length-wise. They wouldn't use...

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Radio Drama Pointers

Microphone Technique:

- 1) Sensitive and dead areas. Don't touch!
- 2) Proximity effect. (Boomy if too close.)
- 3) Proper distance for radio acting. (4" to 6")
- 4) Dynamics and distance. (Back off to yell.)
- 5) Off mic use for distant sounds. Asides.
- 6) Popping "P"s and S-S-S-Sibilance.
- 7) Mic safety. (Don't hit, blow into, or drop)
- 8) Assume every mic is always ON.
- 9) Quiet script page turning.

Radio Acting:

- 1) Quiet in the studio.
- 2) Don't cough or talk during production.
- 3) Watch the director. Wait for your cue.
- 4) If your character is in a scene, stay at the mic.
- 5) Speed equals excitement. Don't bore the audience.
- 6) Jump in if there's dead air.
- 7) Wait for director's signal at the end of the show.

Radio Direction "Sign Language"

- 1) "Wait" - Open hand.
- 2) "5-4-3---" - Finger count down.
- 3) "Theme starting" - Form a "T" with hands.
- 4) "Watch for cue" - Point to person then eye.
- 5) "You're on" - Pointing finger.
- 6) "Cut" - Finger slits throat.
- 7) "Faster" - Move index finger clockwise.
- 8) "Stretch it out" - Pulling taffy.
- 9) "Come in/"Back off" microphone - Move hand towards/away from face.
- 10) "Louder" - Elevate the hand, palm up.
- 11) "Quieter" - Lower the hand, palm down.

Radio-On-Stage Audio Setup

by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

Unlike traditional stage plays, radio-on-stage shows require that all voices be mic'd, as well as the live sound effects. Additionally, there will be the triggering of pre-recorded sound effects, and either a live keyboardist or pre-recorded music tracks of theater organ and piano. This show will be busier--audio-wise than any stage play. And the coordination and timing of actors and sounds/music will be more complex than stage plays. The number of live SFX, pre-recorded SFX and music cues may seem daunting, but there are ways to split up control of those sounds so as to not swamp the audio tech staff.

Some troupes may think they can get by without micing the actors, but balancing the volume levels of the various elements will be impossible unless voices and live SFX are mic'd. Dummy mics and stage voices will not work for this show. However, think of the audio system as *reinforcing* the sound on-stage and not *supplanting* it. The volume levels will not be extreme. The intent here is for clarity--allowing the audience to hear the many sonic elements of the show. The concept is to treat the show as if it were going out for broadcast, but deliver that sound to the live audience in the theater.

P.A. SYSTEM:

You'll need a P.A. system sufficient to fill the venue--with mostly talk. While most P.A.s are used for rather loud music groups, the volume levels required doing radio drama won't approach those used for rock bands, so you won't need massive amplification. If your theater...

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Inputs:

The sound sources will consist of 3-5 voice mics, 1-3 live sound effects mics, pre-recorded sound effects and either pre-recorded music tracks or a keyboardist (organ and piano, which could be provided from a single synth/sampler keyboard). Dynamic unidirectional mics are best for radio-on-stage shows. Avoid condenser mics--as they pick up too many stray sounds, including noises from the audience.

Electronic Effects:

A reverb effect on one microphone would be nice. This is to depict the angels in Heaven. It is not essential. Many mixing boards now come with on-board reverb effects. This would be assigned to a single mic, but you'd want to be able to switch off the reverb effect so that mic could be used by non-Heaven actors. To simulate a telephone voice you...

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Speaker Placement:

The location of P.A. speakers in the theater may be impacted by the use of mics on-stage. The existing sound system in a theater may be fine for the typical sound design and scene music of a stage play, but could cause problems when used for radio-on-stage productions because of mics being on-stage. It may be better to opt out of using a theater's fixed speakers and instead employ portable P.A. speakers--which are better able to be positioned for clarity and sound quality.

Depending on the size and layout of your theater, you can place a speaker...

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Please note that because mics will be on-stage, you risk feedback if the speakers are behind or directly above the mics. If your theater has speakers in these locations, you should either move them or avoid using them. Experiment to make sure that your speakers don't cause feedback or "monitor spill"--which is just before you reach the squeal point of feedback. "Monitor spill" produces a boxy sound that strikes the ear as odd--and will interfere with the intimacy that drama requires. By keeping the P.A. volumes at a reasonable rate you can avoid monitor spill. When setting volume levels, your goal should be...

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Monitoring:

For monitoring purposes, there should be no speakers facing the performers--as this will produce "monitor spill." Instead, the sound effects artist(s)--and live keyboardist (if you use one)--should be wearing headphones and receiving a mix of all voices, music and SFX. This is necessary for them to hear both themselves and to follow where they are in the script. Certain scenes have bustling crowds on-stage and only headphones can provide an accurate rendering of where the actors are in their dialogue. Failure to use headphones often results in...

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MICS FOR ACTORS:

Because radio dramas rarely have more than 4 people on-mic in a scene, you do NOT need a mic for each cast member. For *Wonderful Life*, you should have 3-4 regular vocal mics, primarily to accommodate actors of various heights. Set up mics for "tall", "short" and "medium" actors. Since most scenes only have 2-4 actors speaking at one time, each actor can be on their "home" mic most of the time, but for dramatic purposes, they may be assigned to be a different mic--even one that might appear too tall or short for them. It's sometimes necessary for two or even three actors to share a mic. For example, in *Wonderful Life's* Heaven scenes, Clarence and the Superintendant Angel should share a single mic--since it will have a reverb effect applied...

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Label the mic or mic stand with 1-2-3-4 and F--for filter--on the side facing the actors. During rehearsals, the director may employ blocking--as to who's on which mic for a scene--or even to cross from one mic to another on a certain line of dialogue. Since the mics are clearly labeled, actors can use

these numbers when marking up their scripts as to which mic they need to be at and when. (Mic <4> , <F> , etc.)

Mics running through a P.A. system are treated differently by actors doing drama than by other mic'd performers. Rock singers, lecturers, or DJs often "eat" the mic (put their lips right on the mic.) For drama, we seek a natural tone, so the actors should never be closer than 4 inches from the mic element. If they speak too close to the mic, the super-bassy "proximity effect" kicks in and you get the unnatural sound of a commercial voiceover or shock-jock. Such close-micing also ups the risk of actors popping their "P's."

Mic Height:

You can avoid both the proximity effect and popping "P's" by setting the mic at...

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NOTE: You might be tempted to use modern "pop filters"--small hoops covered with sheer material, or thin metal screens at a distance of 3-5 inches from the mic. However, these devices were not used in the Golden Age of radio and would spoil the 1940s look. Instead of pop filters, radio shows used mic height and distance to avoid these problems. You should too.

To set the various mic heights, have some...

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Conduct Mic School:

Although you set the mic heights in this way, please note that actors must learn how to "work" a mic. Even if they've done 10 years of voiceovers, few actors are experienced when it comes to performing *drama* through a mic into an amplification system. Assemble the actors--together with the director--for mic school. With the P.A. on, do a mic technique demonstration so they can learn how to act into a mic.

- 1) Explain the concept of below-the-chin micing. Tell each actor to select a "home" mic based on their height and try to play there as much as possible during the play.
- 2) Describe and show the "strike zone" of the mic--what areas are sensitive, less-sensitive and dead.
- 3) Explain that a short actor's mouth can be as far below the mic as a tall actor's can be above it. (This will be essential training for when two actors of differing heights must share a mic--for dramatic purposes, such as a love scene or an argument.)
- 4) Show how speaking while one approaches the mic simulates an "entrance" and backing away while speaking simulates an "exit." The distance traveled is only about 2-3 feet, but the talking should be non-stop during the travel.

- 5) Let them see that when the script indicates a character is (DISTANT) that they should be 12 to 18 inches from the mic.
- 6) Explain that all calling out, yelling and screams should be done at an up-angle into the theater--so as to not deafen crewmembers wearing headphones.
- 7) Demonstrate how to hold a script at a mic--and turn pages without the sound getting picked up.
- 8) Demonstrate how if one turns his head perpendicular to the mic while speaking, the mic won't pick them up. (Many newbie radio actors--trying to address an actor face to face--make this mistake.) They must aim their words AT the mic, from wherever they are positioned.
- 9) Bring up two actors to play a "two-hander" scene at adjacent mics. Show how they can deliver their lines without eye contact--just talking straight into the mic. Then show how they can do the scene *with* eye contact. (The actor on the right should stand a bit further right to his mic and "cheat" a bit left to aim his eyes at his partner, while his mouth is angled at his mic. The actor on the left does the mirror-opposite by standing further left of the mic and "cheating" right.) This type of positioning allows actors to use their typical stage skills when doing multi-character scenes.
- 10) Have two actors play a "two-hander" scene at the *same* mic. Position one at 45 degrees from mic-center and the other at 135 degrees from mic-center--but both are aimed directly at the mic. Also: Have the cast note how script handling needs to be coordinated when two actors work the same mic.
- 11) Lastly, explain that after a few rehearsals, actors will acclimate to "working" the mic.

MICS FOR LIVE SOUND EFFECTS:

The SFX artist (or artists) are usually located at either extreme Stage-Left or Stage-Right. They should be Down-Stage, in order to provide the audience with a clear view of their work. You'll need 2-3 dynamic unidirectional mics for sound effects, depending upon how many devices there are and how large. SFX artists work in front of a 6-foot table upon which is arrayed a variety of noise-making devices--creakers, scratchers, crashers, etc. They also use their feet to walk upon wooden or stone surfaces. They may have a full-size door beside the SFX table or miniature door mounted to either the main SFX table or on a table behind them.

For the SFX table, I recommend using a...

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You'll need a dedicated mic for the floor surfaces. You can mount it on a short mic stand or a regular height stand with a boom pointed at the floor.

If the door is free-standing or on a table, aim a mic at the lockset area, but it must be positioned so that the whoosh of air from door opening or closing doesn't ripple noisily across the mic element. I often use a small door mounted to my main SFX table and then position the boom mic each time I need to open or close the door. Please note that the door and the floor surfaces are usually located near each other, since characters entering or leaving via a door usually also take several steps.

THE SFX “SOUND TRUCK”:

In Golden Age radio dramas--and in many contemporary radio-on-stage productions--the SFX artist triggers pre-recorded sound effects from on-stage. This is contrary to how conventional plays handle their pre-recorded tracks and your troupe may choose to have a booth tech trigger all tracks.

TECHNICAL CHECKLIST FOR RADIO-ON-STAGE PRODUCTIONS

Items you may already have or need to buy or rent for a radio-on-stage production.
For recommendations of specific items, see page ENGINEERING-6 of this script.

FOR ACTORS:

- 3 or 4 microphones (for regular voice sounds)
- 3 or 4 tall mic stands - for a period look get chrome stands with heavy iron bases.
- XLR mic cables - get enough for all mics, and have some spares in case cables go bad.
25 foot cable lengths are recommended.
- (Optional) Phone Filter Mic (available at www.ruyasonic.com/em_products.htm)
plus mic stand and XLR mic cable

FOR LIVE SOUND EFFECTS:

- 2 or 3 microphones - for regular voice sounds
- 1 or 2 tall mic stands with booms - for a period look get chrome stands with heavy iron bases.
- 1 short mic stand (for footsteps)
- XLR mic cables - get enough for all mics, and have some spares in case cables go bad.

FOR PRE-RECORDED SFX:

- Playback device - (Audio CDs, MP3 player, SD player, etc)
- Mixer - to adjust volume for playback device

OVERALL:

- Audio mixer capable of mixing a max of 8 microphones and how many playback devices you need,
NOTE: If you use a live keyboardist, you'll need mixer inputs to handle their feed (and a "direct box" to go from their keyboard outputs.)
- (OPTIONAL) A multi-input "snake" may make it easier to run mic cables to your mixer--especially if the tech booth is far from the stage. You may choose to locate the mixer just off-stage.
- P.A. System (amp, cables and speakers) sufficient to fill your venue.

Radio-On-Stage Mic & Stand resources (as of 2009)
by Tony Palermo (www.ruyasonic.com)

NOTE: Some info has been blacked out in this sample script. The full version has all the product names and web-page links.

MICS:

One easy-to-find mic that is perfectly authentic for a 1940s look is the [REDACTED]. This is commonly called [REDACTED]. They're available at [REDACTED] for \$160 each (with free shipping). LINK: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] You'll need 3 or 4 of these—for the actors.

Another idea is to use conventional mics, but mount a boxy-style classic mic façade to the front.

For SFX, just get a few conventional mics—something like a [REDACTED]. Here's a link to some good \$30 clones:

LINK: [REDACTED]

You'll also need to simulate the sound of voices on the telephone—specifically Sam Wainwright's important call to Mary. Read my website's advice about a variety of ways to create this effect. www.ruyasonic.com/sfx-phone.htm The best way is to use a special Phone Filter Mic—I make them—(you can't find them anywhere else). They're available for \$75 (including shipping). See www.ruyasonic.com/go-filter-mic.htm for more information.

STANDS/BOOMS:

To complete the period look, I'd suggest shiny chrome mic stands—like these from [REDACTED] for \$20 each: LINK: [REDACTED]

You'd also want one chrome boom arm—for the SFX table mic: Here's a \$50 model:

LINK: [REDACTED]

For a second or third SFX mic, maybe a chrome gooseneck will help to position the mic—depending on your SFX door size, etc. Here's a \$15 model

LINK: [REDACTED]

If you opt for the [REDACTED] mics--you'll need to order the short mic stand listed next.)

If you need a taller short mic stand for SFX, try this \$22 model:

LINK: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It's not available in chrome, but because it's on the floor, nobody will notice that it's black.

HEADPHONES FOR SFX TEAM, KEYBOARDISTS, BOOTH TECHS:

In the Golden Age of radio drama sound effects artists and organists wore headphones so they could clearly hear the dialogue and their own work and thus be more precise as to timing and volume levels.

The mix you'll want to deliver is what is going out to the P.A. system—voices, sound effects and music. There is no need to generate separate mixes for the SFX crew or anyone. The point is to provide clarity of what the show sounds like to the audience. Do not provide headphones for the actors—this will mess with their performance and cause traffic problems as they cross from their seats to the various mics. You may wish to let actors wear headphones when learning how to work a mic, but not during the show itself.

Please note that the actual headphones of the 1930s-1950s radio dramas were uncomfortable and tinny in their sound. It is possible to find these vintage headphones on e-bay, but I suggest using non-descript modern headphones that won't seem too out of place in your period setting.

I highly recommend...

APPENDIX HAS BEEN TRUNCATED AT THIS POINT IN THE SAMPLE SCRIPT.
The full appendix runs 60 pages.

TELEPHONE VOICE EFFECTS:

There are several scenes with through-the-phone voices (Sam Wainwright's call to Mary, Mr. Potter's call to George and Mary's Call to George). For these lines, you'll need to simulate the tinny tone of a telephone handset's through-the-earpiece sound. There are several ways to achieve this effect.

The Cup Method:

One easy version can be produced by taking a coffee mug, paper cup, or tall drink glass and holding it up to the side of your mouth while you speak into a regular microphone. You have to play with the positioning a bit to get the right balance of full voice and phone-voice. Garrison Keillor's actors on the radio variety show, *Prairie Home Companion*, use this technique, which goes over well visually with their live audiences--it is a comedy show, after all. The sound quality only *suggests* the phone and our imaginations let it BE a phone caller. It's a testament to radio drama's power of suggestion.

The EQ-it-to-Heck Method:

A not too bad electronic method uses a standard microphone run through a mixer board that cuts out all frequencies under 300 Hz and over 3000 Hz--but not all mixers can cut so specifically, nor as deep as is needed. Like the cup method, this equalization tweaking method only *suggests* a voice over the phone.

There are also computer "plug-in" effects out there that use this EQ technique, but they lack the slight distortion and thus, the intimacy of a real telephone--but those plug-ins won't work in real time for a radio-on-stage show. I've seen some engineers use a beat up old microphone and run it through an electric guitar distortion pedal and then EQ it severely, but that's expensive and not entirely convincing. The effect pedal trick also tends to feed back easily in live situations.

The Filter Mic Method:

The professional way to render this sound is to use a telephone filter mic. I make "filter" microphones out of 1960s telephone parts. They sound exactly like a phone--because they *ARE* phones--with both the tinny tone and slight distortion. You could do-this-yourself by cannibalizing old telephones and figure out how to wire them up and mount them in some housing, but I do that and sell them as a sideline to my radio drama work.

I've used my "Go-Filter" mics on radio drama shows for years. They don't hum, don't feedback, don't have problems with popping P's, don't pick up "bleed" from actors NOT on mic, and look so "Flash Gordon-ly" different from conventional mics that cast members rarely speak into the wrong mic by mistake. While my mic's housing is steel, the nylon face plate allows actors to produce the hang-up clicks you hear through the line by tapping on the face plate with a fingertip or clicking a tongue near the mic. The face plate is also easily wiped clean, for good hygiene. These mics get past airport security with no hassles. I travel with them all the time.

For information on Go-Filter mics, see www.ruyasonic.com/go-filter-mic.htm

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