

MARK: A ROCK GOSPEL
by Robert Beck

Dramatis Personae

Narrator A	A Demoniac of Capernaum
Narrator B	Peter's Mother-in-law
Narrator C	A Leper
	A Paralytic
Jesus of Nazareth	A Man with a Withered Hand
	Jairus, A Synagogue Official
Simon Peter	Jairus' Daughter
James, Son of Alphaeus	A Woman with a Longstanding Illness
John, Another Son of Alphaeus	A Deafmute
Andrew, Peter's Brother	A Blindman
Levi, A Tax Assessor	A Child
	Blind Bartimeus
John the Baptist	
King Herod	Disciples
Salome	Scribes
Two Sadducees	Woman at the Tomb
Scribe	Guards
Moses	Villagers
Elijah	City Throngs of Jerusalem
	Temple Personnel
	King Herod's Courtiers

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ACT I

Scene I

(Narrator A is sitting on a prop trunk in the front center of the stage, chatting with the people in the front row. When the house lights go down, a spot comes up on Narrator, who begins the following monologue.)

Narrator: A

I see the house lights have gone down.
And the spot has come up.
It must be time to begin.
Yes, I'm sure it is.

(Declaims)
THE BEGINNING OF THE GOOD NEWS
OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD,
ACCORDING TO SAINT MARK.
No, that won't do.

Narrator B:

Too pretentious.

Narrator C:

Too imperious, for a small town boy.

Narrator A:

Anyway, you've probably heard the story.
It's not news for you, then, eh?
Or maybe you haven't heard it.

(Muses)

Is it a happy story?
Full of tinsel and light?
Pinwheels, popcorn, and balloons?
I'm not sure.
I do know that it gets hold of you and won't let go.

(Shudders)

Narrator B:

Anyway, it was a long, long time ago.
Or maybe it was yesterday?

But it was far, far away ...
Or maybe not.
Maybe it was right here.
Was it here? I'm not sure.

I am sure of some things.
I'm sure that in those days
the sun seemed to be always shining,

pinned in its sky like a butterfly in a box.
The hills were blue with promise
and the skies green with hope.
Unless it was the other way around.

Remembering simplifies things, you know,
clarifies them.
Maybe changes the way they were.

Narrator: A

I remember the lake,
which could be stone gray in its cruelty,
but at that time it held its luminous, satin surface
motionless as a glassy sea.

Narrator: B

And all of Galilee held its pent-up collective breath,
like the question before the storm.

(Pause)

Narrator: C

And into that stillness, who should appear?
Roaring out of the desert
like a disgruntled grizzly bear,
greeting the rude and cheerful morning of springtime?

None other than John the Baptist.

Narrator: A and C

Weird John,

Narrator: C

with his matted, mangy, moth-eaten camel-skin hood
and his crazy eyes,
charging us to arrange our lives,
change our lives,
or lose them ...

(Pause)

Crazy John.
Something to see, all right.

Something to write home about,
and panic your family.

Yes, that's how it began.
With John, the unwashed Baptizer.

There is a sound of wind, and music comes up. The narrator moves into the following song, which he sings solo. Dipping into the prop trunk, he impersonates John and Jesus at the appropriate times. For John, he puts his cloth or garment over his head like a hood. For Jesus he has a distinctive hat, perhaps a formal top hat, which becomes the emblem of the Jesus character.

Toward the end of the song some of the players gather around, just outside the edge of the circle of light, listening to the signer. It is as if they were passing by, but were captivated by his story. They join in with him during the last chorus. It is from among these that Jesus and Peter and Andrew are selected.)

[THE DESERT]

Narrator A (sings)

John appeared in the desert with the word:
Clear the way of the Lord.
Clear the way,
Clear out the way.

He came like Isaiah said he would
with his camelhair hood
and his word like a sword
that could not be ignored:
Clear the way of the Lord.

Narrator A and C:

For this was a beginning, Lord,
a place for starting from.
We need our beginnings, Lord,
a taste of things to come.

Narrator C:

Jesus came to the river to begin,
to be baptized by John,
to begin,

not for his sin.

He washed in the water for a start
and the sky split apart,
and it sent out a dove,
and a voice from above:
You're the Son that I love.

Narrator A and C:

For this was a beginning, Lord,
a place for starting from.
We need our beginnings, Lord,
a taste of things to come.

(The listeners begin to drop in around the circle.)

Narrator C:

Jesus wandered the desert forty days,
to be put to the test.
He would fast
up to the last.

He wandered the wasteland to the east
with the angel and beast
and the truth to be faced,
for the truth was his feast
and his hunger increased.

Narrator A and C:

For this was a beginning, Lord,
a place for starting from.
We need our beginnings, Lord,
a taste of things to come.

Narrator C:

Jesus walked by the water with the news:
Now the kingdom's at hand,
take a stand,
show me your hand.

He traveled the lakeshore with the news,
it was hard to refuse,
and he warned us to choose,
and he chose us by twos,

to report the good news.

(The listeners softly join in the song for the final chorus.)

Ensemble:

For this was a beginning, Lord,
a place for starting from.
We need our beginning, Lord,
a taste of things to come,
helps us some.

(The character who is to play Jesus moves to the edge of the circle of light, and the narrator hands him the "Jesus hat" for singing the next song, "The Call." During this song different members of the cast are "called" into the show. The number builds from quiet to rather full. The number of those called expands as those whom Jesus has called call others in turn. the song is a march with a "Pied Piper" feeling to it. There is a sense of being members of an up-coming group, of self-congratulation on being in on the wave of the future.

As the song progresses, the case sets the stage for the following scene — the village Capernaum. Here it has the feeling of a "work song.")

[THE CALL]

Jesus (sings):

As he was walking along the sea,
the sea of Galilee,
he saw two fishermen cast their net
to see what they could get.

(Jesus mimes the call of Peter and Andrew.)

Peter:

He singled Simon out by name;
his brother Andrew also came.
The Son had come to make his claim.

Jesus:

Come, Come and follow me.

(The three parade around until they come to James and John. Different styles of marching might be in order — such as the Yellow Brick Road walk from Wizard of Oz.)

Come follow me, I'll make of you fishers of men,
Come follow me, I'll lead you to serve.
Become the Rock, with keys to loose and bind.
Come serve the flock, come net the fish you find.

Jesus, Peter & Andrew:

Come follow me, I'll make of you fishers of men,
Come follow me, I'll make you my own.
Come follow me, and leave it all behind,
Come follow me, and see what's on my mind,

Come follow me,
Come follow me,
Come follow me.

James & John:

Then who'd he see by Galilee?
The sons of Zebedee.
They left their father's nets behind
To see what fish they'd find.

(Jesus mimes the calling of James and John).

One was James, and one was John.
They left the nets they labored on.
He simply called, and they were gone.

Jesus:

Come, come and follow me.

(Parade, as before.)

Come follow me, I'll make of you fishers of men,
Come follow me, and sit at my right.
You are the ones I call to come awake.
Become the sons of thunder from the lake.

Jesus, James & John:

Come follow me, I'll make of you fishers of men,
Come follow me, I'll make you my own.
Come follow me, and leave it all behind,
Come follow me, and see what's on my mind,

Come follow me,
Come follow me,
Come follow me.

Jesus:

As he returned to the sea once more
to walk along the shore,
where Levi's levy taxed the poor.
He called at Levi's door.

*(Levi could be the original Narrator. He is dressed in
blue denim, pants and jacket.)*

Levi:

He went to Levi's house to eat.
His followers were at his feet.
The Pharisees refused a seat.

Jesus:

Come, come and follow me.
Come follow me, I'll make you a witness to men;
Come follow me, but leave your accounts.
Come follow me, but bring along your pen,
Some day you'll be writing accounts for men.

All:

Come follow me, I'll make of you fishers of men,
Come follow me, I'll make you my own.
Come follow me, and leave it all behind,
Come follow me, and see what's on my mind,
Come follow me,
Come follow me,
Come follow me.

*(During the final choruses, Jesus escapes the center of
the celebration and moves to one side, watching it.
Eventually, the partying moves off, under the guidance of
Peter and others.*

*When the hoopla dies away, Jesus comes to the "desert,"
down stage right wind, isolated by spot. As the song
progresses he moves back into the stage center, which now
has become the village Capernaum.)*

[Desert, Reprise]

Narrator:

Jesus left for the desert once again,
in a spirit of prayer,
far from loud
clamoring crowds.

He went to the desert lost in prayer,
in the clear desert air.
He had hoped to find there
time and place to prepare,
in a spirit of prayer.

All (softly, in the background):

For this was a beginning, Lord,
a place for starting from.
We need our beginnings, Lord,
a taste of things to come.

Narrator:

Jesus went to a village and a town
then the cities around,
as he knew
he had to do.

He preached in the cities and the towns
and the villages, too.
And the countryside through,
all the multitude who
need to start life anew.

* * *

(ACT I)

Scene 2

(The village consists primarily of a synagogue, stage right, and a house, stage left, with a hill, up center. Other houses might be in evidence. A cantor, dressed in black hat and long black coat and wearing sidecurls, comes out of the synagogue and addresses the audience.)

[DEMON]

Cantor (chants):

He went into Capernaum
and went into the synagogue
and there he saw a man with an unclean spirit.

(Cantor leaves and two narrators — which could be townsfolk — take over the telling of the tale. Jesus acts out the account in, or in front of, the synagogue. Meanwhile, a scribe is seen to observe the proceedings from the side, and then leave quickly. The scribe is wearing glasses with mirrored lenses, like a CIA prototype.)

Narrator A:

He went into Capernaum
and went into the synagogue
and there he saw a man with an unclean spirit.

Narrator B:

Right inside the synagogue
He found the poor demoniac
and brought him back to health.

Voice One:

What's it all mean?

Crowd:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: *Trouble.*

Voice Three: *Trouble.*

Voice Four: *Trouble.*

Voice One:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: *Trouble.*

Voice Three: *Trouble.*

Voice Four: *Trouble.*

Narrator A:

He said to the demoniac:
Would you like your spirit back?
He said to the spirit: Demon, get out of him.

Narrator B.

The demon threw him in a fit,
And when he had enough of it,
He left him high, but left him.

Voice One:

What's it all mean?

Crowd:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: Trouble.

Voice Three: Trouble.

Voice Four: Trouble.

Voice One:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: Trouble.

Voice Three: Trouble.

Voice Four: Trouble.

Crowd:

Who is this man?
Why does he do the things he does?
He does what no one can.
He wanders ways, and wonders whys,
and wakes a world that never was.

Narrator A:

The crowd in great astonishment
saw the spirit's banishment
Saw the man released from his enthrallment;

Narrator B:

He teaches with authority,
it isn't like the Pharisee.
They wondered what the devil it all meant.

Voice One:

What's it all mean?

Crowd:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: Trouble.

Voice Three: Trouble.

Voice Four: Trouble.

Voice One:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: Trouble.

Voice Three: Trouble.

Voice Four: Trouble.

Crowd:

Who is this man?
Why does he do the things he does?
He does what no one can.
He wanders ways, and wonders whys,
and wakes a world that never was.

Narrator A:

He entered into Simon's house,
to treat the mother of Simon's spouse,
to lift her from her Sabbath fever,

Narrator B:

Prompted by another law
he healed poor Peter's mother-in-law,
Granted a favor, the fever to leave her.

Crowd:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be trouble.

Voice Two: Trouble.

Voice Three: Trouble.

Voice Four: Trouble.

Voice One:

I don't know but I'm sure it's gonna be

All:

Trou - ble.

Attention shifts to a stage side wing, where a young woman, reflects on the call.

[RUTH'S SONG]

Female disciple (sings):

Now the winter's done,
Rains have come and gone.
Flowers bloom across the earth
Dove repeats her song
Blooms the Rose of Sharon,
Lily of the field,
Apple tree among the trees
Forests have concealed

This is the garden of waking
This is a corner in space
Now the decision is taken
Forth from this moment of grace
Now I shall greet the promise
That full in the silence came
With Magdalen Mary and Thomas
Hearing you calling by name,
Hearing you calling by name.

Tell me whom you seek,
Calling by the lake,
Turning from the grief of sleep,
Urging dreams awake.
Look, the hour is morning
Here's the rise of day
All the world is poised to hear,
Heed the words you say

This is the garden of waking
This is a corner in space
Now the decision is taken
Forth from this moment of grace
Now I shall greet the promise
That full in the silence came
With Magdalen Mary and Thomas
Hearing you calling by name,
Hearing you calling by name.

We'll go where you go
Gather where you will lodge
I will make your people mine
Follow with your God

If your name be Sorrow
As my name be Ruth
We shall praise what may befall
Mutual in truth

This is the garden of waking
This is a corner in space
Now the decision is taken
Forth from this moment of grace
Now I shall greet the promise
That full in the silence came
With Magdalen Mary and Thomas
Hearing you calling by name,
Hearing you calling by name.

(A leper, wrapped in ragged robes appears on one side, outside of town, in the desert, isolated by the lighting. The following song involves just the leper and Jesus, until the very end of the song.)

[THE LEPER }

Leper:

The leper lived on the outskirts of town,
it's no place you'd call home.
He had no money and no silk gown,
he had no place to lay his head down,

Jesus:

Then Jesus came in the power of God.
The leper cried in need.
Jesus saw, and he gave a nod,
he has a feeling for the downtrod:

Leper:

If you will do it, you can cure me.
See my burden, see my need.
Help me, love me, reassure me.

Jesus:

Yes I will. Be cured, be freed.

The sickness left and the man was cured,
but Jesus strictly warned:
Go off now, and not a word!

Leper:

The man went off,

and forgot what he'd heard ...

Jesus:

so Jesus lived on the outskirts of town,
in desert wastes alone.
He helps you lay your burden down,
he'll even take it on his own —

Chorus:

If you will do it, you can cure me.
See my burden, see my need.
Help me, love me, reassure me.

Jesus:

Yes I will. Be cured, be freed.
Yes I will. Be cured, be freed.

(One of the narrator comes out, with a guitar, and recites the following song in Talking Blues style. Meanwhile, Jesus and the townsfolk act out the story. A department store mannequin can serve as the paralytic, to be lifted in over the crowd. Later, someone dressed like, and looking exactly like, the dummy comes out of the crowd walking very loosely. During the proceedings, two "Scribes" are seen to observe briefly from across the stage.)

[THE PARALYTIC WALKING TALKING BLUES]

Narrator:

When Jesus went back to the house once more
the people just jammed in around the door,
a-craning and a-straining to be sure they heard
what he had to say about the Holy Word.

Stretching their necks,
elbowing each other,
looking over the other guy's shoulder.

A commotion occurred in the back of the crowd
then the noise on the roof got especially loud
and out of the ceiling materialized
a bed — with a person who was paralyzed.

He was completely stiff,
rigid,
absolutely uptight.

Seeing their faith, Jesus asked that one:
What can be your trouble, my son?

relax, God loves you, despite your sin,
so loosen up a little from the state you're in.
Don't be frightened.
You are forgiven.
You're allowed to be freed up ... some.

At this, certain scribes began to balk.
How can we allow this kind of talk?
It seems they understood him to say
that he's the one who took sins away.
And that's blasphemy.
Only God can forgive sins.
Who does this guy think he is?

Well, if that's the way you're gonna be,
I'll show you that the Son has authority.
Get up, go home. And take that bed.
The man got up and the whole crowd said:

Crowd:

We've never seen anything like this before!

*(The following song moves between the center and the
synagogue, where a scene takes place before three silent
Scribes. They clearly oppose what Jesus is doing. Toward
the end of the song they huddle briefly and then depart.)*

[ON A SABBATH DAY]

Disciple:
On a Sabbath day passing by a field of wheat,
Jesus' followers
gathered off some grains to eat.
Some standing by
disapproved what they saw:

(Scribes mouth the following as it is sung)

This isn't what is written in the law.
Jesus:
Jesus turned aside,
looked at them, and then he said:
Think what David did
how he ate the temple bread.
Sometimes the Law's
something better to break.
We were not fashioned for the Sabbath's sake.

Disciple:

In a synagogue,
someone with a withered hand;
that same afternoon
Jesus kept his new command.

Jesus:

What says the law,
to do good or do harm?
Stretch out your hand, and I'll restore your arm.

All:

Freedom is a gift.
Freedom is an attitude.
We can all be free;
Sing a song of gratitude.

*(During the next stanza Scribe brings out a "Jesus
Wanted" poster, apparently to post in the vicinity. The
disciple singing steals it to show to the others, and the
audience.)*

Disciple:

Freedom has a cost,
it must also be said.
He crossed them, now a price is placed upon his head.
Wanted: Dead!

Disciple:

I told you so,
I said there's gonna be
Trouble.

Voice Two:

Trouble.

Voice Three:

Trouble.

Voice Four:

Trouble.

* * *

(ACT I)

Scene 3

First Disciple (Spoken):

Look at this! What's going on?

Second Disciple:

What have we done? Help some people? Is that so bad?

Jesus:

Let's see that.

(Takes the poster and looks it over briefly.)

Gather the others!

First Disciple (to others):

Meeting. Now.

Others:

What's up? What's wrong?

Second Disciple:

The heat's on. The Scribes are getting rough. They've decided that he's an outlaw.

Third Disciple:

Because he says that sometimes it's better to break the law?

Second Disciple:

And we're the out-castes.

Third Disciple:

This is intolerable! They're treating us like we were lepers.

Former Leper:

Maybe some of us are.

First Disciple:

Oh, I don't mean that. It's just that they act like we were social revolutionaries. Marxists, or something.

Second Disciple:

We are!
I'm Groucho.

(Puts on a false nose and glasses. Cheers. What threatened to be an intolerably heavy tone instantly lightens, as story time begins.)

[SEEDS]

(The following song is recited to background music by the lead singer, in the Rap manner. These lines may be answered by a chorus chant by the others on stage: "Thus the Kingdom of God is." However, the response is optional.

Jesus:

Jesus had a point to make *(Others: Thus the Kingdom of God is.)*
and so he stopped beside the lake. *(Thus the Kingdom of God is)*
The people sat along the shore. *(Thus the Kingdom of God is)*
He told them this and a whole lot more. *(Thus the Kingdom of God is)*

(Jesus hands his hat to the first narrator. The disciple with the false nose and glasses puts on reflecting lenses over them, to represent the scribes in acting out the following story. Different disciples take on the parts of the different "soils.," The narrator is the farmer.

In the first part, the disciple accepts the word. In the manner of a melodrama, others flash placards which read THE SEED IS THE WORD, and GOOD NEWS. But then the scribe swoops in and whispers to the disciple, who respond wide-eyed, and rejects Jesus. A placard proclaims: SATAN TAKES AWAY THE WORD.)

First Narrator:

Think of a farmer planting seed.
He planted barley and he planted wheat.
His arm grew wearier the more he sowed.
The birds ate whatever fell by the road.

(In the next episode, another disciple — Peter — receives the word, then is threatened by the scribe, and

*rejects Jesus. Placards say: FOLDS UNDER PRESSURE,
and THIS IS A WARNING!)*

The day grew longer with his toil,
he let some fall on shallow soil.
They withered up when they were only shoots,
they had no place to sink their roots.

*(In the following episode, the scribe pays off a third
disciple — Judas — and that disciple rejects Jesus. Placard
reads: RICHES CHOKE THE WORD.)*

When the farmer was tired and worn
he let some fall among the thorn.
The thorn choked off the tender grain,
and soon only the thorn remain.

*(In the final episode, everyone "sprouts" branches and
twigs, and wave them while singing.)*

But some seed fell on the fertile field
and O! how wonderful the yield.
Thirty, sixty, one hundred fold.
And that's the first tale Jesus told.

*(during this and the following chorus there is a
celebrational swirl of group activity. Everyone moves
around, to settle in place for the next story.)*

All:

Thus the Kingdom of God is.
Thus the Kingdom of God is.
Thus the Kingdom of God is.
Thus the Kingdom of
God is.

*(Another disciple, a woman, takes the hat and acts as
narrator/farmer. While telling this parable she makes a tree
out of a newspaper.)*

Second Narrator:

Another instance Jesus told,
the crop a second farmer sowed.
At the proper time she plants the ground,
then goes about her daily round.

(Thunder and lightning. Swaying together, as if in a boat on rough seas, the disciples become alarmed while Jesus rests. Or perhaps one of the disciples, obviously not one of the fishermen, gets sick. Jesus is awakened by the group, and he makes a calming gesture over the sea. The entire universe becomes serene, with gentle lighting and therapeutic music.)

Jesus and the disciples arrive at a shore, and step out on the land. A man — a synagogue official — comes up to address them.)

[DAUGHTER, DAUGHTER]

Jesus:

Took a ride
to the other side

Official:

A synagogue official came
and passionately cried:
My daughter's very ill,
please come that she may live.

Disciples:

Jesus went off with him,
with the power of life to give.

(While they are moving toward the house, a woman comes up behind Jesus, hesitantly touching his clothing, though unseen by him.)

Woman:

I believe
if I touch his sleeve ...

Jesus:

She at once was healed
although he felt the power leave.

(Jesus turns and looks, having felt the encounter.)

She came forward then
and fell upon her knees.
Daughter, go in peace now,
and be free of this disease.

All:

Twelve years over, her new life has begun.
Her money was spent, her body worn.
Daughter, Daughter, see what faith has done.
Father, thanks be to your son
we are reborn.

(Jesus and the party arrive at the house.)

Bystander:
People said:
Your daughter's dead.

Jesus:

Jesus said there's fear enough,
let's have some faith instead.
He took her hand in his
to say, TALITHA KOUM.
Little girl, get up
and take a walk around the room.

All:

Twelve years old, and her new life has begun.
Why do the people weep and mourn?
Daughter, daughter, see what faith has done.
Father, thanks be to your Son we are reborn.

First Narrator (spoken):

He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him.

(The party moves to the synagogue.)

And on the Sabbath he began to teach them in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this...? Is he not the carpenter...?"

{NAZARETH}

Second Narrator (sung):

Went down into Nazareth,
went into the synagogue;
found his hometown people no longer love him.

Some trouble with the family,
neighbors were not neighborly,

just nonplused at what they might make of him.

Disciple One:

We don't know, but we think there's gonna be trouble.

Disciple Two:

Trouble.

Disciple Three:

Trouble.

Disciple Four:

Trouble.

Disciple One:

We don't know, but we think there's gonna be trouble.

Disciple Two:

Trouble.

Disciple Three:

Trouble.

Disciple Four:

Trouble.

Neighbors:

We know this man!
Isn't he Joseph and Mary's son?
Why does he think he can
when no one else has tried to do
what no one else has ever done?

Second Narrator:

e scarcely spoke a word before
they closed and double-locked the door,
to make it very clear he was rejected.

Since they threw out the seed he sowed,
he took his movement on the road,
to knock on doors where he was less expected.

* * *

(ACT I)

Scene 4

Narrator (spoken):

And he called to him the Twelve,
and began to send them out two by two.,

(They leave briefly, to get their things.)

And he charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff —

Jesus (spoken):

No bread.

(They put aside a huge picnic basket.)

No bag

(They put away garment bags and fancy luggage.)

Do not put on two tunics.

(They get rid of their three-piece suits. Etc.)

No money in your belts.

(Credit cards are surrendered)

(The disciples leave in pairs, going on a mission to other villages. They may leave through the audience. Jesus leaves at the side of the stage.)

AFTER THE DISCIPLES ,march out, and before the dance begins, this little dialogue among the narrators, to explain the following "dream".)

Narrator One:

King Herod heard about these goings on,
for Jesus' name by now was widely known.

Narrator Two :

Some of the people said: John the Baptizer

must have been raised up from the dead;
it is death's dominion working through him.

Narrator One:

Others, none the wiser, preferred to hold
an alternative opinion.
They claimed it was Elijah.

Narrator Two :

Still other seemed to think they saw
a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.

Narrator One:

But when King Herod heard it,
he is reported to have said
"John, whom I beheaded,
is raised up from the dead."

Narrator Two :

For Herod, you see, had jailed John
for daring to speak out against the king's marriage
to his brother's wife, Herodias.
She had a daughter named Salome.

Narrator One:

And one day, Salome danced for Herod's guests ...

[OPTION I: DEATH OF THE BAPTIST]

[DANCE;]

(The dance contains eight musical sequences, comprised of six themes. The first theme, which is also the last in the sequence, is the march-like "Mission" theme. This marks the departure and return of the disciples. The second theme, which is also the second-last theme, is the "Flashback" which transfers us into the story-time of Salome and John's Death — and back out again.

The intervening themes are: (3) Salome's Dance; (4) John's Death; (5) Salome's Triumphant Return, with John's

head on a platter; (6) the Funeral theme, in which John's body is carried out in solemn procession.)

[OPTION II: DEATH OF THE BAPTIST]
[DIALOGUE SEQUENCE]

(While the disciples are away on their mission, the following dialogue takes place, with two pairs of disciples, one pair on each side of the stage:)

(Stage left:)

First Disciple:

Well, this is discouraging.
Time to shake our sandals at another village.

Second Disciple:

Did you see how quickly the doors slammed shut?

First Disciple:

After they grabbed the children, and pulled them indoors.

Second Disciple:

The fear in their eyes!

First Disciple:

Herod has them frightened!
Everyone has their guard up.

Second Disciple:

I say it's John's fault!

(Stage right:)

Third Disciple:

That wild man! That Baptist!
He couldn't keep his mouth closed!

Fourth Disciple:

He calls himself "The Voice."

Third Disciple:

The bullhorn, I'd say,
Roaring like a wounded bear.
Sniffing out sin here, corruption there.
It's just not a smart thing to criticize royalty.

Fourth Disciple:

At least not to their faces.
Now we all have to pay the piper.
But still, I blame Herod's wife.

(Stage Left:)

First Disciple:

She hated John!

Second Disciple:

She wanted him dead.

First Disciple:

She wanted his head.

Second Disciple:

On a platter! She got it, too.

(Stage right:)

Third Disciple:

Salome was at fault!

Fourth Disciple:

She's just a kid.

Third Disciple:

Oh, but her dancing! Lascivious!
You can't tell me she didn't know what she was doing.

Herod was like a string around her little finger.
She had *him* dancing — like a yo-yo.

Fourth Disciple:

Well, it's true they say he offered her half of his kingdom.
But Salome, a gold differ? C'mon.

(Stage Left:)

First Disciple:

Salome is just a kid!
Herod is to blame! He's paranoid.
And now I hear that he thinks Jesus is John,
risen up from the dead again.

Second Disciple:

That's not good for us.

First Disciple:

Not at all.
And Jesus better not attract too much attention.

Second Disciple:

Look. There's a door opening.
Maybe this village will be friendlier than the last.

*On the return of the disciples there is a general hubbub,
not unlike a sales promotional meeting, as the various
emissaries report in. The following spoken dialogue ensues.*

First Disciple:

I wish to announce ten villages saved! *(Cheers)*

Jesus:

Well done, good and faithful servant.

Second Disciple:

I wish to announce five villages saved! *(Cheers.)*

Jesus:

You too are a good and faithful servant. Well done.

Third Disciple:

I wish to announce one village saved.

First Disciple :

One village?

Third Disciple:

Well, actually one person.

Jesus:

One person?

(Jesus paces, then repeats:)

Jesus:

One person?

(After thinking about it, Jesus smiles and turns to the third disciple with a welcome.)

Jesus:

Welcome good and faithful servant. Well done.

[THE DEAFMUTE]

(Much turmoil and commotion. General indignation. In the midst of all this, the deafmute comes on stage, preferably opposite the place of general activity. Immediately there is total silence, as if someone had turned off the volume knob of a TV set. This might be facilitated with a music cue.

The deafmute is in a silent world of his own. He emanates silence. When he comes on stage, the group around Jesus immediately turns toward his silence, as if it were the sound of shouting. Jesus goes over, curious. Jesus and the deafmute mime the cure. This would involve Jesus

spitting on his hands rubbing them, and touching the eyes and mouth of the deafmute. Jesus is seen to try some speech with him, that cannot be heard. Suddenly the sound goes on again, with the following dialogue.)

Jesus:

I said, can you hear me.

Deafmute:

What? Yes! Yes!! I can hear you!

(General acclamation. Music starts up for the next song. The crowd presses in around Jesus and his friends, so that all we can see are the backs of the circle of enthusiastic onlookers. Jesus and his disciples sneak out of the circle unnoticed, and hide in a spot across the stage. Having discovered their absence, the crowd looks up, looks around, and dashes off stage in presumed pursuit of their quarry. Jesus and disciples emerge cautiously, for the next song.)

First Disciple:

Are they gone?

Second Disciple:

I think so. For the moment, anyway.

First Disciple:

This is exciting and stimulating and rewarding and everything I was hoping it would be. But once in awhile I think about the old days, fishing on the lake. Now THAT was solitude.

Second Disciple:

Yes. The egg-blue sky glowing in the firmament, and the green pastel hills of Galilee rimming the harp-shaped lake, like water in a bowl.

First Disciple:

And solitude.

Second Disciple:

Yes. And the white towns like a child's toy blocks baking in the distance
beneath the beating sun.

First Disciple:

In the utter stillness of solitude.

Second Disciple:

Yes. When he said we'd be fishers of men, I didn't know we'd be such LUCKY
fishermen. Maybe we should throw the little ones back.

Jesus (behind them):

I think we need a holiday.

[THE LOAVES]

*(Before — and during — the following song, the
disciples come with Jesus to a secluded place. A red neon
"EAT" sign is seen off in a back corner of the stage. The
party goes off stage in that direction. Immediately some of
the crowd sneak in from the far side of the stage, tracing the
Jesus party to the eating place. At the urging of some of his
disciples, Jesus comes back out, and sees the vast crowd, as
represented by the theatre audience.)*

Jesus (sings):

The Twelve were getting weary,
the crowds and problems pressed.
Let's go apart for supper,
I know a place to rest.

Crowd Member:

The people guessed.

First Disciple:

God's people in a desert.
They needed to be led.
Like sheep without a shepherd
they needed to be fed,
they needed bread.

Second Disciple:

There were only some fishes,
some loaves of bread to eat.
In fifties and in hundreds,

in groups they took a seat,
like fields of wheat, when

Jesus:

He took the loaves,
blessed them and broke them
and shared them out
through his disciples.

With fish and bread
he fed the people.
They ate till they were filled.

All:

They ate till they were filled.

(During this time, "loaves" are handed out by the members of the cast. If desirable, the distribution can be extended to the theater audience. After all, there is only one more song till intermission.)

First Disciple:

They gathered up the dishes;
the blessing overflows.
With several full of fishes,
and twelve, leftover loaves,
left of those, when

All:

He took the loaves,
blessed them and broke them
and shared them out
through his disciples.

With fish and bread
he fed the people.
They ate till they were filled,
they ate till they were filled.

(Jesus and the disciples prepare to leave, which they do by boat. They are seen to depart on the OTHER side of the hill in center stage. They leave in the direction opposite the eating place, moving with the waves, as in the earlier storm sequence.)

OPTIONAL VERSE:

Second Disciple:

God's people crossed the water,
The Lord had led them through.

First Disciple:

When Jesus crossed the water,
the Twelve, they wondered who.
You thought they knew, when

(The crowd stands on, and alongside, the hill, staring off in the direction taken by the departing disciples. They seem to be happy villagers, staring into the sunset, singing contentedly.)

He took the loaves,
blessed them and broke them
and shared them out
through his disciples.

With fish and bread
he fed the people.
They ate till they were filled,
they ate till they were filled.

(After the song is finished, the villagers disperse, and then the "boat" is seen to come across the front of the stage, but without Jesus. They are having a hard time of it. The music is that of the next song. Then, calmly and smoothly, Jesus is seen walking from the other side, as if on a conveyer belt. A disciple sees him coming and points the "apparition" out to the rest. Peter climbs out and walks to meet Jesus, but realizing he is on water, he sinks. Jesus pulls him out, and they make it back to the boat. Meanwhile, they begin singing:)

[HE IS THE MESSIAH]

Peter:

When the twelve disciples were in the boat,
Jesus walked the water (and Matthew wrote
that Peter went to meet him, but didn't float);
many happenings, but what's the meaning?

Jesus:

Don't you know the sunrises in the east?
Peter is the Rock, yet he rose, at least.
The Pharisees and Herod, beware their yeast!
Many homilies, but what's the meaning?

(The disciples, who are still munching of some of the bread of the previous episode, hold it out and stare at it in bewilderment.)

They thought that he was discussing bread:
Didn't you listen to what I said?
Why can't you get it into your head?
are you still without some understanding?

(An instrumental stanza — while a blind man emerges on stage at the same spot the deafmute appeared previously. This should strongly suggest the earlier cure, and if feasible might be the same character as the deafmute, only with a new problem, indicated perhaps by prominent dark glasses. Jesus, frustrated in his attempt to communicate with the disciples, sees the possibility of illustrating his point with a cure. He goes over to the blind man and repeats the action of the deafmute, this time for regaining sight. On the instant the cure takes place, a strobe light comes on, suggesting the partial vision.)

Jesus:

Jesus saw a blind man in misery.
He moisturized his eyelids: What can you see?

Blind Man:

I see somebody walking, but like tree.

Jesus:

Do you only partly understand me?

(On the second try, the strobe light goes off — full vision.)

Jesus:

Jesus had no problem with second tries,
and so he did it over, and touched his eyes.

Blind Man:

Now he saw with clearness (and much surprise).

Now the blind at least can see some meaning.

(The blind man departs, rejoicing.)

Disciples:

Although the Twelve seemed somewhat slow,
And there was much they didn't know,
A little meaning began to grow,
Soon there's got to be some understanding.

*(Deciding to try another approach, Jesus turns back to
he disciples.)*

Jesus:

How do other people suggest I came?

Disciples:

Elijah, John the Baptist, or some such name.

Jesus:

But what do my disciples believe I claim?

Peter:

Up jumped Peter, for he saw the meaning:

(Peter:)

You are the Messiah!
Peter replied.
The long hoped-for Messiah
God would provide!

Jesus:

Yes, but now I die,
and when I have died,
I will rise from death
on that other side!

Peter:

Peter said to Jesus: You can't mean that!
I'd kind of like to be an aristocrat.

Jesus:

Jesus said to Peter; That's where I'm at,
So if you'd follow me you'd better work it through!

(Music continues while the players leave the stage.)

[END OF ACT I]

...

Other Disciples:

Elijah, John the Baptist,
they say you came.
Elijah, John the Baptist,
or some such name.

Other Disciples:

Elijah, John the Baptist,
is all you claim.
Elijah, John the Baptist,
it's all the same.

ACT II

Scene I

(The second act is entirely focused upon the capital city, Jerusalem. In this first scene, Jesus and the disciples are moving toward the city, with a sense of great things to happen there. There is, however, a dispute between the disciples and Jesus as to the character of those great things. Upon arrival in the city, Jesus enters into a confrontation with the religious leaders in the temple, first by action, then by dispute./ The Jerusalem segment concludes with his death and the promise of new life.)

The second act opens on a stage which is empty except for a hill, and the tree, the latter of which Jesus is dismantling to make a rough-hewn "processional cross." Three of the other disciples are watching him, with varying kinds of conflicting emotions. They are carrying backpacks, or other paraphernalia for traveling. Jesus is humming or whistling while he works — a tune which is eventually recognized to be the first song in this part.)

[ON THE ROAD]

Jesus (sings):

If you would be my followers,

then come and follow me.
Take your cross, your weary load,
and follow me that narrow road
to see Jerusalem with me.

Peter:

Jesus said he had to die.
Peter didn't understand.
He took Jesus to one side
and there he earnestly denied
what Jesus said his Father had planned,
and all that it implied.

Jesus:

Jesus looked upon his own
and then aloud to Peter said:
The only ways you know are man's
You know nothing about God's plans.
Who will you follow when I'm dead?
Will you follow someone else, instead?

If you would be my follower,
then come and follow me.
Take you cross, your weary load,
and follow me that narrow road
to see Jerusalem with me.

[TRANSFIGURATION]

Narrator:

Six days later,
Jesus took Peter, James and John
and led them up a mountain,
with none other,
altogether all alone.
They noticed how his outfit shone.

*(Jesus stands alone on top the "hill," while the three
disciples gather around below. As his clothing shines, he is
joined by two figures representing Moses and Elijah,
played by players with hand-held masks, popping up from
behind.)*

Then came Elijah, walking with Moses.
They were together, talking to Jesus.
Peter decided —

Peter:

Lord, it's good for us to be here.
Let us pitch some tents here for you, one apiece for each of you,
for Jesus,
for Moses,
and Elijah!

Narrator:

Then a shadow,
then a voice came from the cloud.
It scared, it terrified them.
(Mimicking the solemn voice:)
Hear his teaching,
He is my beloved son.

(Moses and Elijah disappear in a cloud of smoke.)

Narrator;

Then Jesus was the only one.

(As they are coming down the mountain, one of the disciples observes a Scribe who has been watching them. The disciple is startled, a reaction which is not alleviated when the Scribe slips out as soon as he discovers he is noticed. shaken, the disciple [that one who was earlier cured of the withered hand], sings the following song to his fellow travelers.)

[WHERE ARE WE GOING?]

First Disciple:

Where are we going?

(He turns to a second disciple.)

Where does this road end?

Second Disciple:

I'm not too much for knowing too much, my friend.

First Disciple:

Don't you see that he's leading us down
the primrose path?
Don't you care that there's blood to be found
in the after math?

(Seeing that he's not going to get much of a response from this disciple, the singer turns to another.)

Where are we going
Where does this way lead?

Third Disciple:

Don't you know that we're going to sow the seed?

First Disciple:

Now he's walking a narrow road
with his head in the sky;
all he knows are the things he's told
by that voice on high/

(Frustrated, the singer turns back to the disciple first addressed.)

Where are we going?
Where does this path wind?

Second Disciple:

You keep slowing us down, you'll be left behind.

First Disciple:

Is he blind, or even half-aware,
that this road is treacherous?
Is he giving even half a care
about the rest of us?

(The troubled disciple addresses the world in general.)

Where are we going?
Who's in charge, if any one?
What are we doing?
Say it, before it's done!

(Since the questioner is ignored, the final series of questions and demands becomes rhetorical in thrust. Jesus and the tree come down, and the other disciples catch up with them. Jesus motions for them to follow and he walks off. Two of the three follow, while one stays behind for the following spoken interchange. The first, second, and third disciples in the next song are, of course, different from those in the previous.)

First Disciple (spoken):

Oh, *there* you are. (*To the others.*) Look who's back.

Second Disciple:

I believe it is the elect themselves. Well, while you were having your picnic on the mountain, we were having to do some work.

First Disciple:

No end of difficulties. Some worry father showed up and wanted "the disciples of Jesus" to rid his poor boy of the conniptions.

A Third Disciple:

The kid was a mess. He kept tipping over. First, whoops, into the water. Haul him out of that, pat him dry, and then, Whoops,. into the fire. Haul him out and anoint his burns, and watch it, there he goes again.

First Disciple:

It was disgusting.

Second Disciple:

We tried everything. Even prayer. Of course, nothing worked. And where were you? At a party.

Third Disciple:

To make matters worse, we found some impostor — whom we've never seen before — casting our demons (*solemnly*) "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

First Disciple:

Worse yet, It worked for him. Made us look like fools. Of course, we put a stop to it.

Second Disciple:

And where were you, the prize pupils? Off for special lessons? Some of us don't get particular treatment — just the dirty work.

One of the Disciples Abused By All This:

Hey, is it my fault he likes us? Take it up with him.

Second Disciple:

We will, you can be sure.

First Disciple:

When we get to Jerusalem.

Second Disciple:

Then we'll see who's first and who's last.

(They rush off to join Jesus. The scene changes, and the party enters a village. The buildings, reminiscent of "Capernaum," are arranged around the periphery of the stage. The stage area is seen to be sort of a town square. This village area will be the setting for the next two songs and part of the third.)

[ON THE ROAD, II]

Narrator (sings):

He taught his disciples then
as they came toward another town.

Jesus:

soon enough the time will come
when the Chosen One in the hands of some
is given up to follow death down,
but three days rise again.

Narrator:

Though they failed to understand
Yet they feared to question him.
At the house he turned to say:
What was your concern on the way
But they were silent, one confessed
they argued over which was best.

Jesus:

If you would be my follower,
then come and follow me.
Take your cross, your weary load,
and follow me that narrow road
to see Jerusalem with me.

(The next song is a "village" scene. We are treated to a scenario of happy villagers, who welcome strangers. They are going about their various trades. In one part some children are playing. Jesus moves toward the children, watching them, as the previous song concludes. The villagers look on, beaming. As the next song begins, Jesus takes a child on his knee. Various people from the town come forward for the subsequent scenes. Jesus interacts with them, and the disciples react.)

[LAST AND FIRST]

Jesus:

The last shall be first
and the first shall be last, and servant.
The servant has come,
and the servant has come to serve.

So give to the poor
and forgive all the underserv-ed.
The mighty shall fall
and the small shall receive what they deserve.

He took a little child in his arms. (Yeah)
You welcome him, you welcome me. (Yeah)
But if you do this child harm, (Yeah)
you're better off with a millstone in the sea. (Yeah)

(The music is interrupted for the following dialogue.)

First Disciple (spoken):

Hey, you kids. Clear out. Don't bother the important man.

Second Disciple:

We're off to the big city, to rearrange the government. This isn't the children's hour.

Jesus:

Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God.

(Cheers among the villagers, and everyone joins in dancing and singing.)

All:

The last shall be first
and the first shall be last, and servant.
The servant has come,
and the servant has come to serve.

So give to the poor
and forgive all the underserv-ed.
The mighty shall fall
and the small shall receive what they deserve.

(A Scribe, not entirely happy with the wholehearted welcome delivered by the village, comes forward.)

Scribe:

He came across a shred Pharisee,
who had a problem with divorce.
The policy's monogamy;
equality will be the matter of course.

(Another dialogue interrupts the song:)

Scribe (spoken):

Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

A Husband:

Moses permitted it, you know.

Jesus:

For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. You do not permit your wives to divorce their husbands; neither should you husbands divorce your wives.

(The women cheer, and the singing and dancing begin again.)

All:

The last shall be first
and the first shall be last, and servant.
The servant has come,

and the servant has come to serve.

So give to the poor
and forgive all the underserv-ed.
The mighty shall fall
and the small shall receive what they deserve.

*(The Rich Young Man comes forward, and addresses
Jesus.)*

Rich Man:

The young man's concern: he was rich.

Jesus:

To share in life, keep God's commands.

Rich Man:

Keep God's commands? OK. But which?

Jesus:

Give away all your money and your lands.

*(The Rich Man leaves, saddened. Peter and the disciples
break into the song with the following dialogue.)*

Peter (spoken):

Hold it. Hold it. Let's not be so strict about it. If you don't relax your standards a bit we won't get anybody to sign up.

Another Disciple:

Yeah. We could've used his financial structure.

Jesus:

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

*(Jesus' disciples cluster in conference, amazed. They
respond to this revelation in song:)*

Disciples (sing):

His followers, the Twelve, they were stunned.
What of our gardens and our gold?
We've left our families and our funds.

Jesus:

Then you will be returned one hundred fold.

(The disciples and the villagers join in a general celebration, dancing and singing.)

All:

The last shall be first
and the first shall be last, and servant.
The servant has come,
and the servant has come to serve.

So give to the poor
and forgive all the underserv-ed.
The mighty shall fall
and the small shall receive what they deserve.

(James and John are seen conversing.)

John:

Is this Jerusalem?

James:

This one-donkey town the capital? Of course not. Sometimes I think you've lived on that boat too long. Everybody knows this is ...

(Notices a sign.)

Jericho.

John:

I can read too.

(Reads carefully.)

"Jericho. The town that made Joshua famous. Noise ordinance enforced. No blowing of horns. No leaning on walls."

[ON THE ROAD III]

James:

Zebedee's sons, James and John,
came to him with their request.
they asked him, aside, alone:

John:

Master, may we have a throne,
one on your right and one on your left,
when you come in your own?

Jesus:

Jesus answered them aloud:
What you ask you do not know.
Can you drink the cup I take?
Take the journey that I must make?
And follow down the truth I live?
for honors are not mine to give.

All:

If you would be my follower,
then come and follow me.
Take your cross, your weary load,
and follow me that narrow road
to see Jerusalem with me.

(The previous chorus is the signal to get back on the road. As they pick up their packs, etc., Jesus issues the departing word.)

Jesus:

Jesus called the Twelve apart,
and said: The greatest must be small.
You who want to be the best, well, you must learn to serve the rest.
The Servant's come to free and ransom all;
to undergo the test.

(A blind beggar, at the exit gate of the city has been attentive to all this. He is the equivalent of a "street person," and might be dressed as such. Perhaps he wears dark glasses and plays a clarinet. As the Jesus party leaves the town, the beggar calls out. Jesus' disciples and various townsfolk try to silence him.)

Blind Bartimaeus:

Coming out of Jericho
they heard the blind Bartimaeus:
Son of David, pity me!

Son of David, that I may see!

Jesus:

The people tried to keep him still,
But Jesus turned and said: I will.

(As the company sings the following line, Jesus touches the blind man, who rises from his place and begins to follow Jesus.)

All:

And the blind man rose and followed him down the road.

(This scene ends with Jesus leading the blind man and the others off toward one side of the stage., The disciple who doubts the wisdom of this journey hangs back, and repeats the song he sang after the Transfiguration. From opposite sides of the stage this disciple and Jesus sing together:)

Jesus:

If you would be my follower,
then come and follow me.

Take your cross,
your weary load,
and follow me
that narrow road
to see
Jerusalem with me.

I'll rise again in three.

Questioning Disciple:

Where are we going?
Where will the road lead?
Where are we going?
Where are we going?

[INSTRUMENTAL INTERLUDE]

(The instrumental interlude provides the transition to the next segment — arrival and entrance into the city. Toward the end of the interlude, the party reaches a hill from which the Holy City is visible for the first time, in the near distance. This is a sight that never fails to affect the traveler, no matter how jaded and experienced. It summons up all the wild dreams and hopes for which Jerusalem is the symbol. For a moment the party freezes in an attitude of awe.)

* * *

ACT II

Scene 2

(During the following song Jesus and his friends enter the city of Jerusalem. They enter from the front of the stage, to one side. This spot, marked by a large funerary urn, becomes a second focal place of interest during this scene. The song begins quietly, builds to the triumphal march in the middle, and closes quietly and thoughtfully.)

[HOZANNA]

Jesus:

And then as Bethany came into sight,
he knew Jerusalem couldn't be far.

(He sends two of the disciples ahead.)

He sent two disciples to town:
Find there a colt no one's ridden.

Come and bring it back.
if someone should ask
Why do you do that?
Simply tell them:
Blessed is he who comes.

(They begin to move across the stage.)

Disciples:

Blessed is he who comes,

Comes in the name of the Lord.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

(A crowd carrying branches comes to meet them. A grand parade develops, with confetti and the like, with Jesus in the rear. The people are waving palm branches, which can be the same branches which were removed from the tree at the start of this act. The disciples who were sent ahead bring in a boggy horse head, which Jesus sticks on the end of his staff, to simulate riding a donkey.)

Crowd:

Hozanna in the highest.
Hozanna in the highest.
Hozanna in the highest.

First Disciple:

It seems a multitude stood by the road.
The people spread out their coats on the ground.

Second disciple:

And others cut reeds from the fields,
Took them and spread them before him.

First Disciple:

Those who went in front,
those who came behind,
those who followed him,
they were calling:

Crowd:

Blessed is he who comes,	Hozanna.
Blessed is he who comes,	Hozanna.
comes in the name of the Lord.	Hozanna.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.	

Hozanna in the highest.	Hozanna.
Hozanna in the highest.	Hozanna.
Hozanna in the highest.	

(The parade enters the city. That is, they leave the stage front area by one wing, and return by another to the main stage, which is now revealed to be the city. Dominating the rear stage area is the temple gate, facing the audience, with guards stationed across it, clocking the way. The guards are

holding dowels, or broomsticks, like rifles, crosswise in front of them as a barrier.)

Blessed will be the reign,	Hozanna.
Blessed will be the reign,	Hozanna.
Reign of the King to come,	Hozanna.
Blessed will be the reign of the King to come.	

Hozanna in the highest.	Hozanna.
Hozanna in the highest.	Hozanna.
Hozanna in the highest.	

The parade falters and disintegrates at the temple gate, as the crowd loses its nerve before the guards. Jesus continues right up to the gate, where he "looks over all."

Second Disciples:

Into the city
of David they came,
and to the temple
he went straight-away.

But since it already was evening,
he looked to the Twelve,
ready to return,
Bethany tonight.
They remembered:

Others:

Trouble,
trouble,
trouble,
trouble.

Trouble,
trouble.

(Signaling the disciples, Jesus and friends put up a brave front by continuing the parade back the way they came, pretending not to be disillusioned. As the festivities wind down, the people put the palm branches in the urn, to make a tree like a hotel lobby palm. As the disciples leave the temple area with Jesus, evening descends. The final wail is heard in almost total darkness.

Crowd:

Blessed is he who comes,	Trouble.
--------------------------	----------

Blessed is he who comes,
comes in the name of the Lord. Trouble.
Blessed is he who comes Trouble.
in the name of the Lord.

Hozanna in the highest. Trouble.
Hozanna in the highest. Trouble.
Hozanna in the highest.

Wailing Voice (offstage):

Trou — ou — ble.

(A pause — and then the light comes up on the same temple gate, now seen from the inside. We see the backs of the guards as they look out. In front of us the temple business is going forward. there are officials selling offerings at tables, with queues where worshipers are waiting to buy. Posted signs list and proclaim "TEMPLE RESTRICTIONS," "FINES," "FEES," "AUTHORIZED OFFERINGS," "PREFERRED OFFERINGS," and "KEEP OUT." And similar sentiments. Some within the temple area are wearing monks' hoods. At the side, where previously the urn was situated, the "fig tree" stands.)

[TREES: There are two — the fig tree is the second. The mustard seed tree, fashioned into Jesus' staff, represents the Kingdom of god which Jesus proclaims. The "kingdom tree" is now complemented by the fig tree, which represents the Temple. together, the trees represent the two sides of the conflict, and can be given contrasting colors, such as blue and orange.]

[THE TEMPLE]

Narrator:

That next day when they left Bethany,
walking toward the city he felt hungry.

(Jesus and Peter and one or two others enter past the fig tree. They are wearing hoods, with the cowls down.)

Quite a long way off he saw the fig tree thick with leaves,
yet it had no fruit for him to eat.

Jesus:

Nevermore shall people eat your harvest,

nevermore shall you provide their food.

(As Jesus curses the fig tree, a cloud seems to pass over the temple area. Those in the temple look up or about with alarm.

After this, instrumental music builds in the background, while Jesus and his friends, wearing hoods, enter the temple past the guards, who see no threat in single individuals. At a signal, everyone wearing hoods drops them, and quickly and quietly they take over the area, as the narrator signs the following. Quickly the friends of Jesus take down the posted signs and put up their own, with messages such as "FREE GOD" and "ISRAEL FOR THE ISRAELITES" and "GOD LOVES THE PEOPLE". They appropriate the offerings for sale and distribute them to the crowd. The merchants are scared off, and Jesus takes one or two of their tables for a speaking platform. He is upon the tables, teaching, by the time he is to sing his lines. The crowd moves to gather around.)

Narrator:

When they reached Jerusalem and
he entered the temple,
he kicked out the money lenders,
tipped over their tables.
he upset the pigeon stalls
and nearly cleared the temple walls,
and then he asked them:

Jesus:

Don't you know that
it says in the bible
that my house shall be called a house of prayer?

Jesus (continues, speaking, with music under):

A house of prayer for ALL peoples! God does not play favorites.

Do you not read, "You shall not harm the stranger in the land; you shall do no wrong to the poor person. You shall not afflict the widow or the orphan. If you do afflict them and they cry out to me I will hear their cry.

When I would gather them, says Yahweh God, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them I will take away."

"When I spoke, you did not listen; when I called, you did not answer.
Therefore I will do to the house called by my name as I did in Shiloh.

(As the speech continues, the following verse comes up under. At the conclusion of the scene, the crowd has clustered around, having abandoned the former temple for the "new temple" which is Jesus. During the speech, the fig tree silently drops its leaves.)

Disciples:

When they reached Jerusalem and
he entered the temple,
he kicked out the money lenders,
tipped over their tables.
he upset the pigeon stalls
and nearly cleared the temple walls,
and then he asked them:
Don't you know that it says in the bible
that my house shall be called a house of prayer?

*(The temple scene freezes, and Jesus and friends leave,
to assemble at the now empty fig tree.)*

Peter:

That next morning, as they walked along,
Peter saw the fig tree and remembered:
Master, look, the tree that you
cursed yesterday is gone.

Jesus:

Jesus answered: Faith can move the hills.
Faith can even move this mountain Zion.
That is just what I have come to do.

(Jesus motions for the disciples to gather round the devastated tree, and another story time begins. This parable gives, in symbolic form, the conclusion of the gospel drama, as a play within the play. The story telling technique — mime, or whatever — should evoke the parables of the first act. As the various servants are sent forth in the mime, the action is reflected in the temple area, as we see the high priest send forth certain emissaries. These will be identified by costume to be the same characters as those who try to trap Jesus in the debates of "Temple Talk" after the following song. Toward the end of the song there is a

flickering of light, as if a major fir were burning in the distance.)

[THE VINEYARD]

Jesus: (Others may take some of the verses)

My friend had a vineyard on a fine hill.
He dug out a wine vat and he built a tower.
He rented it out and then he left it until
the end of the season when the due day
came to pay the bill.

He sent out a man for what was due still.
They grabbed him and beat him and they left him naked.
He sent out another, but they treated him ill.
He sent out a third and heard that this one
they'd gone on to kill.

My friend, he had one, had his son still.
He sent him on over as a last hope, thinking
they'll have to respect my son, I'm sure that they will.
They grabbed him and beat him and they killed him
outside on a hill.

(The disciples and Jesus sing in counterpoint.)

Disciples:

When they reached Jerusalem and
he entered the temple,
he kicked out the money lenders,
tipped over their tables.

he upset the pigeon stalls
and nearly cleared the temple walls,
and then he asked them:
Don't you know that
it says in the bible
that my house shall be called
a house of prayer?

Jesus:

My friend had a vineyard
on a fine hill.
He dug out a wine vat
and he built a tower.

He rented it out and then
he left it until
the end of the
season when
the due day
came to pay
the bill.

(The action returns to the temple. Jesus is preaching to the crowd. In a scene similar to the village scene earlier, Jesus dialogues with various characters who come forward. The debates are done in "rap" style.)

[TEMPLE TALK]

(Three Scribes come forward.)

First Scribe (spoken):

Jesus in the temple was instructing folk
when some Pharisees positioned in the front row spoke:

Second Scribe:

Teacher, we are sure you are a truthful man,
being just as careful as a teacher can.
We have a little problem, wondered what you'd say —
Whether to pay the emperor or not to pay?

First Scribe:

Master, you can always muster all the facts,
so tell us, should we trouble with the temple tax?

Jesus:

Jesus was aware of their hypocrisy:
Why do you believe that you can corner me?
Give me a coin, I might resolve your case.
He held up the coin: Can you place this face?

Scribe:

"Caesar" was the answer.

Jesus:

Jesus said: You frauds,
now give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

Second Scribe:

This answer just amazes us; we don't know what to say.

First Scribe:

Perhaps it'd be advisable to quietly slip away.

Third Scribe:

I still don't know whether we're supposed to pay.

(Some people, obviously fans of Jesus, cheer; others gesture with hostile intent. There is some rhythmic movement in time with the background beat, as we make the transition to the next dialogue. Eventually, two Sadducees step forward.)

First Sadducee:

Up stepped some Sadducees, that stood about.

Second Sadducee:

Teacher, we have this existential doubt –
Moses never mentions that the dead will rise,
but he does give us a law, that when a fellow dies
and leaves this life before his wife's become a mother
to provide him with an heir she ought to marry his brother.

First Sadducee:

She should marry his brother to carry on his name
and though eh wouldn't be the father it would count the same.

Second Sadducee:

If the first brother died, then she' marry another.

First Sadducee:

And if he died, then another brother.

Second Sadducee:

And if he died, another brother.

First Sadducee:

So forth and so on, she married each one
trying to provide the fist brother with a son.
Now, pretend that this woman had married seven.
Who would be her husband when she got to heaven?

Second Sadducee:

To which of the seven would she be the wife?
Who would be her husband in the afterlife?

Jesus:

You don't know your theology, Jesus replied.
Why, there isn't any marriage on the other side.
And as to resurrection — Moses also said
He's God of the living and God of the dead.
If the dead don't awaken, do the dead belong
to a God who is feeble or a God who is strong?
You're simply mistaken, so admit you're wrong.

Second Sadducee:

Did he actually ask us to admit we're wrong?
He's trying to embarrass us in front of this throng.

First Sadducee:

This is just too much. Let's move along.

*(Again, rhythmic movement as the Sadducees fade into
the crowd and a Scribe steps forward.)*

Scribe:

A scribe standing near was hearing Jesus' replies.
Teacher, you are answering well and wise.
I too have a question. What would you suggest
out of all the commandments would be the best,
the one that would summarize all the rest?

Jesus:

This is the first:
Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!
Therefore you shall love the Lord your God
with all you heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind,
and with all our strength.

This is the second:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
There is no other commandment greater than these.

Scribe:

Teacher, that's perfect. I'm glad I stayed.
That's a connection I've never made.
Love the Lord with all your self
and love your neighbor just as yourself —
Why, it's worth more than saying all the prayers in church!

Jesus:

My friend, you are reaching near the end of your search.

A Bystander:

No one had anything else to say,
so that was all the questions that they asked that day.

(The sky darkens as the sunsets; a purple evening, with threatening clouds. As earlier, there is a flickering suggesting the city is burning, only more vividly. Jesus and the disciples have left the city, and are standing on the Mount of Olives overlooking the temple area.)

[TEMPLE, REPRISE]

Jesus (sings):

The towers of Jerusalem,
the stones of the temple,
they will tumble down to dust,
and crumble to rubble.

Guard against that fateful day,
the time they take the sun away,
so stay awake to watch and pray —
the time of the trouble
will come when you know not
the day nor hour.

(The disciples and Jesus sing in counterpoint.)

Jesus:

The towers of Jerusalem,
the stones of the temple,
they will tumble down to dust,
and crumble to rubble.

Guard against that fateful day,
the time they take the sun away,
so stay awake to watch and pray —

the time of the trouble
will come when you know not
the day nor hour.

Disciples:

* * *

ACT II

Scene 3

The light comes up on the supper room. This place is visually defined on the stage by spotlights. Two disciples are seen setting up the table in silence. The "EAT" sign is lit and visible outside a window. After they work awhile, the narrator begins to sing. When the table is ready, the others enter, also in silence, and take their places on the far side of the table, as in Leonardo's painting.)

[THE SUPPER]

Narrator (sings):

And in the days when the Passover neared,
they wondered what they should do to prepare.
he sent tow disciples to town:
Find there a room for the supper.

They went into town
where they found a man
with a supper room
just as he had said.

Jesus:

Then on that evening he came with the Twelve.
And in the course of the supper we warned:
One of you sharing this meal,
you are about to betray me.

First Disciple:

Surely it's not I?

Second Disciple:

Not one of the Twelve?

Third Disciple:

Not the ones you called.

Fourth Disciple:

We're the faithful few.

(During the above exchange, the disciples strike the pose in da Vinci's Last Supper painting. Then the "Judas" disciple dons silver glasses like the scribes, and slips out.)

Jesus:

He took the bread,
blessed it and broke it,
and said:
This is my body.

He took a cup,
blessed it and shared it,
and said:
This is my blood.

(The disciple repeat Jesus' words, as a chorus, preparing to depart as they do so.)

Disciples:

He took the bread,
blessed it and broke it,
and said:
This is my body.

He took a cup,
blessed it and shared it,
and said:
This is my blood,
the covenant,
poured out for you,
poured out for all.

(they leave the room as the narrator signs the last verse of the song. Peter and Jesus hang back.)

Jesus:

As toward the Mountain of Olives they walked
he motioned toward the Twelve faithful to say:

Your faith will be shaken tonight,
where are the sheep without a shepherd?

Peter:

Peter said: Not I.

Jesus:

Jesus said: Yes, you.
Think was you have said
when the rooster crows.

(They leave.)

[TRANSITION: INSTRUMENTAL VERSE]

A Voice (sings to begin the instrumental verse):

Where are we going?
Where will this road end? ...

(The next song moves abruptly from episode to episode. It has a feeling of rapid review of impressions and remembrances, a series of vignettes. It can probably best be done as a series of still shots. the stage is darkened, and the action is localized by spots. The garden can be down stage, to the far left. Judas enters with the guards from down right. The sponge on the stick is at left center, with a pencil plot of the had of Jesus. The cross is silhouetted up center, slightly off center. This cross is a bedraggled barren tree, with the Jesus Hat on it.)

[INTO YOUR HANDS]

(Jesus is praying in the garden, beneath a narrow spot.)

Jesus:

Into your hands, O Lord, Father,
I do commend my spirit.
Into your plans with all their demands
take my prayer, all of my fear.
Into your hands, O Father,
O Lord.

(The spot widens to reveal the sleeping disciples. Jesus speaks to them as they waken.)

Jesus:

Can you not stay awake, Peter?
Can you not pray one hour?
Father, please take this bread that I break
and this cup that I'm to drink.
Take them away, O Father,
O Lord.

(Judas and the guards enter. Judas steps forward away from the guards into the circle of Jesus' attention. He greets him with an embrace, and then steps back toward the guards, who now are apparent to Jesus and those with him.)

Judas:

There he is! That's the one!

Guards:

Jesus of Nazareth!
You're under arrest.
Don't try to resist.

(Peter picks up a piece of plumbing pipe, and moves forward impulsively.)

Peter:

Let me ... I'll take care of this!

(Jesus steps in front of him.)

Jesus (sings):

No, Peter, no, put that down!
God will take care of his own.

Peter:

I say God will take care of the one
who will do that which has to be done!

Jesus:

Don't you see he's your brother, my friend?
Don't you see that it never will end
till we break from the circle of blood?
Let it go! And leave vengeance to God

(Jesus goes to the arresting officers with arms outstretched. They shove him across the stage roughly. Watching them go, Peter cries out, without hope.)

Peter:

No! No! I *don't* see!

A Disciple:

Into their hands, O Lord, Father,
you do command hi ending.
He Judas kissed refused to resist,
and now they've led him away
into their hand, O Father,
O Lord.

(Spot on Jesus' face.)

Jesus:

Darkness fell down at noon
and the wine on the stick was sour.
Do you forsake me? Father, please take me.
I give all that I am.
Now it is done, this hour,
O Lord.

[INSTRUMENTAL BREAK]

(During the instrument break, the stage dims and a light comes up on the back wall, silhouetting the tree with the hat, in outline on the hill. while this vignette is held, the cast sings the next verse softly.)

All:

Into your hands, O Lord, Father,
we do commend out spirits.
Into your plans, with all their demands
take our prayer, all of our fear.
Into your hands, O Father,
O Lord.

[SATURDAY: INSTRUMENTAL TRANSITION]

(Scattered impressions of frightened disciples, hiding, while the long night passes. The light dies out behind the tree. The instrumental transition ends with dawn arriving. As the light grows, we see that the tree has blossomed into

glorious full bloom. The tomb is apparently at the base of the hill, which is the destination of three women who enter.)

[HE IS RISEN]

First Woman:

Very early
Sunday morning,
when the sun rose,
they reached the tomb to anoint him.

All Three Women:

As they came, the women cried:
Who will roll the stone aside?
Yet, the tomb was opened wide.
There a young man sat inside,
sitting at the right,
shining in a white robe.

(The young man in white emerges from behind the tree.)

Young Man:

You are looking
for Jesus.
He is risen.
He is not here. He's been raised.

First Woman (doubtfully):

He is risen?
He's been raised?

Second Woman (with greater assurance):

He is risen. He's been raised!

All Three:

He is risen. He's been raised!
He is risen. He's been raised!

(As if summoned by the women's excitement, other in the cast appear on stage. The word and enthusiasm spreads.)

All (gradually increasing):

Alleluia! He is risen!
Alleluia! He is risen!
Alleluia! He is risen!
Alleluia! He is risen!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

(The cast leaves through the audience, singing.)

He is risen!
Alleluia!
He is risen!
Alleluia!
He's among you!
Alleluia!
He is risen!
Alleluia!
He is risen!