The Service at Rocky Bluff

A Musical Play in Two Acts

by Scott Icenhower

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DEDICATION

To Mary Anne Goslen

STORY OF THE PLAY

Amy Westmond and her husband Floyd, along with his brother and father who comprise a country music group, return to Amy's home church. They reminisce and catch up on the gossip with Marie, the church's housekeeper, and Betty, the choir director, who inspired Amy earlier but now seems to have somewhat of an attitude.

The Westmonds are told that a search committee will be there for the evening hymn-sing to try to lure the church's beloved pastor away. With the unseen organist who communicates through charades, they form a plan—a fake pastor and fake service! Lloyd will do his comic preacher routine and Floyd will be his minister of education.

The two "ministers" have an abundance of bad jokes, and there's plenty of comical choreography when they all sing. The fake service seems to be working, but when Betty brings out her puppet, Bobby Socks the Bible Book Worm, there are unexpected--and heartfelt--consequences.

A genuinely funny and tender play which allows you to showcase the comic and singing abilities of your actors. One original song and most others are easily available in hymnals. Performance time about 80 minutes without an intermission.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

This play premiered on July 28, 2006, by the Presby Players, Greensboro, NC with the following cast:

Amy Westmond: Sheri Masters
Wade Westmond: Marc Alley
Floyd Westmond: Stephen Hale
Lloyd Westmond: Stephen Swoap
Marie: Eloise Hassell
Betty: Polly Cornelius

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 M, 3 W)

AMY WESTMOND: Married to Floyd, in the quartet, former member of Rocky Bluff Church.

WADE WESTMOND: Father of Floyd and Lloyd, leader of quartet.

FLOYD WESTMOND: Married to Amy, in quartet, son of Wade, brother of Lloyd.

LLOYD WESTMOND: In quartet, son of Wade, brother of Floyd.

MARIE: Member and housekeeper for Rocky Bluff Church.

BETTY: Music Minister and church member of Rocky Bluff, longtime friend of Amy.

Note: *The following are only referenced in the script and never seen: Pastor Meade, Mrs. Davis, Bob, Lula and the preacher search committee.*

SETTING: Sanctuary of Rocky Bluff Baptist Church
Act I: Sunday afternoon
Act II: The Sunday evening service. (The audience becomes the church congregation.)

PROPS: Church bulletin in hymnal; fake CD with dedication insert for Amy; stack of music, purse, cell phone and sock puppet for Betty.

MUSIC

Some song selections, especially the old hymns, can be changed, if necessary. One song which cannot be changed is "I'll Fly Away" which serves a dual meaning. First the duet is sung slow and gives a sense of reconciliation. Then it is sung at its regular speed so the show ends on a happy note. Two other songs which must be included are "God's Army" (available from the publisher) and "Just a Closer Walk." The latter is done with a vamp at the beginning so Wade can say to Marie, "We can't walk this close forever."

MUSIC - continued

In case your church doesn't already have an all-purpose music license, be sure to obtain permission to use the two copyrighted songs, "Daddy Sang Bass" and "I'll Fly Away." See additional notes at end of script for choreography suggestions.

SONGS

Act I

Quartet: "We'll Understand It Better By and By"*
Quartet: "Where We'll Never Grow Old"*
Marie and Quartet: "Just a Closer Walk"*
Betty and Quartet: "Close to Thee"**

Act II

Amy and Quartet: "Unclouded Day"
Quartet: "Life's Railway to Heaven"
Lloyd solo: "God's Army"***
Marie and Quartet: "Daddy Sang Bass"
Quartet: "Down by the Riverside"
Congregation: "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus"**
Quartet: "Are You Washed in the Blood?"
Ladies Trio: "Farther Along"
Betty and Quartet: "It Is Well With My Soul"
Everyone: "I'll Fly Away"

** A cappella (or a quartet member could play piano or guitar)*
*** Live band or recorded organ accompaniment*
**** Original composition by Scott Icenhower. Sheet music available from the publisher.*

ORGAN SONGS/EFFECTS

Betty's song in Act I
All accompaniment in Act II, unless a band is used
"Take Me Out to the Ballgame"
"Charge"
Dissonant chord
"Tah-Dah" chord of triumph
"The First Noel"
"Jeopardy Theme"
"I'll Fly Away" introduction and song

ACT I

(AT RISE: It is Sunday afternoon. The sanctuary of Rocky Bluff Baptist Church. The sanctuary is empty. AMY enters alone.)

AMY: *(Looking around, flooded with memories.)* This sanctuary's so beautiful – I'm home. *(To OTHERS.)* Come on in. *(Beat.)* What are you afraid of? You were here for the wedding and didn't turn into a Baptist.

(FLOYD enters with his brother LLOYD and father WADE.)

FLOYD: No, but we got a lot of folks praying for us to change. Now, if their prayers are answered, I wonder what kind of Baptist we'd turn into. Primitive, Free Will, Independent, Southern, Reformed…
WADE: Primitive - I've seen you boys eat.
AMY: Now Dad, since I married your son he has made remarkable progress. He's reformed.
LLOYD: A nice wedding like that will do it to you. I still can't get over how emotional everybody was.
WADE: That's because Amy was marrying a Methodist. *(HE pulls a church bulletin out of a hymnal lying on a pew and starts reading.)* Hey look, Amy. You're still on their prayer list. They just can't let it go.
AMY: Don't you think they might be supporting our music ministry?
FLOYD: *(Pulls AMY to him.)* Of course they're praying for our ministry. God has blessed our <u>mixed</u> marriage. Don't you think so, Mrs. Westmond?
AMY: I do.
FLOYD: I do too. *(THEY start to kiss.)*
LLOYD: Hey, hey! Renew your vows someplace else. This is a church.
AMY: I got my first kiss up there in the balcony.
WADE & LLOYD: Baptists!
WADE: I love the acoustics in here.

AMY: This has always been a sanctuary for singing.

*(**SONG:** WADE begins verse of "We'll Understand It Better By and By." The OTHERS join in. They sing a cappella. After song, LIGHTS up to full. MARIE enters.)*

MARIE: Excuse me, folks, but the service ain't till tonight. I'm going to have to ask you to… Well lookie there, oh my… Amy, you come here to me. I didn't know it was you – I thought it was…oh, never mind. *(THEY hug.)* How are you, dear?

AMY: I'm fine, Marie.

MARIE: Let me look at you. Married life hasn't hurt you a bit; and it's done wonders for your husband.

LLOYD: Yeah, you should see him eat now – knife, fork, the works.

WADE: How are you doing, Marie?

MARIE: I can't complain - although my memory ain't what it used to be. *(To FLOYD and LLOYD.)* I can't seem to remember which one of your sons is Floyd and which one is Lloyd.

FLOYD & LLOYD: I am. He is. You are. She was talking about you….

MARIE: You boys. Well, I'm glad it's you and not them.

WADE: Them who? Who did you think we were?

MARIE: A pastor search committee. They didn't make it in time for the morning service, but they'll be back.

AMY: I thought they'd want to remain anonymous. How did you find out?

MARIE: They pulled right into the driveway when Bob was patrolling the parking lot. He said the car had out-of-state tags, two men in the front seat and two women in the back. They asked a lot of questions about the church; and said they'd heard good things about us. Then they asked what time the evening service was and drove off. That's all it could be.

WADE: And so you were going to run them out of the sanctuary just now?

End of Freeview

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