

# AND THEY DANCED<sup>1</sup>

by David H. Kehret and John Steven Paul

as developed and performed by the Soul Purpose Chancel Drama  
Troupe at Valparaiso University

PERFORMANCE NOTES: *And They Danced* is designed to be played in a chancel: a very compact space. Most chancels feature several steps leading from the floor of the nave and landing on the high altar level. The staging suggested in this script depends on such steps. For example, at the opening, the players are arranged in a symmetrical grouping on at least three levels. On the top level, three men are arranged as follows: SIX in the middle, FOUR to his right, and FIVE to his left. Two of the women are on the step below: TWO stage right (in front of FOUR) and THREE stage left (in front of FIVE). ESTHER (ONE) is down center, a step or two in front of the group. Six simple folding chairs are arranged on three sides of the chancel area.

The players move out from this very compact grouping into a closer relationship with the audience, and, ultimately, should occupy as much space as the nave and chancel have to offer and sightlines will permit. At other times, the players move back into their initial compact and symmetrical arrangement. The centerpiece of the action is the celebration of Lazarus' resurrection. The celebration features music, singing, and dancing. The more space afforded the celebration, the better, yet a great celebration can be suggested in a small nave and chancel space as well.

The play is performed by six players: three men and three women. At certain points in the play the players take on the roles of characters in the story of "The Raising of Lazarus" (St. John 11). ONE becomes ESTHER, a dear friend of Lazarus' family. TWO becomes MARY, one of Lazarus' sisters, and THREE becomes MARTHA, Lazarus' other sister. FOUR becomes LAZ-

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ARUS himself, and FIVE becomes MARK, a townsman from Bethany. (FIVE should also be able to play the guitar.) SIX becomes JESUS.

The players are costumed neutrally. It is suggested that MARY and MARTHA be dressed in black turtleneck shirts with black skirts or trousers. The other players might be dressed in white turtlenecks and black skirts or trousers.

**At the opening of the play,  
ESTHER (ONE) is methodically  
preparing a casserole meal. Her  
actions are mimed.**

**ONE**

*(Reading the recipe instructions aloud to herself)*

“Four double handfuls of bulgar wheat,  
steamed until it cracks open.  
A measure of flour.  
A pinch of salt.  
A pinch of dried herbs, rubbed together  
and sprinkled into the mixture.  
One egg, beaten.

**ONE**

*(continues)*

Enough broth to give it moisture.  
Mix together.

Prepare another bowl . . .”

**SIX**

Glazed for use by the fire:

**ONE**

“Rub around with olive oil.  
Press a clove of garlic into the surface.  
Place first mixture into the new bowl, firm  
down.  
Sprinkle bread crumbs over the top, pat in.  
Place a damp towel over bowl.”

**FIVE**

Esther wipes off her hands and brushes off her apron.

**TWO**

She picks up the casserole and goes out her front door to the village street.

*TWO & THREE now come down stage and take positions extreme down right and extreme down left.*

**THREE**

There she walks down four or five houses and across.

**FIVE**

She stops at a door.

**ONE**

Mary? Martha?

*MARY (TWO) comes to the door.*

**ONE**

Oh, Mary, I, I knew you'd be having all sorts of company these days—some folks even from a distance out of town and I knew how things get short. I just wanted to bring over a little something here to help out. You can set it by the fire to warm and just use it whenever you happen to need it.

*ESTHER "hands" MARY her covered hotdish and turns away from the door. Then she turns back.*

**ONE**

And, uhm, Mary, I just wanted to say how sorry we all are about Lazarus. We had hoped and prayed like you and Martha did that Jesus could get here in time. But with Lazarus taking sick so fast and then going

so quickly...well, we just want you to know  
we're so sorry—we're so sorry.

**SIX**

Lazarus was dead.

**FIVE**

Against everybody's hopes...

**CHORUS (i.e. ONE through SIX)**

Lazarus was dead.

**TWO**

O Lord, if only you had been here, my  
brother wouldn't have died.

**THREE**

*(with anger in her voice)*

O Lord, if only you had been here, my  
brother wouldn't have died.

**TWO & THREE**

O Lord, if only you had been here...

**CHORUS**

My brother wouldn't have died.

**SIX**

But Jesus had not been there.

**FOUR**

Blame the Palestinian postal system?

**FIVE**

The donkeys were slow?

**THREE**

The cart broke down?

**ONE**

Hardly.

**FIVE**

Word had gotten through to Jesus, and he—  
well, Jesus—

**SIX**

—okay, let's be honest—Jesus just  
dilly-dallied around for a couple of days  
before gathering his disciples and heading to  
Bethany.

**CHORUS**

When he got there it would be too late.

**TWO & THREE**

There would be no healing miracle in  
Bethany when Jesus got there.

**FIVE**

There would be no  
just-in-the-knick-of-time-and-everything-  
back-to-normal that day.

**TWO**

Jesus would not be led to a sickbed, ...

**THREE**

but to a graveyard.

**CHORUS**

There he would stand in front of a tomb.

*FOUR separates himself from the Players  
and takes a position off stage.*

**SIX**

*(with great emotion)*

Father, I know that you listen to me.

[pause] Lazarus, come forth!

**CHORUS**

*(hesitantly, hoping, doubting)*

Lazarus, come forth!

*After a moment's silence, FOUR slowly rejoins the players, as if he has returned from the dead. The other players respond with initial doubt and hesitation, then with ecstasy. All the actions are mimed.*

**ONE**

*(rapidly, with great excitement)*

Suddenly there would erupt in that graveyard the greatest gift unwrapping the world has ever seen.

**TWO**

Funeral shroud and grave clothes torn and ripped,

**THREE**

pulled this way and that.

**FOUR**

Poor Lazarus blinking his eye in the bright light

**TWO**

his face smothered with tears

**TWO & THREE**

and kisses

**ONE-THREE**

and hugs from his sisters and everybody around

**ONE, TWO, THREE, FIVE, & SIX**

yelping and screaming and crying

**CHORUS**

and shouting all at the same time.

**FOUR**

And suddenly Lazarus would find himself lifted up on strong shoulders...

*FIVE and SIX boost FOUR up high on their shoulders and process upstage as far as possible.*

**TWO & THREE**

... with Mary and Martha tagging on behind as they start on the way out of the cemetery.

**FOUR**

...and the funeral procession in reverse would make its way from cemetery back to town.

**THREE<sup>2</sup>**

*As if seeing the action from afar.*

Along the way a couple of young men would go off to the side down over the hill, down to a flock of sheep, and they would get the biggest ewe they could find, and they would butcher the ewe and clean her out there in the field and bring her into the village...

**FIVE**

...just as the fire that someone else started in the village square was dying down to very hot coals.

**ONE**

Then...

**TWO**

they would put the lamb on a spit on a rack

**THREE**

and start burning it over the fire.

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2. This line might also be taken by ONE. Other lines may be taken by actors other than those indicated if the staging requirements make such modifications necessary.

**FIVE**

In short order that village would be transformed.

**FOUR**

Esther would be coming out of her house wondering

**ONE**

What in the world is going on?

*And now it dawns on ESTHER just who is standing in front of her. She looks at MARY and MARTHA who assure her that this is indeed her friend LAZARUS. ESTHER runs to hug him.*

**TWO**

and she would soon know...

**CHORUS**

and every passerby would know...

Now the preparations for a great celebration begin—the kind of celebration that a community might have when one of their number comes back from the dead. The celebration of new life is the centerpiece of the play and must be wonderful!

**ONE**

tables, chairs, and benches from every house, and down from the side streets, filling the village square...and food...trays and trays of food

**THREE**

Now Esther's funeral casserole

**TWO**

will be the centerpiece for the head table!

**ONE**

Then

**FIVE**

the lamb would be done

**SIX**

and the wine skins would come out

**CHORUS**

and everybody

**ONE**

eat

**ONE & TWO**

and drink

**ONE through THREE**

and laugh

**ONE through FOUR**

and cry

**ONE through FIVE**

and talk

**CHORUS**

until they had their fill.

**FIVE**

And when the sun dipped further below the horizon, another transformation would begin to take place in the village. Torches would be brought out and placed on the fronts of houses

**ONE**

forty, fifty torches there flickering around the village square.

#### **FOUR, FIVE, & SIX**

And the tables and benches would all be pulled back off to the side

By now the players have dressed for the party to celebrate LAZARUS' return from the dead. Each of them, including LAZARUS, has, with exaggerated enthusiasm, taken and put on three items of party clothing which have been situated on the chairs from the beginning: a crazy hat, a colorful vest, and, perhaps, a long scarf.

#### **TWO-THREE**

and down at one end six stout chairs placed in a row

*...and six stout chairs are brought down center stage. They are the chairs that have been sitting in the chancel. From these chairs the music is played and the dancing enjoyed.*

#### **FIVE**

and in from the shadows would come musicians

Ideally, the players would be able to play the instruments called for, but really any combination of simple melody and rhythm instruments will do.

#### **ONE**

dulcimer

#### **SIX**

harp

#### **TWO & THREE**

two flutes

#### **FOUR**

a tambourine

#### **FIVE**

a drum

The particular piece of music should be chosen by the players. The music should be up-tempo and singable. The music is played slowly at first and then more and more rapidly. The dancing of the three men will increase in enthusiasm as the musical tempo increases.

#### **THREE**

The women would grab the children and bring them over to the side where they would find a place to sit, and the men would step forward onto the street.

#### **TWO**

Then the music would start and the men would begin to dance and they would dance—every dance they knew, faster and faster and faster and faster on into the night, and there would be Jesus in the middle of them dancing, his hands in the air, his feet and legs moving to every step he could remember, his robe swaying with his body, while the torch lights flickered over the whole affair.

#### **FIVE**

Then the music would slow, just for a moment, and one by one the men of the village would pull back off to the side and find a place to sit on a bench or on the ground until there were just two figures left in the center of the city square. And Jesus and Lazarus would grasp hands together and they would dance.

*Jesus and Lazarus dance with increasing joy and abandon and then suddenly the music and the dancing stop and the two men embrace each other for a long moment.*

Now the tone of the play changes radically. The players drop their roles and speak directly to the audience. The staging should now be quite formal: the players are arranged in straight lines, boxes, or equilateral triangles. With each successive line, the players, very reluctantly, take off one of their three items of party clothing returning them to the chairs or dropping them to the floor. Finally they have all returned to their original, neutral costumes.

**FOUR**

But none of that could have happened.

**TWO**

Remember this so you'll never forget it.

**TWO through FIVE**

None of that would have been at all possible.

**THREE**

Mark this indelibly in your memory.

**CHORUS**

None of that would have happened...

**SIX**

...except first Lazarus had died.

*The players return the chairs to their original positions in the chancel.*

**ONE**

Death and resurrection

**TWO**

death and new life,

**THREE**

that's what the weeks of Lent are about.

**FOUR**

And that's the message of Easter.

**FIVE**

not just resurrection

**SIX**

not just new life

**CHORUS**

but *death* and resurrection, *death* and new  
life

**TWO**

For there is no resurrection

**FOUR**

where there has not been a death

**THREE**

There is no new life

**FIVE**

unless something old has been put away.

**ONE**

There is no born-again

**FOUR**

until there has been a burial.

**CHORUS**

We've heard that before

**FIVE**

but we tend to spiritualize such thoughts out of reality. Yet the death and resurrection we are talking about here is as real and down to earth

**FOUR**

as the death of Lazarus

**TWO**

which made it necessary for his companions to put him away in a tomb

**THREE**

because he was going to smell.

**FOUR**

That's how real this death is that we're talking about and the resurrection that follows.

**CHORUS**

All of us have experienced at some time in our life the dying, the letting go of one life for a new one.

**SIX**

We left high school, we had to let go, had to let part of ourselves die to go into the university.

**TWO**

We have moved from one place to another; we have experienced having to let go of the past in order to embrace the new life of the future.

**FIVE**

We have lost loved ones and have known the letting go that has to be done before our own life can go on.

**THREE**

We had to change jobs or vocations and have known death, the letting go, the giving up of one thing for something new to take place.

**ONE**

Some of you know how terribly hard such dying is, how so unbelievably hard it is that sometimes we find it just impossible to let go and cling for dear life to dying things, unable to take our hands off of them.

**CHORUS**

Those of us...

**TWO**

...who are struggling and can't get free from the misuse of alcohol and drugs.

**CHORUS**

Those of us...

**FOUR**

...who are caught in a relationship that we know has no future, but we lie to ourselves about how fantastic this is going to be for us and for the other person

**ONE**

...because we just can't let it die and let go.

**TWO**

It's too scary?

*ONE nods and then gives TWO her last piece of party clothing. All the players' party clothing has now been removed.*

**CHORUS**

Those of us

## **SIX**

...who are trapped in a job, a position, a status that has become a death for us and who can't let go of it for the uncertainty and the insecurity and the unfamiliarity of anything else.

## **FIVE**

There are also those among us who have had the courage to let go and who know what wonderful new life is possible when we allow something to die in order for a resurrection to take place.

## **CHORUS**

Those of us

## **THREE**

...who have been willing to let go of attitudes and ideas in order that new attitudes and ideas can be born.

## **CHORUS**

Those of us

## **SIX**

...who together have let one relationship die in order that between us a new relationship can sprout and grow, know the courage it takes and the joy.

## **ONE**

We know, finally, what it means to be born again. We have come to face that being born again,

## **ONE & TWO**

means to be born again

## **ONE through FOUR**

and again

**ONE through FIVE**  
and again

**CHORUS**  
and again and again.

**TWO**  
And we have come to acknowledge that if  
we are to be born again and again and  
again...

**ONE**  
... we must also die again and again and  
again.... We have learned that in dying new  
life comes.

**SIX**  
That in dying an invitation to rise comes to  
us.

**FOUR**  
That it is from *inside* the tomb that we hear  
the voice of Jesus,

**SIX**  
Lazarus!

**FIVE**  
Mary!<sup>3</sup>  
*As his or her name is called, each player  
now comes as far downstage, and as near to  
the audience, as possible.*

**FOUR**  
Allison!

**THREE**  
Dan!

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3. The specific names should be the actual first names of the players, who come down stage as their names are called.

**TWO**

Mark!

**ONE**

Kevin!

**FIVE**

Christine!

**FOUR**

Mark!

**CHORUS**

Come forth!

*The final players' position is a straight line  
parallel to the front line of the playing space.*