

Welcome Back, Billy Best!

A Roaring Parable of the Twenties

The story of the prodigal son in a twenties setting for unison/two part voices
with duo piano accompaniment (Based on Luke 15)

by **Joe Cox** and **Jody W. Lindh**

Cast of Characters

William Randolph Best — The father
Billy — The younger son (a playboy)
Bertram — The older son (hard working, very serious, conscientious)
Preacher — A street-corner evangelist
Billy's secretary
Torch Singer
Chief Editor
Newspaper Kid (boy or girl)
Pantomime: Car Salesperson
Tailors / Seamstresses
Stockbroker
Gamblers
Head Waiter / Waitress

Reporters
Editors
Photographers
Party crowd (flappers and dudes)
Salvation Army Band (optional)

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Performance time is approximately 26 minutes.

Also available:

Full Score (CGC35)

Demonstration CD (CGCD22)

Accompaniment CD (CGCD23)

Preview Kit [includes score and demo CD] (CGK13)

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Welcome Back, Billy Best!

SCENE ONE

Time: The 1920's. On a small side stage, a spotlight focuses on city street corner, a box for the preacher to stand on, and a lamp post. Optional SFX (sound effects): Street sounds — cars and buses, street car trolleys, etc. If desired, a Salvation Army mission band plays "Onward Christian Soldiers" (not too well), or it may be played on the piano or other keyboard. The Preacher enters and stands on a box, inviting a passing public to gather around and listen. Most passers-by look skeptically at the Preacher and leave, but a few stay to listen. The Preacher's lines are delivered in a feverish preaching style with key words delivered in an elongated, trembling tone.

PREACHER

Gather 'round! I tell you — step right up and hear the Word of the Lord! *(Waving the floppy Bible)* Sinners, repent! *(Invites more to gather.)* Step right up, brothers and sisters, hallelujah!

A small crowd gathers; music fades and continues under dialogue.

Wouldn't any among you who owned a hundred sheep and lost one of them, leave the ninety and nine and go after the one who is lost until he finds it?

(to a passing pair)

Join us, brothers and sisters.

And when he found the one which was lost, he will put it on his shoulders with great joy, and as soon as he gets home, he will call his friends together, "Come and celebrate with me," he will say, "for I have found that sheep of mine which was lost."

I tell you, my friends, it is the same in heaven! There is more joy over one sinner whose heart is changed than over the ninety and nine who have no need of repentance. Hallelujah!

CROWD (solo voices or all)

(skeptically, disbelieving, amongst themselves) Applesauce ... ah, baloney! ... What a bunch of banana oil!

The preacher tries to regain the crowd's attention.

PREACHER

Brothers and sisters — listen to me! Say there's this woman who has ten silver coins, and if she loses one, will she NOT — hear me out, now — will she NOT search the house from top to bottom until she finds it? And when she finds it ... *(pause)* ... she calls together her friends and neighbors, and says, "Come, celebrate! for I *(overly dramatic)* have found ... the coin ... that was lost!"

Crowd starts to leave.

(quickly) I tell you, friends, it is the same in heaven — there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner — whose heart is changed.

The crowd grows more skeptical, groaning.

CROWD (solo voices or all)

He's all wet. ... This guy's nuts. ... Let's get out of here!

Music stops.

PREACHER

(more calmly) OK, OK. Let me put it to you another way.

Lights fade on side stage.

(Dramatic, looking off in the distance) There once was a man who had two sons, *(fading)* and the younger of them said to his father . . .

Street corner crowd exits. The Preacher exits as Scene Two begins the portrayal of the prodigal son story.

SCENE TWO

As music for Song 1 begins, the lights come up on a busy newsroom of a large metropolitan newspaper. Set background: city skyscrapers. Optional SFX: press room typing, teletype, presses running, phones ringing. If desired, each group (reporters, editors, photographers) may enter just prior to their vocal entrance.

1. Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

Chorus: Reporters, Editors, Photographers, Secretaries, Mr. Best

Joe Cox and Jody W. Lindh

With Precision (♩=130)

2 *mf* Reporters:

News-print and dic-ta-phones, tick-er tape and tel-e-phones, got to make that
 6 dead - line! Slan-ders and scan-dals, we'll find all the an-gles, we'll
 9 stay up past our bed-time! **Editors:** We check each quo-ta-tion, we
 12 check punc-tu-a-tion, we dot our I's and cross our T's! And
 15 when there's a scoop, we work till we're pooped, we're the Best Times from A to
 18 **All:** *f* Z! Ex-tra! Ex-tra! Read all a-bout it!
 21 In-ter-views, book re-views! Ex-tra! Ex-tra!
 24 Read all a-bout it! If it seems we're ring-ing our own
 27 chime, just read our sto-ries and head-lines, just

31
 take a look — at our by - lines, and you can read it in the

34
 Times for on - ly a dime! **3** **Easy Fox Trot, unaccented (♩=82)**
 Photographers: When there's a sto -

40
 - ry, we're there in a flash, *Camera flash!* click - ing pho -

44
 - tos of the crook who stole the cash! When the

47
 pa - per hits the street, it - 'll be all the rage, — and

51
 we took the pic - ture that made the front page! —

55
3 **Secretaries:** Good morn - ing, Mis - ter Best, how

61
 are you Mis - ter Best? The re - port is in, the

64
 pa - per's do - ing grand! Good morn - ing, Mis - ter

68
 Best, Mis - ter Wil - liam Ran - dolf Best runs the fin - est

At the beginning of the song, the cast hurries onto stage to begin the song and dance (Charleston). If more time is needed to get cast members on stage, the piano introduction may be extended by using the accompaniment from measures 35- 40 which may be played prior to measure 1. At the end of the song, the applause is interrupted by the sudden entry of the Newspaper Kid.

6. Get Up and Dance!

Chorus

Charleston Tempo (♩ = 200!)

Joe Cox and Jody W. Lindh

273 **4 All: *f***

280 Come on, my ba - by, I'm — get - tin' ant - sy, spiff up your coat and put —

— on your fan - cy pants, get — up and dance!

284 *(loud stage whisper)*

Hot - sy tot - sy! Don't be a square from Ak - ron, O - hi - o,

287 step out with me, and you — can be my ro - mance, get — up and

291 dance! — We may be in for quite a

295 scan - dal, — but it ain't noth - in' we can't

299 han - dle! — That's it, my hon - ey, now — we are swing - in',

303 let's spend our mon - ey, liv - in' to sing and dance! —

307 Get up, get up, it's time — to get up! Get up, get up, it's time —

* Residents of Akron, Ohio: if desired, choose another 2-syllable city in Ohio! Ohio must be used to retain the rhyme scheme: "Ohio" / "my ro" - (mance).

310

— to get up! Get up, get up, it's time — to get up and

313

Dance sequence (Charleston) (loud stage whisper)

3 dance! Hot - sy tot - sy!

325

16 341 That's it, my hon - ey, now — we are swing - in',

343

let's spend our mon - ey, liv - in' to sing and dance! —

347

Get up, get up, it's time — to get up! Get up, get up, it's time —

350

— to get up! Get up, get up, it's time — to get up and

353

dance! — Get up and dance! Yeah!

As applause fades, the Newspaper Kid bursts in, carrying a bag full of newspapers and waving the latest edition.

NEWSPAPER KID

(shouting) Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Stock market crashes. Wall Street down and out! Read all about it!

Cast reacts in horror. They quickly gather around the Newspaper Kid, crowding to see the headlines.

CAST MEMBERS

I'm broke ... I'm washed up ... I've lost everything! ... etc.

BILLY

(acting real cool) Hey, it's nothing! The market will be back tomorrow. No big deal. Everything's Jake!

CAST MEMBER 1

It's lousy, Billy — don't you get it? It's over!

CAST MEMBER 2

Everything's gone!

CAST MEMBER 3

The market's crashed! There's no tomorrow!