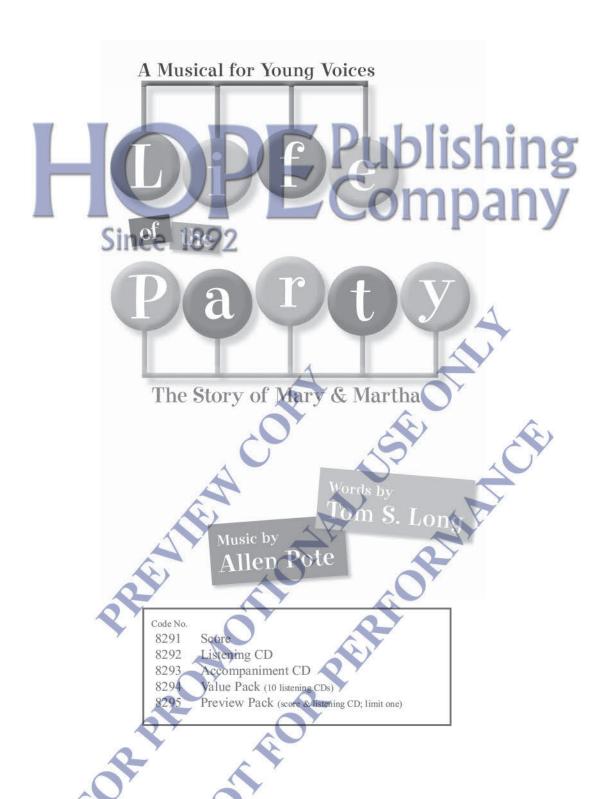
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FOREWORD

The stories of Mary and Martha in the gospels deal with issues that are instantly recognizable—family conflict, making time for Jesus in the midst of hectic lives, and trusting God when things get tough. Any parent who has taken a long car ride with children in the back seat knows that the first issue is universal. Likewise, anyone today who goes to work, attends school, or watches the six o'clock news has wrestled with the other two.

In this simple 30-minute musical, we tried to stay true to these themes with music and words that move from lightbearted humor to poignant drama. We believe the result is a work that will be appealing to adults and children alike.

The show can be produced with minimal staging—some moveable boxes for a set, t-shirts and vests for costumes, and a few easily obtainable props. Of course, those with bigger budgets and more time may enjoy staging the work more elaborately.

In the original production, our young cast had a great time in both rehearsals and performances—and along the way we think they experienced the truth of the story in a new way: A long time ago, Jesus had a close circle of friends who came to believe he was "the Resurrection and the Life." Today, it's still possible to be one of those friends.

—Tom Long and Allen Pote

HOPE Publishing Company Since 1892

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CHARACTERS

Invitation Reader

Martha-prim, practical, obsessively responsible

Mary—fun loving, mischievous, perhaps a little dreamy

Peter-enthusiastic, and a bit simple

Lazarus-Mary and Martha's brother

Jesus—a warm, calm, and wise storyteller (Perhaps best played by an older child or high school student)

Disciples 1-21 (The lines can be divided among fewer actors)

Sheep 1, 2

Shepherd

Wolf 1,2 Farmer Since 1892

Chorus—playing additional disciples, sheep, wolves, branches, and family members as needed.

All roles, except for Mary, Martha, Peter, Lazarus, and Jesus, can be played by either male or female performers.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Approximate Performance Time: 30 minutes

The following notes apply to the original production of Mary and Martha as performed in Pensacola, Florida in July 2002. We offer them as a guideline, which you can change or adapt to fit your own situation.

COSTUMES:

Martha—tailored pants suit, high-buttoned collar with brooch, low heels, hair pulled back in a bun

Mary—lycra capri leggings or bicycle shorts, leotard, bright polka-dotted shirt with the tails knotted in the front, tennis shoes, ponytail tied with bright scarf

Jesus—white pants, white shirt, white sport jacket

Chorus—black pants and black t-shirts, colorful vests (can be made with felt)

SET:

When the play opens, the stage is set with a number of large colorful boxes. The boxes are tall enough to be used as seats and sturdy enough to stand on. They have hinged hids so that props and costumes can be placed inside them or removed from them throughout the show.

If you wish, flats or a backdrop can be used to suggest the interior of Mary and Martha's house or a large banquet hall.

PROPS:

Envelope with invitation White tablecloth Candle in candlestick

Bowl with five or six bunches of plastic grapes

Large book representing the Torah

Seat cushion or pillow with the letters WWJS on it

Nerd glasses

Loaf of bread

STAGING AND MOVEMENT:

- When We All Get Together: The members of the cast enter from several directions at once, meeting and greeting each other enthusiastically. Several cast members, playing servers, bring out trays with plates and cups on them and distribute them to the tables. During the choruses, you may want to choreograph celebratory movements in small groups.
- A Very Special Guest: During the choruses, the cast forms groups of four. Two of the four stand facing each other with their arms extended to represent a pair of doors. A third actor mimes knocking on the doors, and the fourth actor opens the doors to "let him in." The actors make the necessary knocking sounds by stamping their feet. During the verses, various cast members can represent Elijah, a blind person, and followers of Jesus as those groups are mentioned. In the original production, the entire cast did the "wave" when ocean waves were mentioned, and an actor lying on her back was lifted into a standing position when the lyrics "his healing prayer could even raise the dead" were sung.
- Two Peas in a Pod: During the choruses, the cast can do a simple repeated dance step, with Mary and Martha featured in the center of the picture. During the verses, Mary and Martha act out their mutual frustration with each other. At the end of the song, the cast forms a final stage picture representing a "family tree."
- You've Got the Word: Each time this refrain is sung, the cast moves to new positions with an energy and style that fit the music. The liveliness of the movement increases with each repetition until—at the end of the song—the cast forms a kick line that eventually spins out-of-control to become a frantically dancing mob scene.
- Lilies in the Field: The cast forms simple, quiet stage pictures. Throughout the song, Jesus uses the words and music to communicate with Martha. Other movements by Mary, Martha, and Jesus are indicated in the score.
- The Raising of Lazarus: This number can be staged in a stylized manner, with Mary, Martha, and Jesus using an offstage "reader's theater" focus. During each of the choruses, the rest of the cast moves slowly to form a new stage picture behind these three. During the verse when Lazarus is actually raised, the performers all focus on the back wall behind the audience, visualizing the mouth of the tomb where Lazarus is buried. (Other movements by Mary, Martha, Jesus, and Lazarus are indicated in the score.)
- Hand in Hand: In the course of the song, the cast members slowly form groups—exchanging looks of warmth and support. They sing straight to the audience, and—by the end of the song—they stand hand in hand.

Life of the Party

The Story of Mary and Martha

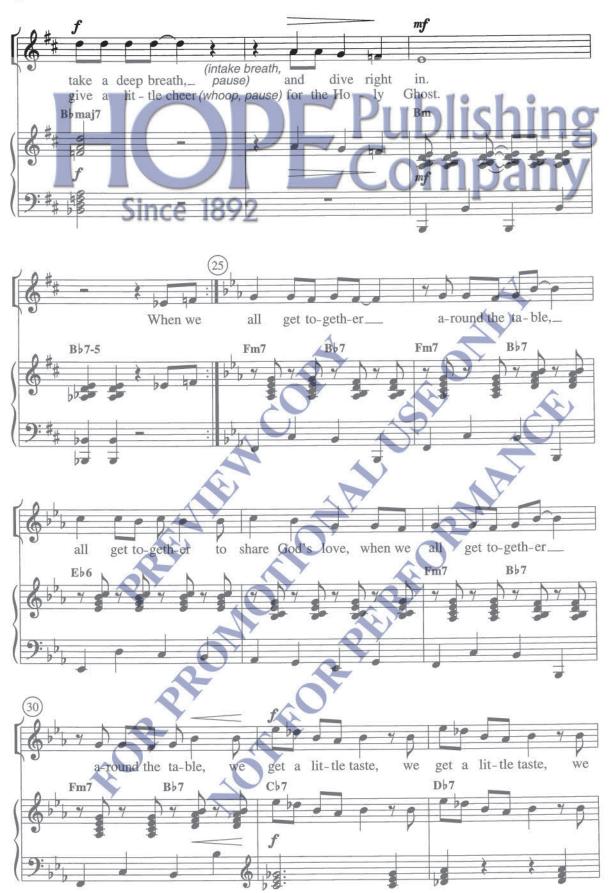
(The stage is set with a number of large hollow blocks or boxes that are sturdy enough for the cast to sit on, stand on, or use as low tables. Several boxes are arranged to represent a head table on a platform upstage. The INVITATION READER enters carrying an envelope and stops down center. She opens the envelope, removes a printed invitation, and reads.)

INVITATION READER: You are cordially invited to a special anniversary celebration at the home of Mary and Martha, 123 Olivet Street, Bethany—Saturday, (fill in date) in the year of our Lord, X-X-V-I. (pronounced ex ex ex vee eye) Dress; casual, RSVP.

(The music for the first song begins and the rest of the cast enters energetically—setting tables and preparing the space for a banquet.)









(At the end of the song, the cast is seated or arranged around blocks representing tables. They improvise party chatter with each other. MARTHA stands and claps to get everyone's attention.)

MARTHA: Thank you all for coming this evening—it's good to see so many familiar faces. And you all know how much my sister, Mary, and I love to entertain.

MARY: We've had a lot of great parties over the years. Remember last year's Prodigal Son Homecoming Dance?

ALL: Yeah!

MARY: And how many have been to one of my Mary of Canaan Cosmetics parties?

SOME FEMALE GUESTS: (ad libbing) I have, me, etc.

PETER: (standing and shouting) How about the fish fry on the beach? I caught that one! Woo!

(He "high fives" another guest enthusiastically.)

MARTHA: Thank you, Peter. I'm glad you enjoyed it. But of all our parties, this one is special.

MARY: This is the anniversary of the first time Jesus of Nazareth came to our house.

MARTHA: And when we think of all the things he did for our family—Mary and I and our brother, Lazarus...well we just feel like telling the story all over again.

MARY: It all started when we were getting ready for the visit.

(Music plays as ALL scatter to new positions.)

MARTHA: O.K., when he knocks at the door, Mary, you go let him in. And everybody else—you all know what to do.

MARY: (jumping up on a box) Yeah, we jump up and shout, "Surprise!"

MARTHA: No! We say: "Shalom, Rabbi Jesus." Let's try it.

(MARTHA turns to direct the rest of the cast, who are standing in position almost like a choir)

ALL: (reciting in a sing-song fashion, with MARTHA leading) Shalom, Rabbi Jesus.

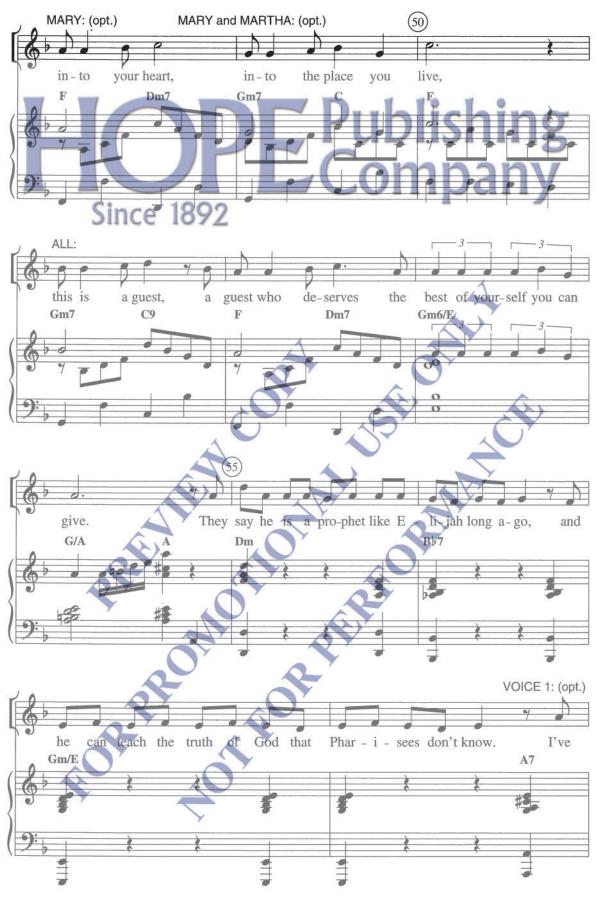
MARY: "Surprise" is more fun.

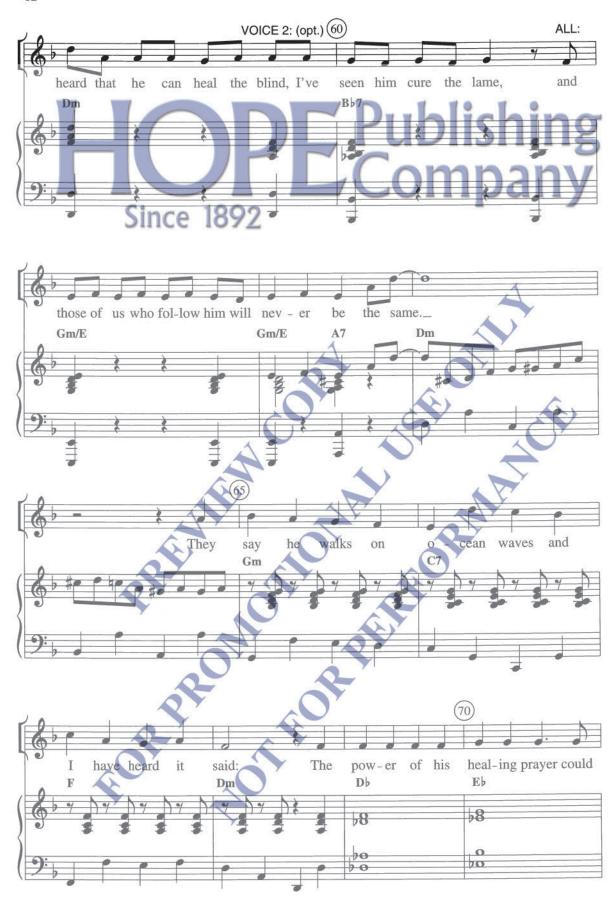
MARTHA: Be serious, Mary-re's the guest of honor.

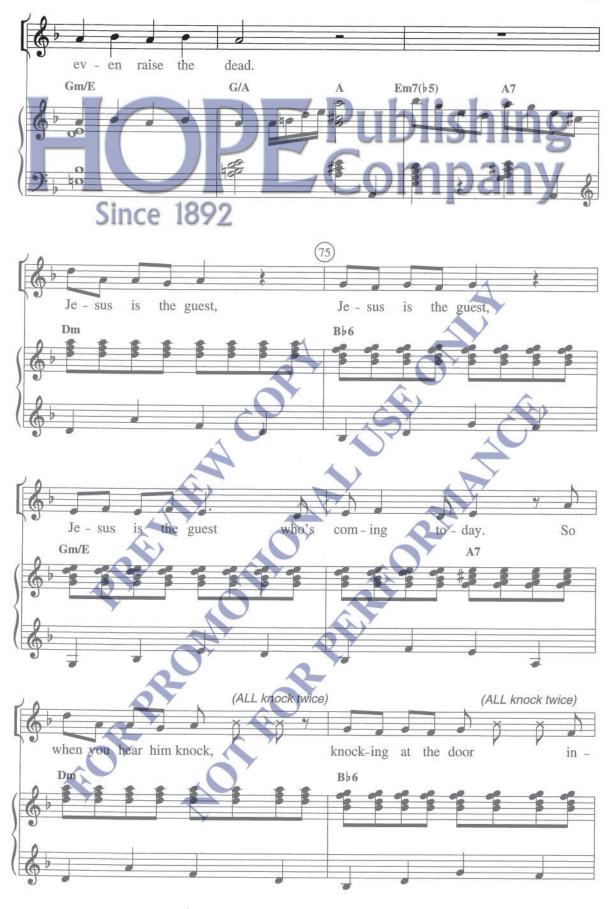
A Very Special Guest



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(At end of song, there is a knock offstage right.)

MARTHA: (rushing to the door) He's here! He's here!

(ALL jump to attention and assume their choir pose, as MARY mimes opening the door. MARTHA then turns back to direct the cast without looking to see who is at the door.)

ALL: (with MARTHA directing) Shalom, Rabbi Jesus.

(LAZARUS enters.)

MARY: Surprise! It's not Jesus. It's our brother, Lazarus.

MARTHA: Oh, Lazarus, you're late.

LAZARUS: He's not here yet?

MARTHA: And it's a good thing. (As she speaks, she moves to the head table and removes a white tablecloth and a bowl of grapes from one of the boxes. With LAZARUS's help, she sets the table with the cloth and bowl.) There's still a million things to get ready. Of course, if your sister, Mary, would help out a little!

(MARY gets a large book out of a downstage box and sits.)

MARY: I am getting ready. I'm reading from the Torah.

MARTHA: I mean something useful. Honestly, your sister is the laziest do-nothing.

MARY: Well, at least I'll be able to talk with him when he comes. Unlike some boring people I

know.

LAZARUS: You two-always with the bickering. Why can't you just get along?

(In the spoken lines leading into the song, MARTHA and MARY face off and circle

each other as they trade comments.)

MARTHA: Are you kidding? She eats matzo in bed and leaves the crumbs.

ALL: Ooo.

MARY: She alphabetizes her shopping list.

ALL: Ahh.

MARTHA: She borrows my robes and never returns them.

ALL: Ohbbh.

MARY: She folds her napkins into the Star of David.

ALL: (laugh)

(The fight picks up speed and intensity.)

MARTHA: She sleeps till noon!

MARY: She sweeps till midnight!

MARTHA: She always has her head in the clouds!

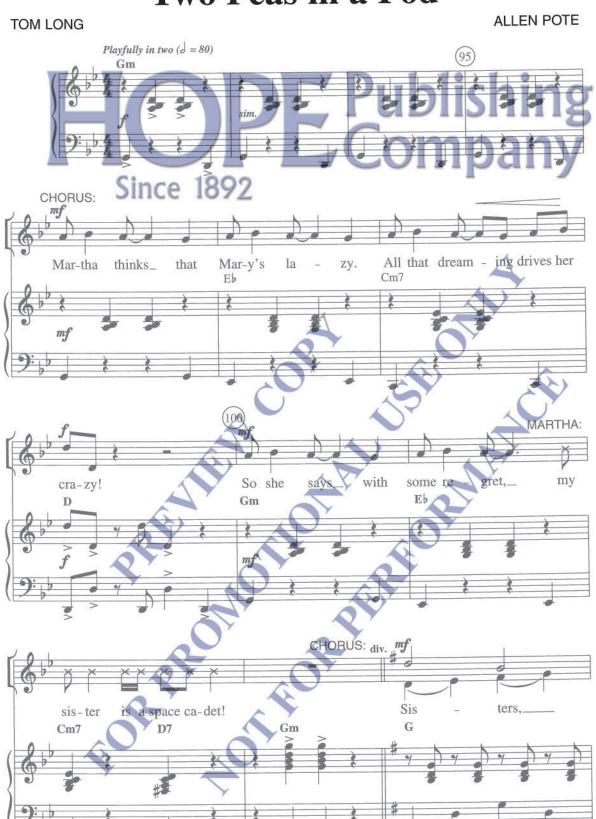
MARY: (nose to nose with MARTHA) She always has her nose in my business!

MARY and MARTHA: (turning back to back and pointing over their shoulders with their thumbs)

She's impossible to live with!

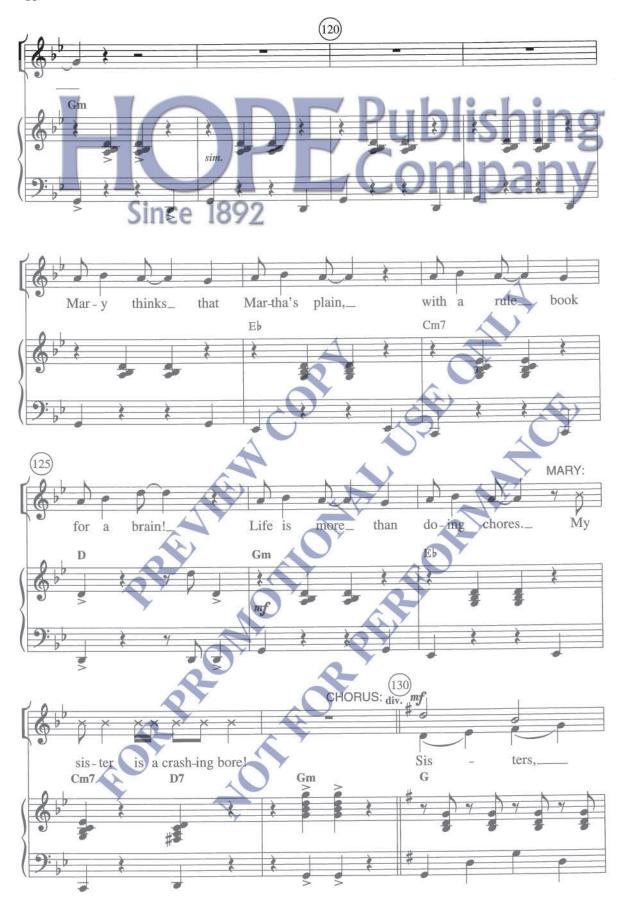
ALL: Ohhhhhhh.

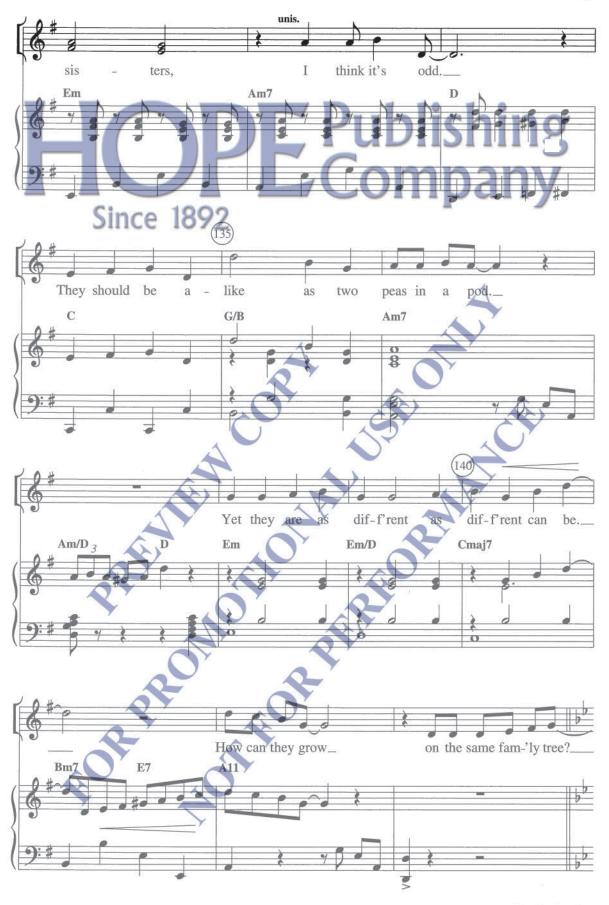
Two Peas in a Pod

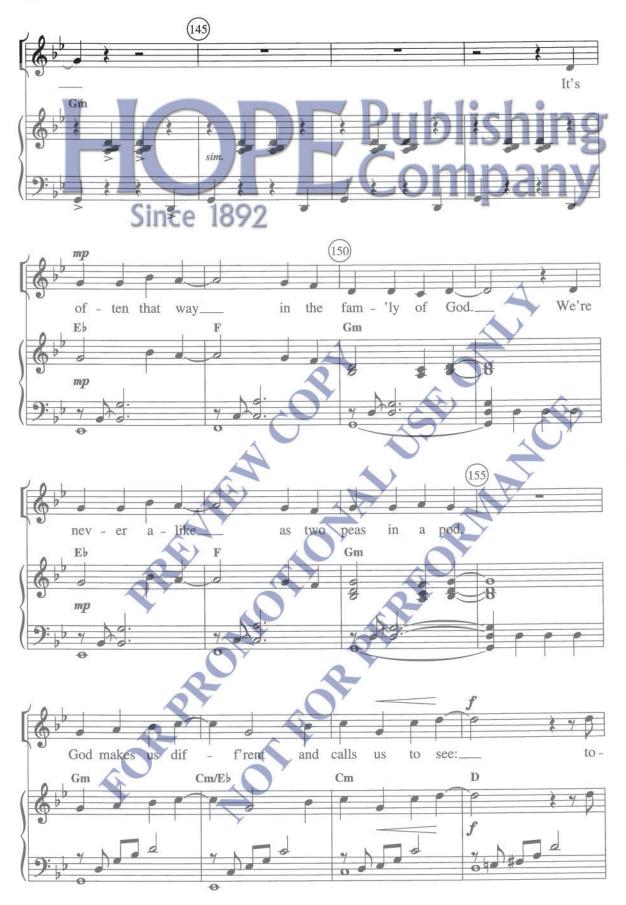


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(In the applause following the song, JESUS wanders in from the "door" stage right. He approaches the rest of the cast who are holding a final pose.)

JESUS: Hello. Am I in the right place?

MARTHA: Rabbi Jesus!

(Caught off guard, ALL try to rush to their choir positions, shouting their greetings at different times. The result is a ragged jumble of noise.)

ALL: (not together) Shalom, Rabbi Jesus.

MARY: (jumping up on a block, on the tail end of the greeting) Surprise! (She blows loudly on

a party noisemaker.)

MARTHA: Mary! I'm so sorry, Rabbi, we didn't hear you knock.

JESUS: That's all right.

MARTHA: Come again?

JESUS: I said, that's all right.

MARTHA: No, I mean, would you come in again so we can give you a proper greeting?

JESUS: (laughing) Martha, really—it's O.K. I feel very welcome.

MARTHA: Well then, please-sit down.

JESUS: (starting to sit on a nearby block) Thank you.

MARTHA: (moving to the head table) Oh, no, no, no over here. This is our best seat. I made

the pillow myself.

(MARTHA lifts up a seat cushion with the letters WWJS on it.)

JESUS: W-W-J-S?

MARTHA: Where would Jesus sit! I had to cover a spot where...(looking at MARY, pointedly) someone let her cat sharpen its claws.

(MARY looks back at MARTHA and makes a little cat claw gesture with a hiss.)

JESUS: (sitting) It's very nice. Now, why don't you sit too, and we can visit.

MARTHA: Oh, no, I couldn't. There's too much to do.

JESUS: Please...I'd love to just talk.

MARTHA: Maybe later. (moving the bowl of grapes in front of him) Here—help yourself to some fruit. (hurrying off left) I'll be in the kitchen if you need anything.

LAZARUS: You can talk with us.

MARY: Yeah, we love your stories.

ALL: (ad libbing) Yeah, sure, etc.

DISCIPLE 1: How about the one about the priest, the lawyer, and the traveling Samaritan?

DISCIPLE 2: I like the one about the farmer planting seeds.

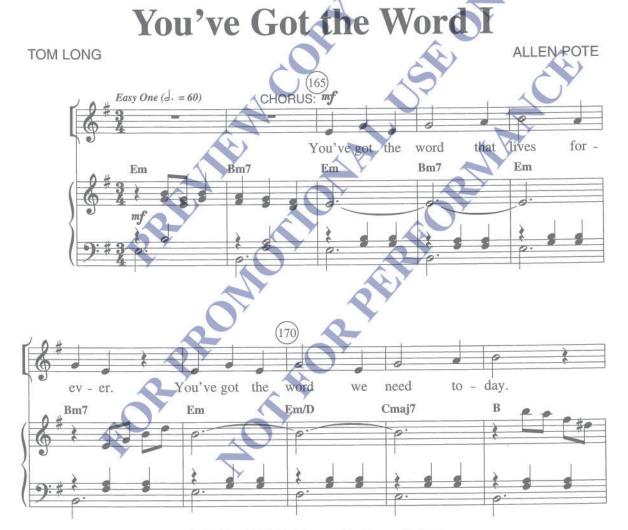
(DISCIPLE 3 stands up wearing nerd glasses.,

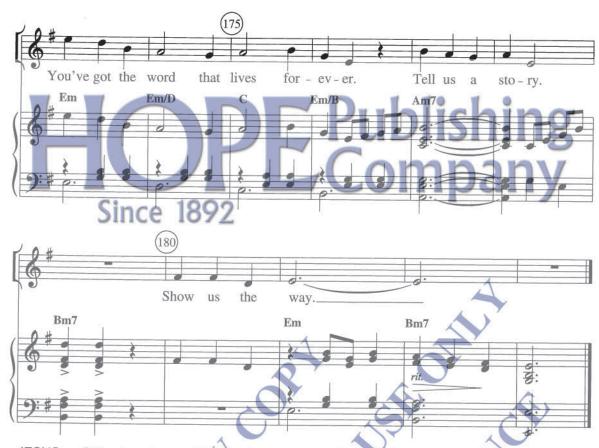
DISCIPLE 3: (with a squeaky, nasal voice) I like all the sayings. (quoting) "The geeks shall inherit the earth!" (Another disciple leans over and whispers in his ear.) Oh...Well, I can be meek too.

JESUS: Actually, I have some new parables for you.

ALL: Great, good, all right, yeah, etc.

(JESUS moves to sit on a box as the rest of the cast settles around him to listen.)





JESUS: O.K.—I want you all to imagine...you are a flock of sheep.

DISCIPLE 4: Sheep? You mean...(bleating) Baaa?

JESUS: That's right. Everybody try it.

SHEEP 1: Baaa.

SHEEP 2: Baaa.

(ALL begin to bleat like sheep.)

JESUS: All right, good! Now who watches over the sheep?

DISCIPLE 5: Uh...a shepherd.

JESUS: O.K. (picking one of the disciples, and pulling him up to stand center stage) You...I'll give you ten shekels to watch my flock.

SHEPHERD: Hey-easy money! Gather 'round, little sheepies.

(Four or five "sheep" crawl over to him and snuggle close, bleating.)

ALL SHEEP: (not together) Baaa...baaa...baaa...

JESUS: Now, what happens when danger comes? (picking a disciple to play a wolf, and pulling him into the scene) Look—here's a wolf. (JESUS shows him how to growl.) Go like this: Grrrr.

WOLF 1: Grrrrr...

JESUS: Good! (picking another wolf) And here—another one.

WOLF 2: Grrrrrrr...

JESUS: (tapping two or three more disciples quickly) It's a whole pack—and they're hungry.

(The WOLVES growl loudly and surround the sheep. The SHEPHERD looks terrified.)

WOLF 1: (sauntering up to the SHEPHERD, nose to nose) I got two words for you kid: Mint...jelly...

SHEPHERD: Yeah, well I got two words for you: ...help...yourself...(running off) Ahhhh!

(All the WOLVES lean back and howl, as the SHEEP cower.)

ALL WOLVES: Aaaoooooo! (They face the sheep and prepare to pounce.)

JESUS: (shouting) Stop! (The SHEEP and the WOLVES freeze.) O.K.—what went wrong?

DISCIPLE 6: A hired person doesn't really care about the sheep.

Exactly, if someone is a real shepherd, the sheep belong to him. And a good shep JESUS:

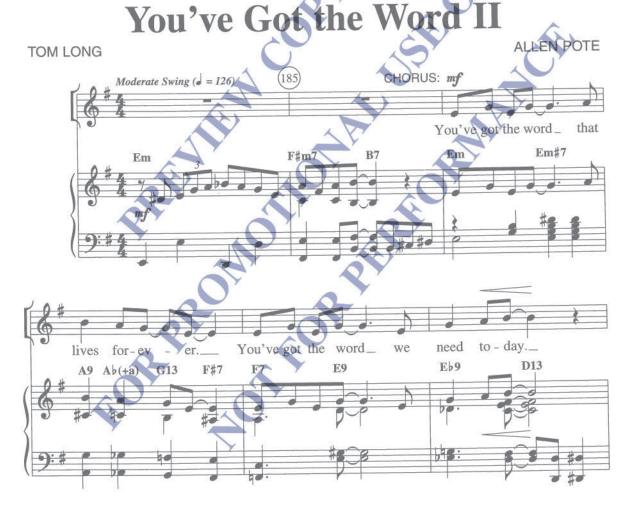
herd lays down his life for his sheep.

Oh...I get it. We're kinda like the sheep...and you...(She picks up the tablecloth and MARY:

drapes it over JESUS' shoulders like a stole.)...you're like our shepherd.

ALL: (ad lib enthusiastic responses)

(During the singing, the cast moves to new positions.)





DISCIPLE 7: Tell us another one.

ALL: (ad libbing positive responses) Yeah...let's do another one...We can act it out again...etc.

JESUS: O.K....I want you to imagine...that I'm a grape vine. (He steps up onto a block.) And you all... (indicating cast members on either side) are the branches connected to it.

(Eight or ten performers jump up and link hands to form two chains—one stretching out from JESUS' right side, and one from the left.)

DISCIPLES: (ad libbing as they link up) Hey, all right, branching out here, I got the right side...etc.

JESUS: Now what happens when...(picking another disciple)...the farmer comes and cuts off one of the branches?

(The FARMER walks down the length of the branches.)

FARMER: Let's see...which one will it be...?

RIGHT BRANCH: (ad libbing sweetly, as the FARMER passes them) Go ahead, you can cut us, we don't mind, yeah cut us, we trust you...

(As the FARMER moves to pass the LEFT BRANCH, the RIGHT BRANCH falls silent.)

LEFT BRANCH: (whining their ad libs annoyingly as the FARMER passes) Ohhh, we don't wanna be cut...why do you have to cut us? Etc.

FARMER: (holding up his hand for silence) O.K., O.K.—(The LEFT BRANCH falls silent.) The grapes on this side have gotta go. (indicating the left side)

LEFT BRANCH: (whining) Whyyyyyy?

FARMER: Because...your "whine" is terrible!

ALL: (groan at the bad pun)

> (The FARMER picks up the candlestick from the table. He then raises it up like an axe over the spot where the LEFT BRANCH is connected to JESUS.)

FARMER: One...two...

LEFT BRANCH: (not in unison, still whining) Ohhhhhhh, nooo, nooo...

FARMER: Three!

(The FARMER gives a big chop, and the LEFT BRANCH lets go of JESUS, screams and falls to the ground.)

JESUS: O.K., what happened?

DISCIPLE 8: The branch died.

Right. Now what if the branch is healthy, and stays connected to the vine? JESUS:

DISCIPLE 9: Oh—it grows fruit!

DISCIPLE 10: (picking up the basket of grapes from the table) Here—use these

(DISCIPLE 10 hands out the grapes to the people forming the RIGHT BRANCH.)

ALL: (ad libbing affirmatively) Yeah!...That's it! Etc.

RIGHT BRANCH: (in unison, rising in pitch and volume) Grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, GROW!

JESUS: Now, what does it mean?

(after a pause) You didn't tell us there was going to be a quiz. PETER:

(laughing) It's not that hard. I want all of you... (He lifts up one end of the "dead JESUS:

branch" and they stand) ... to stay close to me. (He takes the hand of the RIGHT

BRANCH.)

(ad libbing positive remarks as the dead branch stands up again.) Ohhh-I get it,... ALL:

Yeah,...All right, etc.

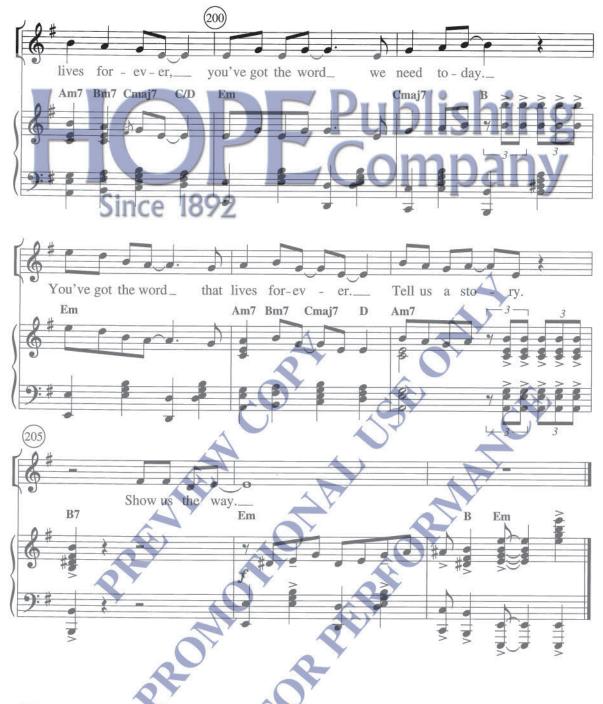
(During the singing, the cast once again moves to new positions.)

Got the



ALLEN POTE

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JESUS: Now, I want all of you to imagine...that you're part of one big family.

(The members of the cast look at each other for a moment, and then DISCIPLE 11 jumps up.)

DISCIPLE 11: Mom! Brutus hit me!

DISCIPLE 12: Stay on your own side of the seat, little missy!

DISCIPLE 13: Don't make me come back there!

ALL: (ad libbing quarreling) Hey, that's my shirt! You stole it! I didn't steal it—I borrowed it. Give it back! I'm home all day with the kids. I need a break! I work all day! I'm tired. I work too! Etc.

JESUS: No no, no! (ALL fall silent.) I mean...imagine you're a family when you're all together

having a good time.

ALL: Ohh.

DISCIPLE 14: Oo...oo...like a holiday dinner!

ALL: (singing) Over the Jordan and through the desert, to Mary and Martha's we go...(ALL

continue to hum under the lines that follow.)

JESUS: Now what makes a time like that fun?

DISCIPLE 15: There's plenty of food!

DISCIPLE 16: And everybody's celebrating!

MARY: Wait—I can help with this one. (The humming stops. MARY runs offstage left and

returns quickly with a loaf of bread. She hands it to JESUS.) Here's some bread from

the kitchen!

JESUS: Good. (He starts to tear off pieces and hand them out.) I want all of you to be my

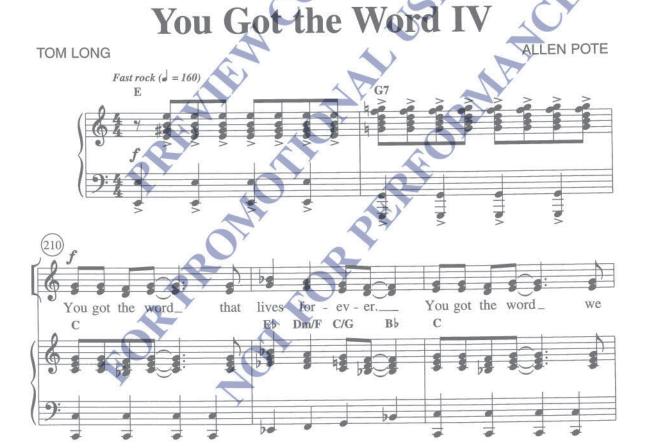
family. And if you believe in me...it's like having special bread that can keep you alive

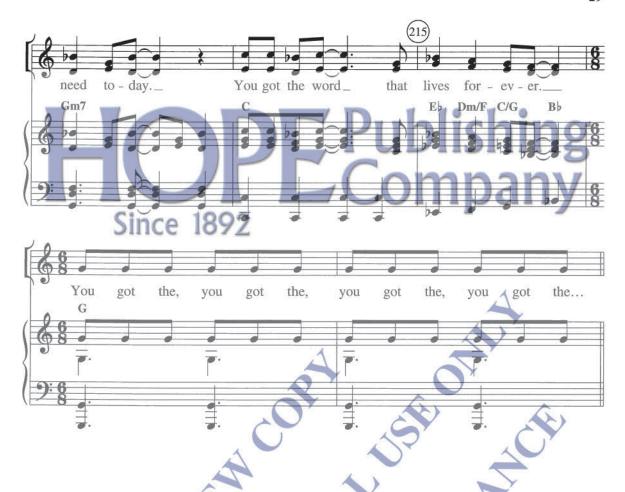
forever.

ALL: (looking at the bread in their hands and responding with awe by saying "ooo," "ahh," or

"ohhh".)

DISCIPLE 17: Come on everybody, let's celebrate!





(The song ends in a frenzy of energy. MARTHA enters from stage left and surveys the apparent chaos with horror.)

MARTHA: Stop this! Stop this! (ALL fall silent.) What is going on here!?

LAZARUS: Uh...We're having a little chat with Jesus?

MARTHA: My tablecroth...the fruit...and this bread! It was supposed to be for dinner!

MARY: (with her mouth full) It's really good.

MARTHA: This is absolutely the last straw! I'm slaving away in the kitchen—just trying to make something halfway decent for our guest. (She moves to confront MARY.) And you're out here making my job harder! (turning back to JESUS) Rabbi Jesus, I know you're a great teacher. Please—teach my sister some manners! Tell her to pull her own weight!

(There is a moment of embarrassed silence. Then JESUS moves to stand between MARY and MARTHA.)

JESUS: (putting a hand on MARTHA's arm, gently) Martha...you're working so hard. And you're worried about so many things. But you don't need to be. I like Mary being here. (taking MARTHA's hand) And I like you here too. There's really only one thing you need.

(As the music begins, JESUS gestures toward a block, and MARTHA sits, somewhat reluctantly. JESUS crouches beside her.)

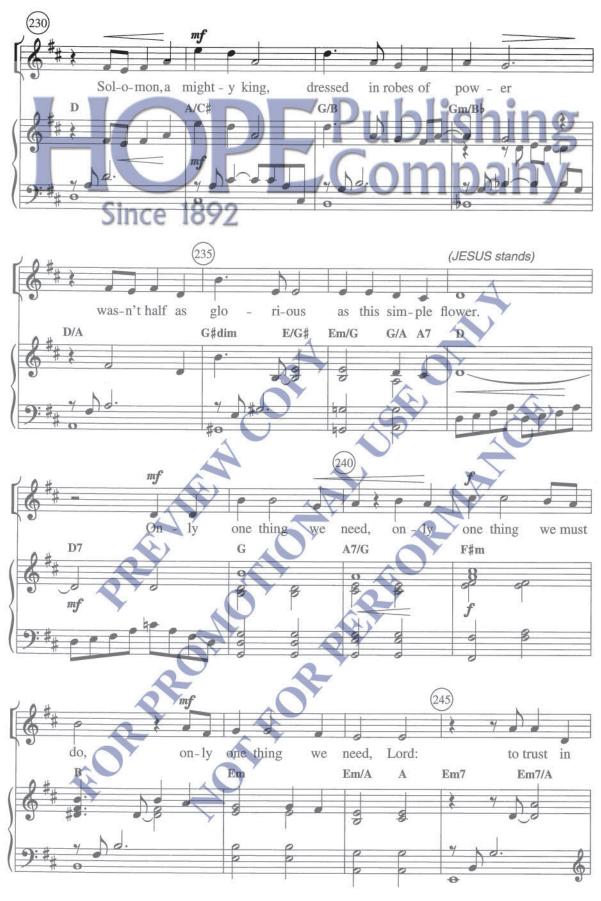
Lilies in the Field

TOM LONG ALLEN POTE



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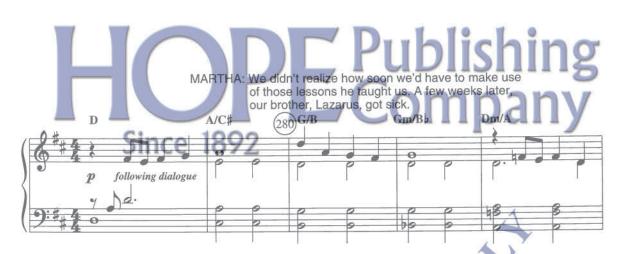


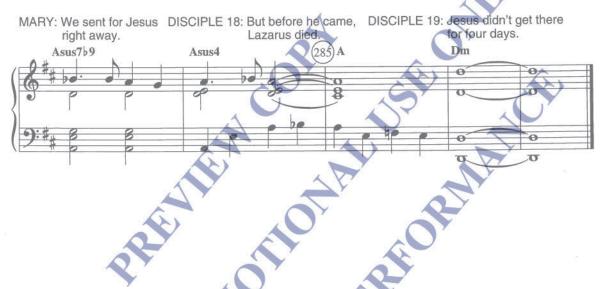


(JESUS brings MARY and MARTHA together and the two join hands tentatively. He then circles behind MARTHA to stand behind her right shoulder.)



(JESUS crosses to one side as the other members of the cast move upstage and remove their colorful vests. MARY and MARTHA step downstage to address the audience.)





(JESUS steps up on a block a little right of center, behind MARY and MARTHA.)

MARTHA: (moving to kneel with her back to JESUS) When Jesus arrived, I met him and said: (focusing on a spot on the back wall behind the audience) If you'd been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died.

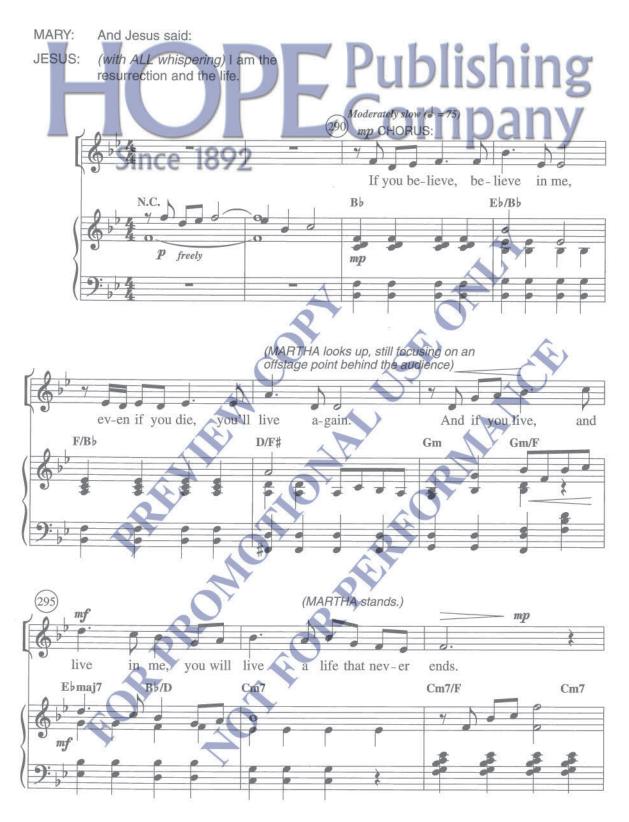
MARY: And Jesus told you:

JESUS: (in unison with ALL whispering) Your brother will live again.

MARTHA: But, Lord, that won't happen till the end of time.

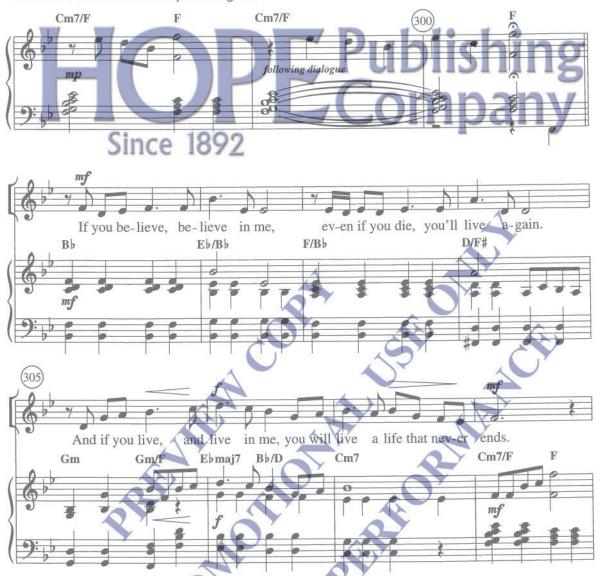
The Raising of Lazarus

TOM LONG ALLEN POTE



MARY: (moving to MARTHA, and taking her arm) When Martha told me Jesus had come, I went out to show him where Lazarus was buried. And Jesus cried with me.

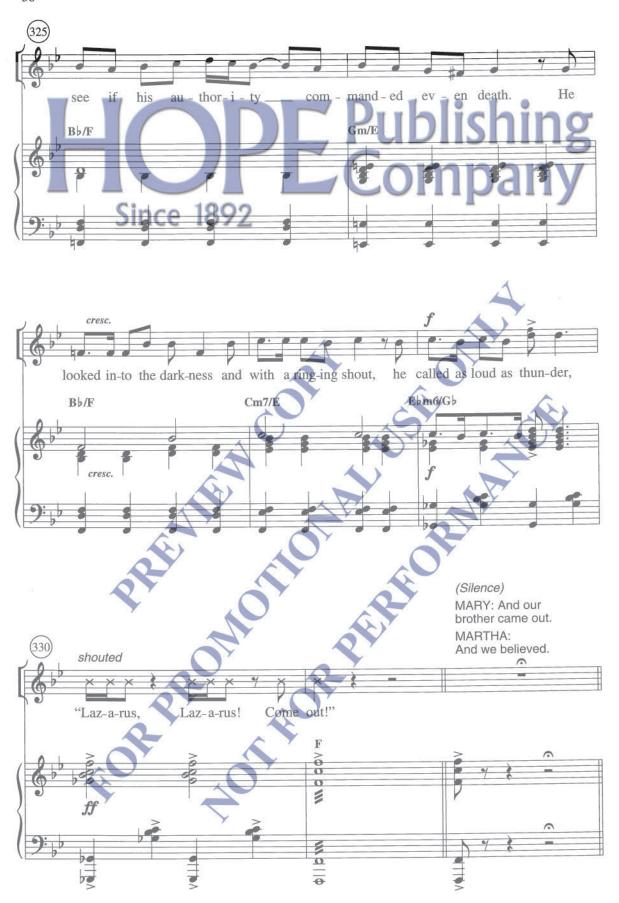
MARTHA: But I couldn't stop thinking about what he'd said.



(JESUS moves to stand on a block center stage. MARY and MARTHA move to stand in front of him and—during the lines that follow—the rest of the cast begin to form a final tight picture around the three ALL focus on a spot on the back wall, as though they are looking into the open tomb.)







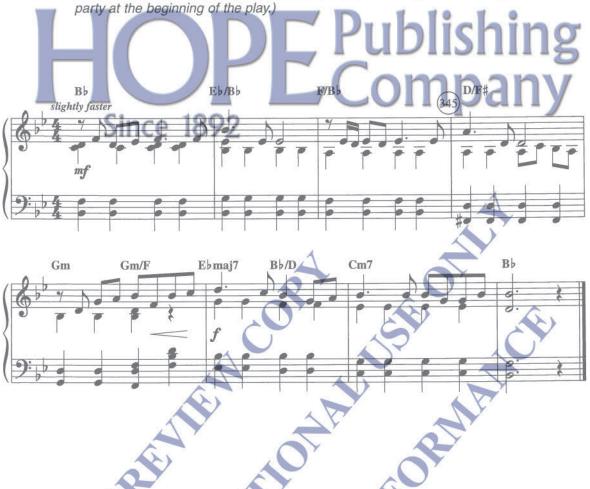
(LAZARUS walks slowly up the center aisle from the back of the audience.)

(He steps up on the left side of the stage and pauses. MARY and MARTHA run to him and they embrace. Then LAZARUS and JESUS step toward each other and exchange a hug.)



(The song ends in a tableaux with MARY, MARTHA, JESUS, and LAZARUS in the center. ALL look out to a spot behind the audience.)

(During the interlude JESUS exits and the other members of the cast move upstage and put on their vests. Then ALL resume the positions they were in during the dinner party at the beginning of the play.)



MARTHA: Once again, I want to thank all of you for sharing this time with us. And I think you can see—we've got a pretty good reason for being here.

LAZARUS: And I've got a great reason for being here.

MARY: Now you know why my sister and I can stand side by side and celebrate.

MARTHA: Of course—there's even more to the story we could tell. But we'll save that for another day.

MARY: And another party!

ALL: (ad libbing a positive response) Yeah, all right, great, etc.

MARTHA: (raising her glass) Until then, we give thanks to the One who brings us together—today and forever.

ALL: (toasting) Here, here!

(During the song that follows, the cast moves downstage to form small groups.)

Hand in Hand



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