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From thin air : the creation of a new American musical

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FROM THIN AIR:
THE CREATION OF A NEW AMERICAN MUSICAL

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

In

The Department of Theatre

by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The Initial Impulse	1
1.2 The First Encounter.....	1
1.3 Old Dog, New Tricks	2
CHAPTER 2: THE WRITING	3
2.1 Organizing My Thoughts	3
2.2 From Oklahoma to Passing Strange.....	5
2.3 Script Influence	5
2.4 Leigh Fondakowski.....	6
CHAPTER 3: LONESOME TIME SCRIPT	8
3.1 Forward to Lonesome Time Script	8
3.2 Lonesome Time Script	8
CHAPTER 4: SOLO PERFORMANCE	48
4.1 Forward to Solo Lonesome Time Script.....	48
4.2 Full Script of Solo Lonesome Time	48
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND THE FUTURE OF LONESOME TIME.....	57
5.1 Feedback on Solo Performance	57
5.2 Future Development.....	57
5.3 Effects On My Acting	57
REFERENCES	58
VITA	59

ABSTRACT

During the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, each MFA candidate began work on solo theatre projects ranging in a wide array of topics and genres. The goal was not to present a complete piece of theatre necessarily, but begin work on a project that could continue as we left LSU. Instead of constructing a solo piece, the faculty and I agreed that I could begin work on a multi-actor script based on the concept of setting a collection of country songs close friends of mine wrote as a new musical. I would create the story, write as much of the script as I could, explore character development, and set and edit the songs. I would then summarize the story and character struggles, using my solo performance as an audience introduction to my work, telling the story, playing guitar and singing the songs of what I titled, *Lonesome Time*. This thesis will serve as a diary of sorts for my project and examine the connection and influence writing had on my acting.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Initial Impulse

I wanted to write a piece that I really wanted to be an actor in. Many actors grow tired of the parts they're offered and instead begin work on a script of their own. Usually referred to as a 'passion project,' my initial reason for writing *Lonesome Time* was to create a piece of theatre filled with the kind of roles that as an actor, I would love to play. I'm also a trained musician and find most of the music in contemporary musical theatre to feel, at times, very slick and over produced. Similar to the financial constraints that the studio system puts on new films, producing a new Broadway show is a huge gamble. Naturally, producers want to do everything in their power to attract as wide an audience as possible for a new show, minimizing the risks of losing their investor's money. New musicals are often adapted from literature and popular films on a short timeline that forces many smart, interesting, talented composers and writers to rush, or play it safe. I wanted my passion project to have just that. I have no time constraints. I don't have anyone watching over me waiting for drafts, or a theatre rented already, or a star to please. There is only one overarching goal and that is to write a fantastic musical.

1.2 The First Encounter

Before coming to LSU, I was an actor in Chicago and like most working actors I know I had several side jobs. One of them was singing in an a cappella group called *Chicago Voice Exchange*. On the car ride out to one of my first gigs with them, we listened to a CD of country and bluegrass songs that one of the other group members, John Milne, and another songwriter friend of his Patrick Penney, had just cut with their band the *Long Gone Lonesome Boys*. They took their name from the Hank Williams's song, *Long Gone Lonesome Blues*. They were simple and beautiful songs filled with humor, love and loss, loneliness, and of course, drinking. I wasn't much of a country music fan, but something about these songs stayed with me. I listened to that CD continuously for next few weeks and one song, *Gallows Man*, especially. *Gallows Man* tells the story of a man who came home one night and found his wife with another man. He ran into the house, scared out her lover, and then strangled her. As the husband walks to the gallows for his execution, he turns and sees that his executioner was the man there with his wife. What struck me about that song in particular was not the violence, but the remorse the husband felt after committing the act.

They found me there the following morning lying by her side
Desolate and so forlorn with my cold unfaithful bride
And now I follow after her and together we will dwell
A faithless wife and a murderer in the fiery depths of hell¹

To me, he deeply loved her. I went around and around with the idea of loving someone so much that finding them with another person could inspire a deadly anger. I couldn't get the song out of my head and soon I began creating my own story around the events of *Gallows Man* as well as the other songs of the *Long Gone Lonesome Boys*. Writing a full book for a musical seemed like a daunting task, considering how little creative writing I had done to this point in my life. What became clear to me was that I could use my imagination for writing like I used it for

¹ John Milne, *Gallows Man* from *Crawling Back to You*, Long Gone Lonesome Boys, 2004, compact disc.

my acting, to raise the stakes, to entwine the relationships of the characters and create backstory. I would put myself into each of their shoes as I went along. Soon I began to notice that I knew them not just in my head, but also in my bones. The story came out of my imagination and me because it was of me and of my soul.

1.3 Old Dog, New Tricks

Anyone familiar with jukebox musicals (musicals using a popular music act's material set to an original story) knows they are all the rage at the moment. As baby boomers age, the market grows for musicals that feature the favorite songs of their collective youths. Shows like *Mamma Mia* (Abba), *Jersey Boys* (Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons), *We Will Rock You* (Queen), and even *Nice Work if You Can Get It* (George and Ira Gershwin) collect an artist's songs and attempt to reimagine them in a new and dramatic way. Writing and developing a show based on preexisting musical material I loved was not only exciting, but could prove artistically and financially fulfilling long term. Plus, it presented an interesting framework I had to stay in. There will be no new music composed for this show.

CHAPTER 2: THE WRITING

2.1 Organizing My Thoughts

I felt lucky that I already knew my show had a climatic physical moment involving at least three of the characters. But who else was in this play? What were their needs and actions? Where to begin?

I started with what I knew. At some point in the show, a man would come home to find his wife with another man. He would run in and scare out her lover and then strangle her. The husband would then be executed, onstage, by his wife's lover. I knew that I liked stories about families and the struggle we all go through to live the sort of lives we dream of. I also knew that I wanted *It's Only Midnight*, to be a song by a woman. I knew someone would be executed on stage, whether it would be by hanging as suggested in *Gallows Man*, or some other means was yet to be determined. There were also several moments from my personal life that I had tucked away to try incorporate as well. And there would be drinking, lots of drinking.

There were three albums of *Long Gone Lonesome Boys* material to choose from, *Crawling Back to You*, *Lonesome Time*, and *Commando*. I began notating the lyrics of each song, no matter if I thought it would make the show or not. This gave me a good sense of the point of view of each song, and into what sort of dramatic situation it might fit. I wrote the titles of each of the songs on notecards and began laying them out in an order, playing with story and plots ideas I had figured out already as I went, separating out songs I was more than ninety percent sure wouldn't make the final show. For example, most shows need a good opening number and *Tonight I'll be Crying In My Beer* fit that bill for me. It was up-tempo, fun, and could be choreographed to. All I needed to do was figure out who was going to sing it. I found that as I selected songs, I could build both forward and backward from them into the play, filing in character development and the connecting dramatic events that linked the songs together, changing the order of the songs if I desired as I went along. But I was still stuck on why would this man kill his wife?

I began compiling emotional ideas about issues I feel drive people to do desperate things. More than anything, I wanted this to be a good man who did a very bad thing. It wasn't that he found her with another man but that he had a feeling for a long time that he was losing her. They were growing apart for some time. Jealousy is a powerful emotion, often expressed in rage and violence between lovers. But that tension needed to build between them. What was causing them to grow apart? Children are often the next logical step in life after a few years of marriage. But what if they couldn't have children? What if someone close to them had a child that they began to covet? That discovery rang in my bones as a moment of truth for my play. I am not lucky enough to be a father yet and while there is still time, I do often feel a bit of jealousy when I see my friends with their kids. I also grow incredibly impatient when I witness what I believe to be insufficient parenting, even if it's none of my business. This man wanted to be a rock, the center of his family, the stronghold. And when he wasn't able to do that, he became angry. Fueling that anger would be the jealousy of another's child. I knew I found the emotional motivation for my murder. Our lives are filled with pressures to live a certain way or to be a certain kind of person, and when someone deviates, consciously or unconsciously from those expectations, they either become isolated from those closest to them, or pulled back into the corral. Who could he be jealous of?

It needed to be someone close to him, a family member. I love family dramas and because I have a younger brother who is very different from me, the relationship and competitiveness of brothers felt like a deep well of creativity to mine. But a brother can't have a baby. He'll need a woman in his life too. Now I had five characters for my play, a pair of brothers, their respective female partners, and a paramour.

I began searching for character names. This was a very fluid process and each character went through several iterations, with nothing but my gut acting as the standard bearer. At first I kicked around names from my family and imagination, like John and Patrick. But in July of 2012 my brother got married. My sister-in-law has a huge family of Irish descent and one of her uncles was named Neil. I liked that name and after searching for its meaning, discovered it meant 'passionate,' but also 'rock.' I liked that. Finding a website with Irish names, the first name I looked at was Aidan, meaning fire. My play had two brothers, both filled with passion and fire, living their lives in very different ways. Neil would be the older brother, Aidan the younger. The surname also changed several times, from Williams, to Baldwin, eventually settling on Hackett. Neil's wife began as Ginny (Virginia), but soon became Deirdre after I discovered it meant the most beautiful woman in the world. Attempting to contrast Aidan and Neil as much as I could, I decided that Aidan would not be married. He and his girlfriend had their child out of wedlock. As an actor in Chicago, I of course waited tables and in every restaurant I worked in, there were Mexican immigrants. I watched how hard they worked and how happy they were to have these opportunities in America. I wanted to honor that somehow. Aidan's girlfriend would be the daughter of Mexican immigrants. At first, her name was Pia, Spanish for peace. But in a strange twist of fate, John Milne had written a song, close to thirty years ago, for a band he was in called *The Toons*, entitled *Elena*. It's an incredibly beautiful song in the style of the *The Beach Boys* and it felt like a sign. Pia became Elena, and Aidan and Elena's daughter would be called Pia.

I carried a notepad in my book bag and anytime an idea for my show struck me, I would write it down. A large part of this project for me was to not edit myself and to allow my imagination free reign and to follow it as I could. William Ball, in his book on *Directing A Sense of Direction*, said this about our imagination:

We say yes because we understand that to do so is the practical way of sending a message to the intuition that every creative idea will be valued, respected, and used. And when the intuition gets that message often enough, it will send us its most perfect and most pure creative ideas. That is why, whether we like it or not, saying yes to everything is the most creative technique an artist can employ (19).

I tried to stay true to that sentiment. I said yes, as often as I could and soon, I had more ideas about my play than I could handle. I would run to my computer to set a song and scene, or connect two songs or characters or moments. The holes began to fill themselves, simply by allowing my imagination to run free. Inside of 3 weeks in August and early September, I had set nearly 40 pages of material. This was greatest discovery for me of the whole process, and one that I hope I can always fall back on. I was learning to trust my imagination and intuition, especially under the pressure of outside deadlines.

2.2 From Oklahoma to Passing Strange

I didn't have any specific musicals in mind that I wanted to model my piece after, but I did have a few that I loved and watched for reference (as well as a few that I watched because I knew I most likely would hate them). In 1999, Trevor Nunn directed a production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* for the National Theatre that was now available on DVD. I had decided early on that my show would be a book musical similar to the Rodgers and Hammerstein model and not sung through like many contemporary musicals such as *Les Misérables*. This choice was made for me as all of the songs are their own separate pieces and I was creating the material that linked them together. The songs of *Oklahoma!* are played into relationship that push the story forward by telling the audience about that character's feelings about another and the action that's taking place. Very rarely do the musical numbers stop the show. There is always a strong need to sing. This was a great lesson and one I've tried to accomplish in *Lonesome Time*. My character's songs have musical moments where the audience learns about how they feel, but those moments also have action that point towards things to come.

The production values of that *Oklahoma!* were second to none. The bright blues of the skies, the rich browns of the wood floors and house, the yellows of the corn, the reds of the handkerchiefs are all images I would like to find in my play. I haven't decided where my play takes place, but the plains of Oklahoma and Texas are in the running. And while the characters of my play don't get around in a surrey with the fringe on top, I do think they could be descendants of those people. Like the people of *Oklahoma!*, my characters are hard working and have dreams of a better life and they do everything in their power to see them fulfilled.

The other major influence for me was *Passing Strange* by Stew and Heidi Rodewald. From the interviews I've watched and articles I've read about Stew, he and John are very similar men. Both are smart, witty and well read. They both took circuitous journeys through Europe in their youths, and both have incredibly eclectic taste in music. Loosely autobiographical, *Passing Strange* tells the story of a black youth growing up in south central Los Angeles in the late seventies and early eighties who travels to Europe in search of 'the real.' The play is an expanded version of the one man shows Stew performed for several years. I was interested in reverse engineering that show to imagine how my solo performance might look. How did Stew tell this story, but still keep it active and moving forward? I loved the simplicity. Six gifted actors total, including Stew himself performing as Narrator, a few chairs and tables, and an incredible onstage rock band all working together as an ensemble to tell this amazing story. There were no major set or costume changes. Everything on stage served the play, an idea that is often talked about in our art form, but rarely achieved. The score for *Passing Strange* is filled with incredible rock, blues, soul and rhythm and blues music. The majority of 'pop' musicals I had seen up until this point lacked dramatic punch, but *Passing Strange* has a depth to rival *Oklahoma!* or Sondheim. The common trait was the need to sing. No matter the musical genre, the characters of these composer's shows don't sing to show off. They sing because it grows out of deep emotional need to express a sentiment about stage action and to push that action forward.

2.3 Script Influence

I have very little to no playwriting experience or training. I'm learning as I do. What I do know is how I'd like my script to sound. There are authors and playwrights I admire like Cormac McCarthy, Tracy Letts, Sam Shepard, and Lanford Wilson who's work lives in my ear as an actor. I'm rarely successful, but emulating the simple, direct, plaintive beauty of McCarthy's *All The Pretty Horses*, mixed with the impassioned pace of a Letts or Shepard play is the goal. There is no over arcing standard to meet, but instead an artistic aesthetic to strive for.

There are several moments from my acting career when I've been handed a script that is less than stellar. Dialogue that is overly expositional or frivolous is as easy to spot for an actor and critic as it is for playwright. What I fall back on again is my intuition. I try not to edit my first pass, but as I go back and reread what I've written, I always ask myself, 'Does this person *need* to say this?' If my gut tells me yes, than it stays.

2.4 Leigh Fondakowski

In November of 2012, the MFA's were lucky enough to be part of a two-week workshop with Leigh Fondakowski. Leigh is a founding member of the Tectonic Theatre Project and author of *The Laramie Project*. She was in Louisiana developing her new piece based on interviews of people who survived and were affected by the BP oilrig disaster that culminated in a workshop performance with the MFA's. During the day, Leigh gave us a crash course in how she develops her work. We started work at the table with Leigh asking us to quickly answer the following questions regarding our projects without thinking.

1. What are you writing about?
2. What do you love about it so far?
3. Who are the characters?
4. What is the one thing I know about any of the characters for sure?
5. What are the texts, sources that you're using?
6. What is driving your work?
7. What motivated you to write on this subject?
8. What do you want the audience to leave the theatre thinking?
9. How do you hope they might feel?
10. Is there a specific theatrical image that happens in your mind?
11. Is there a specific dramatic event?
12. What questions are driving your work?
13. What is the greatest challenge?
14. If your piece is an answer to a question, what is the question?

She encouraged us to think of our plays from all sorts of new and different angles. If the theatrical event for the audience was coming to see a solo performance, what was the central dramatic event? What organizing principle kept the narrative of our shows moving forward?

After a few days of table work, Leigh took us through an exercise Tectonic Theatre Project uses to help generate new images and material called 'moment work.' By quickly answering Leigh's prompts about specific ideas, events, moments, sounds, smells, objects, places, and textures in our shows, we began to generate a well of raw material that could then be taken by actors to create individual images and moments that may or may not make the final show. Each of us had a day to bring in objects we felt 'lived' in the world of our plays and the rest of the ensemble took those objects and attempted to create moments based on themes and events of our respective plays. It was fascinating to have an opportunity to interpret my classmate's work and to watch them interpret mine. I brought in some baby clothes, a guitar and a beer bottle. One of the most exciting images to come out of my time was the soothing of a baby's crying by blowing music on an empty beer bottle. While the content of our projects often defined the form, Leigh encouraged us through this process to allow the form of these moments to influence our content.

Leigh's feedback for my piece was incredibly helpful. Up until that point, I had it in my head that the narrative of my piece would follow both brothers simultaneously, exploring the events of the play from both of their perspectives, a Robert Altman-esque task. Leigh asked me who's story this was and to attempt to write from that point of view. At the time I resisted, but

have now come to see *Lonesome Time* as Aidan's story. Aidan has the chance to not make the same mistakes as his brother and uncle. We, as an audience, root for him.

CHAPTER 3: LONESOME TIME SCRIPT

3.1 Forward to Lonesome Time Script

What follows is the *Lonesome Time* script as it stands at the writing of this thesis. There is undoubtedly a long way to go, but in it's current state, it presents a unique snapshot of this process. I've purposefully left in the questions and comments I wrote to myself as I worked on the play. They are designated in brackets [].

3.2 Lonesome Time Script

Lonesome Time
(WORKING DRAFT)
Book by Jason Bayle
Music and Lyrics by John Milne and Patrick Penny

Opening: As the opening violin notes of Gallows Man wail through the theatre, the curtain is pulled out quickly to reveal a man, Neil Hackett, in an electric chair waiting to be electrocuted. His brother Aidan Hackett watches from outside the glass as a Priest speaks last rites. John (whose face we can't see) approaches Neil to place the black bag over his head. Neil sits in an electric chair that as a piece of furniture, makes its way through the play as a piece of furniture (we are all that close to death). He looks at John and sings:

Neil
Oh Gallows Man
Don't you let me down
Too slowly or too fast
Oh Gallows Man
Don't you let me down
For this day, must be my last
Oh Gallows Man, look to the east
Can't you see, the rising sun
Oh Gallows Man
Don't you let me down, for I must pay
For what I've done.

Music swells. John checks his watch, looks back, and pulls the lever electrifying the man center stage. This "electrifies" the show and we begin. Overlapping sound of TV, and baby crying.

[How do we get Neil and Aidan into this Scene? Maybe they just walk into it?]
Lights come up on Hackett house. Deidre is cleaning in the kitchen. Uncle Pat sits in front of the tube with a beer. Aidan, Elena and Pia are upstairs. Elena is changing Pia and Aidan is restringing/tuning his guitar for his gig tonight. Neil is outside smoking.

Uncle Pat
(Smacking the remote for the TV)
Goddamn thing. Hey Dee?

Deidre
What?

Uncle Pat
You know how to work this DVR thing?

Deidre
You'll have to ask Aidan.

Upstairs. Aidan tunes, Elena speaks to Pia in Spanish, Aidan in English. She continues to talk to the baby as she speaks to Aidan.

Elena
Whew!. Usted es apestoso! Eres mi apestoso, ¿verdad? Tengo los dedos del pie! Sí, tengo los dedos del pie! Aidan? Linda mi nina! Mi angelita chiquita! Preciosa princesita.

Aidan
Yea babe?

Elena
730 tomorrow ok?

Aidan
I know.

Elena
You know, you know.

Aidan
I know. Look, we haven't played since Pia was born. That chick from Nashville is coming in a few weeks and we need the work. If she likes us maybe we sign a development deal and then we are out of here and on our way to Nash-Vegas, baby. Won't that be nice? Get our own place? Just you, me, Pia.

Elena
Yes.

Aidan
I won't be late.
(Kisses her)
Good God, did that come out you?

Elena
(Laughs, chasing him out with dirty diaper.)
See you later.

Aidan packs up his guitar case and heads down the stairs.

Aidan
Later Dee.

Deidre
Will you help your Uncle before you go?

Aidan
Where is he?

Deidre
In the family room.

Aidan
Hey. You need something?

Uncle Pat
Yea, how do I set a show to record?

Aidan
(Looking at the TV as they do this)
You gotta hit “guide” first. Then highlight the show you want. Press record. Then when it asks you if you’re sure this is what you want to record, you say yes.

Uncle Pat
There it is.

Aidan
I know it’s hard to press the buttons with those meaty fingers of yours.

Uncle Pat
(Smacks Aidan with the remote)
Shitbird.

Aidan
I’ll see you later.

On the porch Aidan runs into Neil, smoking.

Neil
Where you going?

Aidan
I told you we’re playing tonight.

Neil
(A Look)

Aidan
I’ll be up and ready to go tomorrow. Don’t worry.

[Aidan could also “not” be in this opening scene. He’s already at the bar playing?]
Neil goes in. Scenery shifts to bar. Band intro for Tonight I’ll be Crying in My Beer. Crowd is lively with lots of dancing and fun. The Long Gone Lonesome Boys, a rockabilly band led by Aidan, move into a raucous version of Tonight, I’ll be Crying in My Beer as patrons laugh and dance. The band is tight and Aidan has excellent presence. Hootin’ and hollerin’. A big party.

Les
C’mon man let’s go.

Aidan
I know, I’m sorry. Couldn’t get out of the house. You guys ready? Let’s go. 1,2,3,4

Tonight, I’ll be crying in my beer.
So pour me another glass and bring it here.
But don’t fill it up to the top!
Better leave a little room for the teardrops.
Tonight I’ll be crying in my beer.

I hired a private detective
To give me a new perspective
To find out if my woman was untrue.
He caught her red handed
With a camera that was candid
In a no-tell motel out on highway two.

So, tonight, I’ll be crying in my beer.
So pour me another glass and bring it here.
But don’t fill it up to the top!
Better leave a little room for the teardrops.
Tonight I’ll be crying in my beer.

I’ll be whining in my whiskey
I’ll be wailing in my wine.
So keep’em coming till I give the word.
I’ll be crying out my eyeballs
In an endless stream of highballs.
Her love has left me shaken,
But not stirred.

She’s been messing around with another guy
Getting her love and on the sly
Shooting the rapids with another man’s canoe.
She made her bed now she can lie in it,
Cuz her bed’s got another guy in it.
And there’s just one thing left, for me to do.

Tonight, I’ll be crying in my beer.
So pour me another glass and bring it here.

But don't fill it up to the top!
Better leave a little room for the teardrops.
Tonight I'll be crying in my beer.

And if want you can sit and watch
Me sobbing in my scotch.
Cuz tonight, I'll be crying in my beer!

Applause. Cheers.

Aidan
Goodnight!

The crowd mills about and begins to clear as the band breaks down gear. Girls swing by and flirt with the band.

Aidan
Who's up for a beer?

Joe
Not me.

Aidan
Les?

Les
Nah

Aidan
C'mon. One drink.

Les
You've got church in the morning.

Aidan
I'll be fine. One beer. C'mon.

Les
One.

Aidan
That a boy.

Next morning. Deidre, Pat, Elena, and Neil are dressed and putting on coats to head out the door to Church. They are running late. Elena sits at the table with Pia. Uncle Pat makes baby talk to her in the other chair. Neil is outside smoking. Deidre comes downstairs putting on her coat.

Deidre

Alright, everybody ready? Where's Neil?

Uncle Pat
Smoking.

Deidre
(*Sticking her head out the front screen door*)
You ready?

Neil puts out his cigarette, goes in front door. He closes front door and locks it as all go out back door in kitchen to car to leave for church. As they pull away, Aidan stumbles in. Crosses to front porch.

Aidan
(*Singing, drunkenly making up new lyrics or mixing up old ones*)
I'll be whining in my whiskey, I'll be wailing in my wine
So keep 'em coming till I give the world, etc...

Aidan crosses into house. Looks in kitchen, sees an unfinished piece of toast on the counter, eats it, heads upstairs to their room, and collapses on the bed.

Scene CHURCH: Neil and Deidre stand with Pia in Neil's arms as a priest blesses and baptizes the child. Dialogue with Priest, Neil, Deirdre and Elena for baptism. It's important that it be filled with white and Mexican people. Possibly even a Mexican priest.
[Can we "cast" Elena's folks even though they may never speak? She needs to feel their presence. It's worse that she sees them all the time but knows she can't approach them and they won't come to her.]

Priest
What name do you give your child?

Elena
Pia.

Priest
Is it your will that Pia should be baptized in the faith of this church?

Neil and Deirdre, Elena
It is.

Priest
(Priest makes sign of the cross on the child's forehead. Begins baptizing Pia)
I baptize you in the name of the father, son and the Holy Spirit. Dearly beloved, this child has been reborn in baptism. She is now called the child of God and so indeed she is. In the name of this child, in the spirit of our common son-ship, let us pray together in the words our Lord has given us:

All

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[Prayer fades as people leave pews and head for rectory. Maybe this next scene just happens in the church as people are leaving and John grabs Deidre just as Neil goes? Seems faster and smoother that way.]

Scene. Church Rectory: People mill about greeting Elena and Pia, thanking the priest for the lovely ceremony. John fights his way through the crowd and approaches Deirdre. There is an unspoken attraction and connection between the two of them. They have history that colors every moment they are near each other. Pia wakes up just in time to barf on Neil's suit coat.

Neil
God (damn)... Elena?

Elena
Yea?

Neil
Will you take her please? It's all over my coat.
(To Deidre, as she wipes the spit up off of him.)
I'm going for a smoke. I'll meet you outside.

Neil goes. We can see him outside smoking, alone.

John
Beautiful service.

Deirdre
Good morning.

John
She's a pretty girl.

Deirdre
Isn't she?

John
I can't think of a better godmother than you.

Deirdre
Thank you.

(Pause)

John

How's Neil?

Deirdre
He's well thank you. Busy.
John
He works hard.

Deirdre
He does, yes. *(Pause)*. Would you like to come to the house? We're having a small reception.
Elena cooked and they'll be more than we can possibly eat . . . You're more than welcome.

John
Thank you. I think I'll pass

Deirdre
Are you sure?

John
I'm sure.

Deirdre
Well... enjoy your day.

John
You too.

Deirdre walks outside and finds Neil. He throws his cigarette to the ground.

Neil
You ready?

They go.

Music Transition to House.

Scene Interior: Neil and Deirdre's house. It's not old and decrepit, but it looks lived in. They inherited it from Neil's father. Aidan is still passed out from last night's festivities while the reception for Pia's christening commences downstairs. People mill about with food and chat and say hello to Elena and the baby.

[What if Neil and Deirdre are really well to do? White collar/ Blue Collar thing. There's a class struggle between the two brothers.]

Neil
(Entering, overlapping)
Aidan?

Elena

(Holding Pia)
Neil, don't.

Deirdre
Honey . . .

Neil
Aidan?

Neil crosses upstairs to the bedroom. Enters, sees Aidan asleep. Flips on light, grabs Aidan and throws him off the bed.

Neil
(Overlapping, improv)
Get up.

Aidan
Jesus...

Neil
Get up dammit.

Aidan
What...?

Neil
(Still smacking him around)
Clean up and get downstairs. Now. There's a houseful of people downstairs waiting for you.

Aidan
Alright, Jesus, take it easy. I'm up. Just give me a second.

Aidan sits on the edge of bed, shaking of the rust. Neil steps towards Aidan again threateningly.

Aidan
I'm up. I'm up.

Neil
Get your shit together or you're out of my house.

Aidan
Fine. Calm down.

Neil
(Throws clothes at him)
Get dressed.

Aidan slowly moves into bathroom. Washes his face, brushes his teeth, combs his hair. Runs back into bedroom and pulls on some clean clothes and his boots. Following scene occurs underneath.

Neil

(As he comes back down stairs)

He's moving.

Deirdre

Good.

Neil

Stop cutting him so much slack.

Elena

He's doing his best.

Neil

It's time he did better.

Elena

He's trying.

Neil

He's got a little girl who needs him. And you.

Elena

He takes care of us.

Neil

He doesn't deserve you. Either of you.

(To Deirdre)

I'm hungry. Let's eat.

They go. Aidan comes down stairs.

Aidan

I'm sorry P.

Elena

I told everyone you weren't feeling well.

Aidan

Thanks.

Elena

You're never home. You stumble in at all hours.

Aidan
I said I'm sorry.

Elena
I know you are.

She disappears into a sea of family and friends.

Neil and Deedee in the kitchen. [Neil has an extremely strong sense of what's "right." And when someone slacks on his or her duty, it bothers him. He'll often express it by throwing little physical "fits" or removing himself for a cigarette. There's the sense that he has tried to do everything the right way, yet Deidre hasn't gotten pregnant and his fuck-up brother did. It's not fair. Is there a pull out moment to find tension between Neil and Deidre? Can we illuminate some of the jealousy/resentment they feel about being childless?]

Neil
(Throwing something into the sink)

Deidre
He's up now.

Neil
Still needs someone to get him out of bed. What he needs is his ass kicked. Elena ought to drop him and get on with her life.

Deidre
He's finding his way, that's all.

Neil
He doesn't get his shit together, he's out.

Deidre
Neil...

Neil
For God's sake, you change more diapers than he does.

Deidre
Well...

Neil
It's not right. Time he accepted responsibility. Grow up.
Stop mooching off of those around him. I worked hard for what we have, to take care of you, this house. He doesn't deserve the little he has, Dee.

Aidan enters the kitchen and interrupts Neil and Deidre's conversation.

Deidre

Good morning.
(She kisses him. Fixes his hair.)

Aidan
Good morning.

There is another moment of tension between Neil and Aidan. Uncle Pat enters.

Uncle Pat
Fat man, coming through.

Neil and Deidre go.

Uncle Pat is a large man, 40-55 of Falstaff-ian wit and appetite. He has great warmth and is quick with a joke or laugh to make light of any situation. That good nature belies his over drinking. If possible always seen nursing a beer or glass. [Chews ice maybe?]

Uncle Pat
Jesus, kid, you have a brain-ectomy or something?

Aidan
I overslept.

Uncle Pat
I can see that. And by the look on your brother's face I'd say your knee deep in shit creek. Neil roust your ass?

Aidan
Yea.

Uncle Pat
Got a little aggressive last night, huh?

Aidan
I'm fine. Just need some food.

Enter Sheila and Peg. [Mother/daughter maybe?]

Peg
(Breaking in. Hugging Aidan)
Good Morning Aidan. You're little girl is so beautiful.

Sheila
Such a blessing.

Aidan
She is, thank you.

Peg

I'm sorry we missed you at Mass this morning. Are you feeling better?

Aidan
Much better, thank you.

Sheila
Good. Good.

(Pause)

Sheila
Did you eat?

Uncle Pat
We were just headed that way.

Sheila.
Don't let us stop you.
[Can I work something in here about "You still playing your music?"]
As they begin to go, Elena and Deedee enter with 2 plates of food and 2 Iced Teas. Hands Aidan and Uncle Pat the plates. Elena offers the Iced Tea to Uncle Pat. There is a moment of recognition from Aidan on how much Elena takes care of him.

Uncle Pat
I'm good. Thanks babe.

She goes. They eat.

Uncle Pat
I don't know what you're waiting for. If I had a lady who could cook like this I'd be twice the fat ass I am today.

Aidan
Not possible.

Uncle Pat
Watch it. I can still sit on you.

(Pause)
So, what's the hold up?

Aidan
For what?

Uncle Pat
You know what.

Aidan
I...

Uncle Pat

I'm just saying. I know you kids do things a little differently these days. Jesus, you know what your Grandma would have done to me if I knocked up my girlfriend?

Aidan
I can guess.

Uncle Pat
Listen. She loves you and takes good care of you. Maybe it's time to make it official.

Aidan
Officially what?

Uncle Pat
Family.

Aidan
We are family.

Uncle Pat
Fine. Legal.

Aidan
I don't know.

Uncle Pat
Why?

Aidan
Because.

Uncle Pat
Because what? Listen, you've got nothing to worry about.

Aidan
You never got married.

Uncle Pat
That's different.

Aidan
How?

Uncle Pat
I'm not a good example.

Aidan
So why are you bugging me then?

Uncle Pat
I had my chances. Besides, we're talking about you and those two beautiful girls.

Aidan
I don't know where it fits.

Uncle Pat
What do you mean, "fits?"

Aidan
Fits in my life, that's all. Seems like I get married...it's over.

Uncle Pat
What's over?

Aidan
Life.

Uncle Pat
It's just beginning.

Aidan
How do you know?

Elena enters and hands Aidan Pia.

Elena
Can you take her for minute?

Elena goes.

Aidan
I'm not ready yet.

Enter Arturo.

Art
There he is, there he is. Big daddy. How you feeling?

Aidan
Hey Art.

Art
How's fatherhood treating you?

Aidan
Good. Good. It's good.

Art
Getting any sleep?
(Laughs)
Aidan

Yea, not much.

Art
You'll get used to it. Hell, I had 3 by the time I was your age.

Aidan
Oh yea?

Art
We got a big order to fill by the end of the month, so if you need some extra shifts you just say the word, ok? Babies ain't cheap. Diapers, whatnot. Wait till there teenagers. *(Laughs)*

Aidan
Thanks. I'll let you know.

Art
(eating)
Good. *(Pause)*. Man is this good. Excuse me gents.

Art exits. Pat and Aidan continue to mingle.

Deirdre and Elena bring more food out and put it on the table. They talk as they unwrap things and lay out the buffet.

Deirdre
There's more food everybody, so help yourselves.
(Pause)
I saw your folks at church this morning.

Elena
They never miss.

Deirdre
Still no word from them?

Elena
No.

Deirdre
(Looking at Aidan with Pia)
I don't know how they resist her. Their grandchild. I guess you have to admire the strength of their conviction. I certainly couldn't do it.

Elena
Once Dad has made up his mind, that's it. Finito. *(Pause)* I know our living here has been hard on you and Neil, Deedee, and, well, I just want to say, thank you. Thank you for everything you've done for us, for taking us in, and how you help out with Pia and...

Deirdre

(She holds Elena for a moment.)

Of course, hey, it's ok. It's ok. You stay as long as you need. It's nice having a little life in the house again. Did you eat? No? C'mon, those tamales of yours are calling my name.

They begin to make plates from themselves. Re-enter Aidan and Pat, escaping.

Aidan starts looking for an exit. He hands Pia to Uncle Pat.

[Could there be a scene out on the porch with the three guys smoking and talking and then Aidan goes? He and Neil have a bit of a fight?]

Aidan

Will you take her for a second?

Uncle Pat

Sure. Come here baby.

Where are you going?

Aidan

I'll be right back.

Uncle Pat

Wait. Where?

Aidan

I'm just running out for a minute. Tell Elena I ran out for ice or something and I'll be right back.

Uncle Pat

Hey...

Aidan's gone.

Scene. The bar. Sunday mid to late afternoon. John sits at the bar, notices some young women across from him. He attempts to approach them, but can never quite find the courage to actually say hello. He eventually sits back down.

[Football crowd? Maybe he walks around and contemplates approaching several different women and just never finds the courage.]

John

He's another guy who eyes you at the bar
And the way he stares, something just might start
Parent / teacher conference over
He's obligation met today
Oh lord you younger women
How you lead that man astray.

You're so tantalizin' his fantasizin'
Stirs a dream that's long kept wake in him
With burning mind and body
He slowly starts to rise

Oh lord you younger women
How you fool with that man's pride

Thoughts disconnected
Mind split in two
Between the old man he's becoming
And the young one he once knew
Crazy lost and lonesome, with no one to hear his cry
Welcome to his world, divorced and 45

A shattered man with out a plan
Lost within his world
He roams his minds confusion
Trying to find a cure
He brings his drink to sit down by your side
But each step he takes, gives him more time
To sink back into confusion
Till he stops cold and alone
Oh lord you younger women
How you torture that man's soul

Thoughts disconnected
Mind split in two
Between the old man he's becoming
And the young one he once knew
Crazy lost and lonesome, with no one to hear his cry
Welcome to his world, divorced and 45

Aidan enters and sits. He greets the guys and girls her recognizes. Improv'd greetings and salutations. Then bellies up to the bar.

[It's the bar that he and the guys are regulars at. He should walk in and be greeted by all of them. Mike and Jim, Joe, Laurie, Kim, Jerry?]

Aidan
Can I get a beer?

Jerry
Sure. Reception over?

Aidan
Small turnout. Wrapped up early.

Jerry gets his beer. Aidan walks over to a table near a TV and sits. 2 guys sitting at near table watch the TV, which is broadcasting only horrible news about unemployment, school shootings, and politicians and pundits yelling at each other. Maybe one of them changes the channel looking for a different game to watch and some bullshit political roundtable comes up for a moment. Intro for Crawl Into The Bottle sneaks in. One of the patrons walks over and flips off the TV.

Mike

Sorrow and pain all around me
In this world of trouble and strife

Jim

The forces of darkness have found me
And I'm running in fear for my life

Both

But as I make my way cross the minefield
Through the crowds of lonesome despair

Jim

I see a tunnel at end of the light
And helplessly make my way there

Both

I twist open the latch and I go down the hatch
And I'm looking for my long lost friend
I take that slow ride as I slip down the side
(Drink)
And crawl into the bottle again

During the instrumental section, a beautifully clumsy dance of intoxication happens. There is an escape from all this sadness. It's here, in this bottle.

Patron 3 and 4

I can't survive on the surface
Where the war rages on and on

Patron 4

But curled up here inside I just swallow my pride
Until every last drop is gone

Mike

I'm safe and nothing can hurt me
Though the storm may all rage all around

Jim

And the bottle will never desert me
Til the day that I finally drown

All

I twist open the latch and I go down the hatch
And I'm looking for my long lost friend
I take that slow ride as I slip down the side
(Drink)
And crawl into the bottle again

All have returned to their spots in the bar by the end of this song.

Mike

I just crawl into the bottle again.

Aidan holds his bottle up at the end as if to say "here's to you." Lights out.

[There's a chance for another split screen scene here as Aidan avoids home and Neil, Pat, Elena and Dee clean up the party. Maybe a *Beaten Man* for Pat if Neil gets verbally abusive with Dee?]

Scene: Living room of the house. Elena waits.

Musical intro for It's Only Midnight. Elena watches TV, folds clothes, does dishes, but mainly waits for Aidan to come home. She checks on Pia.

Elena

It's only midnight,
And I'm not ready yet to face the fact.
It's only midnight,
That you might not be coming back.
The night's still young,
There's a thousand innocent things, you could be doing
It's way to early to believe the worst,
And go to be all sad and blue.

It's 2am now,
And there's still a possibility
It's 2am now
That you might not be leaving me.
Maybe you just met somebody at the bar,
You got to talking and forgot the hour.
You don't wanna call in case I'm asleep,
You wanna talk about it but you know that it'll keep.

If I could stay away for just one more hour,
And keep my courage high.
You could come home under your own power,
With a perfectly good, believable reason why.

It's 4am now
And the night is almost gone.
It's 4am now
And I'm still holding on.

If I could stay awake for just one more hour,
And keep my courage high.
You could come home under your own power,
With a perfectly good, and reasonable lie.

Aidan enters the house quietly.

I see the sunrise,
And it hurts my sleepless eyes.
I hear the door click,
And you tiptoe inside.
You're trying to keep quiet, hoping I'm asleep,
I pray the lord my soul to keep
But I'm sitting on the couch and baby I'm away
I pray the lord your soul to take

If I could hold you for just one more hour,
Until we slip away.
Or if somehow it could be in my power
To turn back the hands of time, so they would say.

It's only midnight.
It's only midnight.
It's only midnight.

Elena
Aidan?

Aidan
Jesus. You scared the shit out of me. What time is it?

Elena.
Early.

Aidan
Baby get you up?

Elena
No.

Aidan
C'mon, let's sleep for few hours.

Elena
Aidan...

Aidan
You want some breakfast?

Elena
No Aidan. I can't sleep, I can't eat, and I can't sit around at night and wait and worry about where you are and who you're with and when you're coming home, if, you're coming home. I can't do it anymore. I don't want to. (She goes)

Aidan
Where are you going?

Elena
We're leaving.

Aidan
Elena, wait. Hold on a second.

Aidan
Don't you wanna make me cry?
Don't you wanna make me moan?
Don't you wanna make me whine?
Cuz, I'm all-alone?
Don't you wanna hear me wail?
The whole night through?
Don't you wanna make me cry?
Like I made you?

I can't believe you're trying to avoid
The one who used to make you feel so blue.
I'd assumed that you'd be over joyed
To listen to me cry the whole night through.

Aidan
C'mon just put your bag down and let's talk about his for minute.

Elena
Aidan...

Aidan
You're tired. You're upset. We can talk about his in the morning.

[I think this verse can be cut. Skip to last chorus.]

When the shoe was on the other foot
I used to take such joy.
In taking you for granted
Like you were just a toy.
Stayed out till the sun came up
Treated you so bad
Till I lost you're love
I never knew just what I had.
Don't you wanna make me cry?
Don't you wanna make me moan?
Don't you wanna make me whine?
Cuz, I'm all-alone?
Don't you wanna hear me wail?
The whole night through?

Don't you wanna make me cry?
Like I made you?
Don't you wanna make me cry?
Like I made you?

Over the course of the song, Aidan charms Elena into staying, eventually ending up back in their bedroom, with Pia in her crib and the two of them in Bed.

Scene. Kitchen and living room of the house. Next Morning. Elena is upstairs feeding Pia while Aidan sleeps.

[There is an uncertainty between Neil and Deirdre, an emptiness that can't get filled up.]

Deirdre

You looked handsome holding Pia yesterday. She seems to like when you hold her. Can't say I blame her.

Deirdre tries to make physical contact with Neil. Maybe a hug from behind? He accepts the affection, but shakes it off quickly.

Deidre

Most babies cry at some point during their baptism. She never made a peep. She feels safe with you.

Neil

Woke up just to puke all over me.

Deidre

I can take your jacket to the cleaners this afternoon.

Neil

I'll drop it off after work.

Deidre

I don't mind.

Neil

I'll do it.

Deidre

I've got some groceries to pick up, Elena asked if I could grab some diapers too, so I can just drop it off on my way.

Neil

(Sharply)

Fine.

(Pause)

We're gonna be eatin' left overs for a month.

Deirdre
You have a taste for something special this week?

Neil
Not particularly.

Neil packs up his lunch, grabs his coat and heads off to work. Into for Crawlin' Back. Lights shift to Elena upstairs

Deirdre
There's a chain that runs from my captive heart
And back to your cruel hand.
And every time I try to part
I receive your reprimand.

Both
There's a love that cannot be denied
But only in my heart.
While yours remains forever cold
To all the tears I've cried.
I come crawling back to you
Following the trail of tears.
Don't know what else I can do...

Deirdre
And to God I pray again this night
To finally be set free.
But I know will lose this fight
For all eternity.

Both
And sometimes I get ten miles
Before I lose my nerve.
I come crawling back to you again
To get what I deserve.

I come crawling back to you
Following the trail of tears.
Don't know what else I can do...

Elena
Tonight I'll break away
This time for good

Deidre
This time I'll find a way
If only I could

Instrumental

Both
And sometimes I get ten miles
Before I lose my nerve.
I come crawling back to you again
To get what I deserve.

I come crawling back to you
Following the trail of tears.
Don't know what else I can do...

*Deirdre grabs her list and her purse and heads out for her errands. She forgets something and inadvertently witnesses the next scene between Aidan and Elena.
Musical transition.*

Elena checks down the stairs to hear if anyone is up and moving. She doesn't want to run into Deidre or Neil. Hearing that the coast is clear, she packs up Pia, grabs bag, and begins sneaking down the stairs. The loud creaky floors wake Aidan.

Aidan
(Groggy)
Where you going?
(No Answer)

Elena? Elena, wait. Wait a minute. Slow down. Just.... For Pete's sake would stop for a minute? Can we talk about this for a minute?

Elena
I'm done talking.

Aidan
Come back inside.

Elena
No. I'm done letting you make a fool of me. Of yourself.

Aidan
Elena.

Elena.
No, Aidan. We've overstayed our time here as it is.

Aidan
Elena come back. Elena.

She's gone.

Aidan
(Slower)
Don't you wanna make me cry?

Like I made you?

[How doe we get Uncle Pat to the Hospital? Can he have some pains at the party maybe and is rushed from there to hospital? Aidan gets a call from the bar? If so, when does Elena leave?]

Next Scene out of Context

Scene: Hospital Room. Uncle Pat lies in a hospital bed reading. Aidan enters

Uncle Pat

Hey...

Aidan

There he is. How you feeling?

Uncle Pat

I've been better.

Aidan

Where's Neil and Dee?

Uncle Pat

They went to get a bite to eat.

Aidan

Need a little pick up?

(Aidan flashes a small whiskey bottle or flask)

(Singing) "Put some whiskey in your water . . ."

Uncle Pat

I better not

Enter Dr. Coursey

Uncle Pat

Hey Doc.

Dr.

Evening Patrick, how you feeling?

Uncle Pat

You want the honest answer?

Dr.

Let's take a look.

(Doctor does a pressure test on abdomen)

How's this? How about here?

Aidan

Awww, his tummy hurts.

Uncle Pat
Dr. Coursey, this is my nephew, Aidan.

Dr.
Hello.

Aidan
I say amputate from the neck down.

Uncle Pat
(In real pain)

Dr.
You're retaining a fair amount of water right now and it's pushing on your organs and your abdominal wall. We'll try some diuretics first, see how it goes, and if those don't work, we may have to insert a port to relieve some of the pressure.

Aidan
Just what his liver needs, direct injection.

Dr.
I'll send a nurse in and be back to check your progress in a few hours.

Aidan
(Following the Dr. out)
Hey, Dr., excuse me. Sorry, I just got here. When my brother said Pat was in the hospital I assumed the fat bastard had chest pains or something?

Dr.
His heart is fine. Your uncle has liver disease. Continual damage to the liver over time builds scar tissue, which eventually becomes cirrhosis. Eventually the liver doesn't function properly and begins to shut down.

Aidan
Shut down?

Dr.
We have him on medication to control his toxicity levels and aid the part of his liver that's still functioning. The discomfort he's feeling now is typical of someone at his stage of disease.

Aidan
What stage is that?

Dr.
Advanced.

Aidan
So, what do we do now? A transplant or...? I mean, he'll be fine, right?

Dr.

In certain cases a transplant is possible, but the wait for a liver can be up to 3 years. And with your Uncle's history, considerably longer I'm afraid.

(Pause)

We can medicate him to help manage his pain and his symptoms. I'm sorry. I wish I had better news.

He goes.

Aidan reenters Uncle Pat's room. Uncle Pat is leaning against the bed.

Uncle Pat

Doctor give you the good news? Hey hey hey, don't get upset. It's alright, everything's gonna be fine.

Aidan

No it's not.

Uncle Pat

Not it's not. But it is what it is.

Aidan

I... I didn't even notice. The thought never crossed my mind that you needed help, or that you had a problem.

Uncle Pat

This has nothing to do with you, or your brother. This has been a long time coming. (Cut) You remember Grandma's homemade bread? You weren't very old when she passed, but when your Dad and I were kids your Grandma used to make homemade bread every Saturday. The smell of it would waft upstairs and hook us up in our bedrooms and drag us down the stairs by our noses.

Well your Grandpa would be on one his rolls, and me being me I couldn't keep my big mouth shut. I learned a few lessons from the butt end of his whiskey bottle. To make myself feel better

I'd go make a PB and J on grandma's homemade bread to make myself feel better. As I got older I'd just stuff my face with whatever I could find. But peanut butter and jelly was always my favorite. Never failed. As you get older though, you start looking for what else is around because you can only eat so many peanut butter and jellies.

Musical Intro

I'm a drinking Man and it's killing me.
When I hold that bottle, Oh ho, I set myself free.
And when I'm free I couldn't careless
About learning life's lessons at all.
I don't have to grow up when there's alcohol.

Now this world and me, when it rains, well I pour.
From everyday bottles, from everyday stores.
There found down in brown bags

That are handed to me. Then held with my loving clutch.
I love them more than my family. They comfort so much.

Bloated belly, liver large and scarred.
Bruised and broken, my soul has spoken, to poisoned, to take charge, whoa.

So when you see me, and look in my eyes.
You'll notice there's yellow, but it's not of my mind.
Cuz I wanna laugh, I wanna cry,
Do it sober one more time,
But I can't make it happen, it's like I'm hypnotized.
I'm a drinking man, and it's killing me.

Neil and Deedee enter as the song finishes. Group hug. Lights out.

[Scene with Neil, Deirdre and Aidan. Neil finds out about Elena leaving?]

[Big Hole.]

[General order but needs expanding. Can this scene take place while another song plays, maybe be "How Can Hell...?" Less talking and more doing.]

Scene: The dry cleaners. As Deidre is walking in, John is picking up his uniforms. He opens the door into her. As she shops, she backs into John and dumps the contents on the floor.

Deidre
Oh!

John
What a dope. I'm sorry. Let me help you with that

[General order but needs expanding.]

Scene. Lunchroom at the machine shop. Aidan is out of it and gets ribbed by his coworkers to perk up. Mike, Jim, Joe, Les. They all dance and play out the different fantasies as the song is sung.

Aidan
How could hell be any worse than this?
Tell me how in heaven's name
Could such a place exist
Well excuse me Mr. Lucifer
Is there something that I missed?

All
How could hell be any worse than this?

Mike
Will she love me even less down there?

Than she does up here

Mike and Aidan
Will she run away, with two of my best friends?

Mike
Well I hate to watch as they enjoy
Eternal wedded bliss

All
How could hell be any worse than this?

Joe
You tell me that the fires below will burn me
I don't know why I should even care

All
Why should all the pains of hell concern me

Aidan
Can't you see that I'm already there?

Dance Break. A release of frustration.

Jim
Well I started drinking while I'm still asleep

All
I sleep less, than zero hours a night

Aidan
And spend more than every waking moment
Dreaming of her kiss

All
How could hell be any worse than this?
How could hell be any worse than this?

[In general order]

Scene- Split stage: Sunset. Neil and Deirdre's house. Neil and Deedee sit silently watching TV. John sits at a table in the bar by himself watching people dance and sing and enjoy themselves. The illusion is that the band is playing and entertaining, but they are playing for Dee and John. Note: Scene can devolve into a "dream" sequence where John and DeeDee break out and meet DS to dance and sing directly to one another.

She kisses his cheek. He barely notices.

Music fades in. Deedee gets up and crosses to the kitchen. Looks out the window at the sunset

John

Sun goes down in a dark orange sky
Clouds of blackbirds, circle and cry
Rows of lovers linger in the dark and here am I

Deirdre

Drag myself through another lonesome day
Without a shred of comfort or joy
Soon the waking world is drifting away and then it's gone

Both

And I dream about you
And I am free
The whole night through
I dream about you

John

Sun comes up in a bright yellow sky
Pours through the windows and into my eyes
I wanna stay here but the dream slips away and then it's gone

Deirdre

Wait for the night to enfold me again
Turn out the light and leave the world behind
All of my sorrows are drifting away and then they're gone

Both

And I dream about you
And I am free
The whole night through
I dream about you

John

I love to see the evening sun go down

Deirdre

I love to watch the moon rise over the town

John

If not for dreams I wouldn't care to live at all without you

John

I know a place where the sun will never rise
I know a world where nobody ever cries

I know the way there I just close my eyes and then I'm gone

Both

And I dream about you
And I am free
The whole night through
I dream about you
And I dream about you
And I am free
The whole night through
I dream about you

Deirdre looks in at Neil. Heads upstairs. Lights out. [Scene between Neil and Deirdre about responsibility (even though Neil has slipped on his as a husband) that sends Neil to the bar to find Aidan?]

[In General Order]

Scene: The bar. LGLB play a decidedly dirty and pointed version of *Burnin' Blue*.

Take my heart and break it
Take me loving life
It makes no difference to me I love you till I die.
I'm so crazy 'bout you
I pretend I'm fancy free
Even though I know you brought me to my knees

Well, shame, shame, shame on me
Blame, blame on me too.
Flame, flame in my heart dyin'
Dyin' but I keep it burnin' blue

Well, shame, shame, shame on me
Blame, blame on me too.
Flame, flame in my heart dyin'
Dyin' but I keep it burnin' blue

Blue to keep me warm
When your love is cold
Blue to keep me torn
My love I can't control

But now you say you're leavin'
That you never were sincere
Well don't think that you fooled me
I just never cared my dear
And I'm hopin' when you leave me
That I hurt more than before

So I burn a brighter blue and love you even more

Well, shame, shame, shame on me
Blame, blame on me too.
Flame, flame in my heart dyin'
Dyin' but I keep it burnin' blue
Dyin' but I keep it burnin' blue

Neil enters to catch the end of the song.

Neil
Hoooooooooo! Play something we can dance too dammit!

Aidan waves to Neil but doesn't walk over.

Neil
Ladies and gentlemen, the father of the year, Aidan Hackett.

Aidan
Why are you here being a pain in my ass?

Neil
I wanted to watch your parenting skills in action. See'em up close. Maybe I can learn something. This guy is somebody's daddy, can you believe it?

Aidan
What's the matter with you?

Neil
Looks like you got it down pat, kid. You just get up on stage with that fancy guitar and pretty soon there's another pretty girl shaking her ass for you to impregnate. Is that all it takes?

Les
Take it easy, Neil.

Neil
You take everything and everyone around you for granted. What kind of man walks out his responsibilities? On his family? But you're no man. You sure as shit ain't a father. Maybe that little girl is better off without you.

Aidan
You son of a bitch.

With this, the brothers fight. A big fight that is a release of built up anger and the things unsaid between them and their families since they were kids. Someone tries to step in.

Les
Don't.

The end of it should exhaust them. The other guys in the band break it up.

Jerry
That's enough. Get out of here, both of you.

Neil
I want you out, you hear me? Out.

Aidan
Fine.

Neil
(To the others)
What are you looking at?

Scene: Outside the Hackett house. John debates on whether to knock on the door. Musical Intro to *Love you Far too Much* sneaks in.

John
If I tell you that I love you, you might spend your life with me.
Throw away a chance at true love, for a life of misery.
So even though I wanna hold you I could never do so
Because I love you far too much to let you know

So I'll pretend, that I don't care, when I see you out with him
You were just a brief affair. Just another idle wind.
And I will hide this love away and never let it show
Because I love you far too much to let you know

With him you'll have a happy loving family
With me you'd only waste your tender
With him you'll have a future that you deserve
With me you'll have a lifetime of tears.

Maybe if I'm still around after many years have passed
I would tell you of my secret and confide in you at last
I tell you why I threw away the only love I'll ever know
Because I knew that once I held you I could never let you go
And I love you far too much to let you know.

John approaches the Hackett house cautiously. He rings the doorbell, looks in the window nervously.

Deidre
John?

John
Hello Deidre.

Deidre
What are you doing here?

John
I had to see you.

Deidre
John.

John
I know I shouldn't have come, I know. You're all I think about Deidre. Dream about.

Neil approaches the house after his fight with Aidan, we hear the reprise of *I Dream About You*

John
I dream about you
And I am free

Both
The whole night through
I dream about you

We can see them go into the house. They laugh and touch each other like lovers. Neil watches from the street. Music becomes more ominous as John takes Deidre's face in his hands and kisses her, Neil rushes to the door and bursts into the house.

Deidre
(Improv)
Wait. Wait. Neil, don't.

John quickly escapes out the window, slides down the pitched roof and runs off. Neil backs Deidre into a corner and grabs her by the throat.

Deidre
(Improv)
Neil I'm sorry. I'm sorry Neil. Please

Neil
(Improv)
(His hands around her throat)
Why? Why?

There is a long struggle. Furniture and lamps get knocked over. Deirdre coughs and gasps for air. Silence. She is gone. Neil collapses on the floor and holds DeeDee's dead body. Time shifts again. The sun begins to rise as police find Neil clutching Deidre. Just as he is lead out of the house in handcuffs, Aidan approaches the house having been out all night. He tries to run in, but is stopped by police. He can only watch as Neil is led away.

In the musical interlude, Neil is led away, changed into prison garb. Neil walks out to meet Aidan for their final visit. They talk through the glass.

Neil
Hey.

Aidan
Hey. How you feeling?

Neil
Fine.

Aidan
Anything I can do for you?

Neil
I don't think so.

Aidan
You sure?

Neil
I'm sure.

Aidan
Scared?

Neil
A little. I'm hoping I go peaceful. Not sure I deserve to.

Aidan
I'll pray that you do.

Neil
(Laughs)
You? Lotta good you praying is gonna do me.
(They both laugh)

Aidan
What, my prayers don't count?

Neil
Not for much.
(Pause)
You seen Elena?

Aidan
Yea.

Neil
You guys gonna work it out?

Aidan
I don't know.

Neil
She's good for you.

Aidan
I know.

Neil
You love her don't you?

Aidan
Yea I love her. I'm scared Neil. I'm scared I'm going to wake up one day and be the kind of bitter, resentful man I swore I'd never be. Angry about the things I brought on myself. Like Dad, like...

Neil
Like me?
Running away won't solve anything.

Aidan
I know.

Neil
Seems to me you got it pretty good. So life's not how you planned it. Embrace it. Might be the best things that happen to you. (Pause) Not that I should talk.

Guard
Hackett.

Neil
Well . . . I'll see you in the morning I guess.

Aidan
I love you Neil.

Neil
I love you too.

Intro for *Lonesome Time* sneaks in as Neil in his cell, Aidan in the Kitchen, John in his house or the usual spot at the bar. All three men examine their loneliness.

Aidan
Raindrops started falling about two hours ago
The moon is hiding in the clouds and the wind is winding low
I'm staring at a picture by a single candle glow
And its lonesome time

Neil
There's no one here to talk to, don't have anyone to call
The summertime is over soon and the leaves will start to fall
How long will it take, till I got nothing left at all?

Both
And it's lonesome time
It's lonesome time.

Aidan
I cannot carry on

Both
It's lonesome time.

Neil
And the good times are all gone
Time to face a mountain,

Both
That I can't hardly climb
And it's lonesome time

John
Each day I walk a lonely street where no else can go
There's no one here to walk with me and share this heavy load
And out on the horizon, the sun is sinking low

All
And it's lonesome time
Well it's lonesome time.

John
I cannot carry on

All
It's lonesome time.

John
And the good times are all gone
Time to face a mountain,

All
That I can't hardly climb
And it's lonesome time

Neil
Don't look for any comfort from above

John
Heartache is the price you pay for

All
Love

Aidan
People try to tell me that my life has just begun

John
Time to make some new friends, time to have some fun

Aidan
Well I got two friends on the table, whiskey and a gun

Aidan
And it's lonesome
Aidan and Neil
And it's lonesome

All
And it's lonesome time

Neil
And it's lonesome time

Gallows Man back in. Aidan is the only one there watching Neil. He watches as Neil sits in the chair.

Neil
And now I follow after her
And together we shall dwell

A faithless wife and a murderer
In the fiery depths of hell.
Oh Gallows Man, I know your face
For I have seen it once before.
I saw you on, that very night
You were the stranger at my door
Oh Gallows Man, you took my life,
When you took my love from me.
So Gallows Man, don't let me down
When you hang me from your tree.

Back in real time, there is a heavy pause. John, looks around for help, but can't find any. He reaches for the lever. A bright flash as music swells, then Lights out.

Musical Transition

Aidan
There's no tombstone so heavy, no graveyard so cold,
As the weight of this loneliness crushing my soul.
And I won't feel as sad, in a dark empty tomb,
As I do sitting here, all alone in my room.

It's Sunday morning and he knows were to find Elena. Aidan quickly heads out as scenery shifts too church.

Priest
The peace of The Lord be with you always.

Congregation
And with your spirit.

Priest
Let us offer one another the sign of peace.

They do. As all greet each other, Aidan finds Elena in her usual pew. She hands him Pia. They take hands and ALL sing.

All
And I don't need a halo or bright shiny wings.
I have no need for these heavenly things.
Just let me stand on that faraway shore
Lonesome, lonesome no more.
One thing I pray if I walk through that door
Lonesome, lonesome no more.
One thing I pray as I walk through that door
Lonesome, lonesome no more.

Lights out. End of play.

CHAPTER 4: SOLO PERFORMANCE

4.1 Forward to Solo Lonesome Time Script

During the week of January 14th, 2013, all 11 MFA candidates had the opportunity to perform their respective projects twice. I used these performances as opportunities to gain greater understanding of the characters in my play, specifically, their need to sing. As an actor, the performances also offered a unique challenge to my training. Embodying the emotional needs of each of these people, as well as the vocally difficult material made for an excellent measuring stick for my growth. Creating a solo performance based on my script forced me to be specific about the events of my play. I began to whittle away many of the more superfluous ideas and get to the heart of the matter. The story continued to grow through this process and two new songs were added to the full script. I knew that Neil and Aidan would have a fight at some point, and the anger of that fight would carry Neil home and lead him to kill Deirdre when he found her with John. What I needed was a serio-comic moment to precede that and having Aidan sing *Commando* as his record label audition felt right. The same was true for the song *Lonesome Time*. I had been searching for a musical opportunity to connect John, Neil and Aidan. The night before Neil's execution felt like an excellent opportunity for all three men to examine their lives and what has become of them. *Lonesome Time* has beautiful three part harmony singing and addresses a question I was after answering from the beginning of the play: What do we have left when we don't have anyone who love us?

The solo performance was a sort of teaser or backers audition. I told the story, introduced the major players, and sang snippets of songs from different moments of the play. The stage was divided into three main playing areas. Mid stage center was a chair that stood in for the electric chair. Stage right was three stools representing the bar, and stage left was a round wooden table with two chairs standing in for the Hackett house/kitchen. Because I accompanied myself on the guitar there were no sound cues and lights were purposefully kept minimal.

4.2 Full Script of Solo Lonesome Time

Singing:

There could be angels or there could be fire
An ocean of brimstone or a heavenly choir
Old friends and loved ones bathed in white light
Or endless black nothing in a dark empty night

Lonesome Time is story about the struggles we all face, struggles with family, with parenthood, with addiction. Those struggles that bring us our highest highs and our greatest joys, but also our greatest pains and our deepest lows. The struggles that seem to find us when we are lost, and alone.

The curtain flies out to reveal Neil Hackett sitting in an electric chair. His brother, Aidan stands outside the glass watching. Neil looks at his executioner and sings:

Oh Gallows Man
Don't let me down
To slowly, or to fast
Oh Gallows Man
Don't let me down,
For this day, must be my last
Oh Gallows Man.

Look to the east.
Can't you see, the rising sun?
Oh Gallows man
Don't let me down
For I must pay, for what I've done.

In a bright burst of light, the flipped switch of electricity energizes the show. Time and scenery quickly shift to a lively bar where a rockabilly band led by Aidan Hackett is playing. Aidan and his girlfriend Elena have just had a baby, a girl named Pia. They live with Aidan's brother Neil, Neil's wife Deirdre, and their uncle, Pat. Tomorrow is Pia's christening, and they have to be at church by 730, but tonight, Aidan has a gig with his band, the *Long Gone Lonesome Boys*.

TONIGHT I'LL BE CRYING IN BEER (Cut)

Tonight, I'll be crying in my beer
So pour me another glass and bring it here
But don't fill it up to the top
Better leave a little room for the teardrops
Tonight I'll be crying in my beer
I'll be whining in my whiskey
I'll wailing in my wine
So keep'em coming till I give the word
I'll be crying out my eyeballs
In an endless stream of highballs
Her love has left me shaken, but not stirred
So tonight I'll be crying in my beer
So pour me another glass and bring it here.
But don't fill it up to the top
Better leave a little room for the teardrops
Tonight I'll be crying in my beer
And if you want you can sit and watch me sobbing in my scotch
Cuz tonight I'll be crying in my beer.

As you can probably imagine, Aidan is not usually at his best on early Sunday mornings and misses his daughter's christening. Friends and family gather at the house for a reception for Pia. Neil rousts Aidan out of bed and threatens to throw him out of his house if he doesn't get his act together. Aidan spends the next few hours greeting guests and accepting congratulations for a responsibility he's not sure he really wants. It's a struggle to balance the obligations he feels towards Elena and Pia with the life of music and freedom he dreams of. Soon, the congratulations and welcome to fatherhood chats are too much to take and Aidan slips out of the party.

Scenery shifts to a bar we meet John McCarthy. John works at the local Penitentiary. He's 45. He's been divorced for 10 years. This place, on this day has become part of his weekly routine. Church, lunch, a game on TV and a wrestling match between the intense loneliness he feels, and his own insecurities.

DIVORCED AND 45(Cut)

He's another guy who eyes you at the bar
And the way he stares, something just might start
Parent / teacher conference over
He's obligation met today
Oh lord you younger women
How you lead that man astray.

You're so tantalizin' He's fantasizin'
Stirs a dream that's long kept wake in him
With burning mind and body
He slowly starts to rise
Oh lord you younger women
How you fool with that man's pride

Thoughts disconnected
Mind split in two
Between the old man he's becoming
And the young one he once knew
Crazy lost and lonesome, with no one to hear his cry
Welcome to his world, divorced and 45

Aidan arrives, orders a beer and catches a seat in the corner. Like all of the regulars here, he has come to escape for a little while. Soon, a happily inebriated chorus of bar regulars sings of the peace and comforts waiting for them at the bottom of a bottle as they dance in a beautiful, albeit, intoxicated, waltz.

CRAWL INTO THE BOTTLE (Cut)

Sorrow and pain all around me
In this world of trouble and strife
The forces of darkness have found me
And I'm running in fear for my life
But as I make my way cross the minefield
Through the clouds of lonesome despair
I see a tunnel at end of the light
And helplessly make my way there

I twist open the latch and I go down the hatch
And I'm looking for my long lost friend
I take that slow ride as I slip down the side
And crawl into the bottle again
(Dance)

I twist open the latch and I go down the hatch
And I'm looking for my long lost friend
I take that slow ride as I slip down the side
And crawl into the bottle again I just crawl into the bottle again.

Uncle Pat is so gregarious and good-natured that from the outside you'd never suspect he has problem. But even surrounded by family and friends, Uncle Pat has never been comfortable in his own skin and has always felt a deep sense of despair and isolation that the booze only compounded. Failing health forces him to confront his problem and how he wants to spend the time he has left. Uncle Pat doesn't like the term alcoholic. He's a drinking man.

I'M DRINKING MAN (Cut)

I'm a drinking man and it's killing me
When I hold that bottle, oh ho, I set myself free
And when I'm free, I couldn't care less
About learning life's lessons at all
I don't have to grow up when there's alcohol.

Bloated belly, liver large and scarred
Bruised and broke, soul has spoken
Too poisoned, to take charge, woh, oh oh

So when you see me and look in my eyes
You'll notice there's yellow, but it's not of my mind
Cuz I wanna laugh, I wanna cry
Do it sober one more time
But I can't make it happen, it's like I'm hypnotized
I'm a drinking man, and it's killing me.

Aidan's late nights continue, but Elena waits. She's used to him coming in late from gigs, but lately he's out all the time and she's beginning to worry. Elena and Aidan moved into Neil and Deidre's house just after Elena found out she was pregnant. Moving in with her family wasn't an option. Her folks are what you might call traditional. She's thankful for Neil and Deirdre's support, but is beginning to feel that maybe they are overstaying their welcome. As has seemingly become her nightly routine, Elena sits up alone, debating how much longer she can wait.

ITS ONLY MIDNIGHT

It's only midnight,
And I'm not ready yet to face the fact.
It's only midnight,
That you might not be coming back.
The night's still young,
There's a thousand innocent things, you could be doing
It's way to early to believe the worst,
And go to bed all sad and blue.

It's 4am now
And the night is almost gone.
It's 4am now
And I'm still holding on.

If I could stay awake for just one more hour,
And keep my courage high.
You could come home under your own power,
With a perfectly good, and reasonable lie.

I see the sunrise,
And it hurts my sleepless eyes.
I hear the door click,
And you tiptoe inside.
You're trying to keep quiet, hoping I'm asleep,
I pray the lord my soul to keep
But I'm sitting on the couch and baby I'm away
I pray the lord your soul to take

If I could hold you for just one more hour,
Until we slip away.
Or if somehow it could be in my power
To turn back the hands of time, so they would say.

It's only midnight.
It's only midnight.
It's only midnight.
It's only midnight.

As Elena and Aidan grow more and more distant, so too do Neil and Deidre. The presence of Pia has exposed a large crack in their marriage. For years they've tried to have a child and neither of them is quite sure how to speak about or deal with the jealousy they both feel. Watching Aidan ignore his responsibilities as a man and father, combined with his jealousy and sense of what's right, fills Neil with rage, a rage that Deirdre is often on the receiving end of.

CRAWLING BACK TO YOU(Cut)

There's a chain that runs from my captive heart
And back to your cruel hand
And every time I try to part
I receive your reprimand

There's a love that cannot be denied
But only in my heart
While yours remains forever cold
To all the tears I've cried.

I come crawling back to you
Following the trail of tears.
Don't know what else I can do...
Tonight I'll break away
This time for good
This time I'll find a way
If only I could

Deedee escapes her loneliness by plunging into her day-to-day routine; Household chores, helping Elena care of Pia, running errands. One day as she heads to the dry cleaners she runs into a man whom she knows in passing from church, John McCarthy. They sit for a time, each relieving, for the moment, the immense weight of their loneliness. Feeling a connection to a stranger that she has somehow lost with her husband, Deirdre unexpectedly kisses him. It's a kiss that sends them home floating, both dreaming about the other.

I DREAM ABOUT YOU

Sun goes down in a dark orange sky
Clouds of blackbirds circle and cry
Rows of lovers linger in the dark and here am I

Drag myself through another lonesome day
Without a shred of comfort or joy
Soon the waking world is drifting away and then it's gone

And I dream about you
And I am free
The whole night through
I dream about you
I love to see the evening sun go down
I love to watch the moon rise over the town
If not for dreams I wouldn't care to live at all without you

It's a big night for Aidan and the Long Gone Lonesome Boys. As is the case in most showbiz stories, one of the guys, has a friend, who's sisters' husband's cousin works at a small record label in Nashville. They are interested in the guys have come to check them out in person. But an argument with Neil right before he goes on has Aidan questioning his self worth, and he torpedoed his audition.

COMMANDO(Cut)

I used to be so highbrow and restrained
Nothing ever really seemed to flow
No Prometheus has come unchained
And I found a way to let my people go.
There's no underwear that's fun to wear it's true
It's nothing but a lie, a hoax, a scam
In the clearing stand my boxers cuz we're through
And I wanna show you all just who I am

So I'm going Commando
Like Marlon Brando, or Tony Orlando
Yes I'm going Commando
And it's only fair that you should know,
That everywhere I go, I go Commando.

After Aidan thoroughly embarrasses himself, he comes off stage and punches Neil. They fight. It's a fight that releases years of pent up anger and resentment.

While the boys fight, John stands outside the Hackett house debating if should knock on the door and tell Deidre how he feels.

LOVE YOU FAR TOO MUCH (Cut)

So I'll pretend, that I don't care, when I see you out with him
You were just a brief affair. Just another idle wind.
And I will hide this love away and never let it show
Because I love you far too much to let you know

With him you'll have a happy loving family
With me you'd only waste your tender years
With him you'll have a future that you deserve
With me you'll have a lifetime of tears.

Maybe if I'm still around after many years have passed
I would tell you of my secret and confide in you at last
I tell you why I threw away the only love I'll ever know
Because I knew that once I held you I could never let you go
And I love you far too much to let you know.

Neil is glowing hot after his fight with Aidan and his rage only doubles when he sees John with Deidre on his front porch.

GALLOWS MAN

I came home unexpectedly, and I saw her by the door.
Standing with a stranger I had never seen before
He stroked her cheek and he made her smile
And together they went in
Holding hands and laughing and so eager for their sin.
Out in the cold, I stood and watched
The light up in her room.
Till the light went out, and I went in
To send them to their doom
I burst in through, the bedroom door
And the stranger rose and fled.
I took her throat into my hands
And I squeezed till she was dead.

They found me there the following morning
Lying by her side
Desolate and so forlorn with my cold unfaithful bride
And now I follow after her
And together we will dwell
A faithless wife and a murderer
In the fiery depths of hell

Neil is convicted of murder and ultimately sentenced to death. The night before his execution, John, Aidan and Neil examine their fates, lost in Lonesome Time.

LONESOME TIME

Raindrops started falling about two hours ago
The moon is hiding in the clouds and the wind is winding low
I'm staring at a picture by a single candle glow
And its lonesome time

There's no one here to talk to, don't have anyone to call
The summertime is over soon and the leaves will start to fall
How long will it take, till I got nothing left at all

And it's lonesome time
It's lonesome time. I cannot carry on
It's lonesome time. And the good times are all gone
Time to face a mountain, that I can't hardly climb
And it's lonesome time

Don't look for any comfort from above
Heartache is the price you pay for love

People try to tell me that my life has just begun
Time to make some new friends, time to have some fun
Well I got two friends on the table, whiskey and a gun

And it's lonesome
And it's lonesome
And it's lonesome time
And it's lonesome time

In a perfect echo of the opening scene, Neil walks to the electric chair, sits, looks at his executioner and sings.

Oh Gallows Man, I know your face
For I have seen it once before.
I saw you on, that very night
You were the stranger at my door
Oh Gallows Man, you took my life,
When you took my love from me.
So Gallows Man, don't let me down
When you hang me from your tree.

Aidan returns to an empty house and for the first time in his life, he finds himself completely alone.

There's no tombstone so heavy, no graveyard so cold,
As the weight of this loneliness crushing my soul.
And I won't feel as sad, in a dark empty tomb,
As I do sitting here, all alone in my room.

But it's Sunday morning and Aidan knows where to find Elena. He quickly dresses and heads out the door. He arrives at the church just as the congregation is offering each other the sign of peace. Aidan looks around and finally finds Elena in the first pew. She hands him Pia. The congregation all join hands and sing:

And I don't need a halo or bright shiny wings.
I have no need for these heavenly things.
Just let me stand on that faraway shore
Lonesome, lonesome no more.
One thing I pray if I walk through that door
Lonesome, lonesome no more.
One thing I pray as I walk through that door
Lonesome, lonesome no more.

Lights out. End of Show.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND THE FUTURE OF LONESOME TIME

5.1 Feedback on Solo Performance

My solo performances were surprisingly emotional experiences. This would be the first test of these songs in a new dramatic context and I would say they passed with flying colors. I could sense the waves of action build as I told the story. That energized my performance, bringing new depths to my understanding of these people. Feedback has been incredibly positive, with the best compliments being offers to help see the full show to completion. I couldn't have asked for more.

5.2 Future Development

The play has obvious holes that need addressing. I'm not sure how to get Uncle Pat to the hospital yet. There can be more connection between Aidan and John. I also have an idea to kill Uncle Pat and have a scene between Pia and Aidan at the funeral. These and other script ideas are currently in development, but not necessary for this thesis. Ideally, a reading of the script will take place at some point in the late spring or early summer of 2013. Similar to my solo performance, I'll learn a tremendous amount about the script and I imagine considerable rewrites will be necessary. Then, the process of raising money for a score to be produced as well as a larger, more staged workshop performance at Swine Palace or a place like Yale's Music Theatre Development Lab can begin with the goal of a full production in late 2014 or early 2015.

5.3 Effects On My Acting

The writing of *Lonesome Time* has had tremendous impact on how I approach scripts as an actor. In some ways, I now look at them like a writer. The hard part of acting is making words and story that are not your own part of you. The best way I've found to do that in the past was to live with the play, sometimes for a considerable period of time, allowing that mysterious power of my subconscious to take over. I've carried around the people of *Lonesome Time* for so long now that I feel like they are a part of me. I'm not given this amount of time for most shows I act in, but what I've found is that my imagination can help me greatly. I 'go there' now much more quickly, bring more of my whole self than before I began writing. I would often need a little poke from a director to commit fully to the emotional life of my characters. Now, I feel as if I can give myself that poke, and before the director even sees me. I have a better understanding of where my character fits in the larger picture of the whole play, which gives me greater insight on how to serve the greater process of creating something like a play. I'm less selfish in that sense, realizing my role is just a small part of a larger whole.

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VITA

Jason Bayle was born and raised in the west suburbs of Chicago and is an Evans Scholars Alumnus of Northern Illinois University. He has traveled the world as both a singer and actor for the last fifteen years.

Since moving to Baton Rouge to pursue his Master of Fine Arts degree in 2010, Jason's focus has been on deepening his understanding of the craft of acting, pursuing writing for both stage and screen, and lowering his golf handicap. He lives with his wife, Mary.