

December, 2005.

HOT AND SWEET

A New Musical

Book, Music and Lyrics by

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New York, New York**

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Blossom Lee:** The owner and front-woman of the swing band. Had been a beauty, still great looking at 40 plus. Street smart. Determined, headstrong, proud.
- Adele:** The band's musical director/arranger. Also a trombone player. Late twenties. Pretty. Warm, wise, witty, with an ironic sense of humor.
- Lou:** The band's manager. Tough and unyielding. Fifty.
- Naleen:** Remarkably talented alto sax player, singer. Sweet, innocent. Seventeen years old.
- Gino:** A handsome gangster. Smart, slick, persevering. Thirty-five.
- Lana:** A terrific trombone player. The most beautiful girl in the band. The mother of a seven year old boy. Twenty-five.
- Tommy:** Lana's son. Sweet, curious.
- Brit:** A sax player. British. Ambitious, unsentimental. Pretty. Mid twenties.
- Beats:** A brilliant trumpeter. Sweet, fat, shy. Early twenties.
- Jimmy:** A good looking, extroverted, seventeen year old. Lou's nephew, the band's go-for and an aspiring arranger.
- Joey Wade:** The owner of a strip joint. Mid 40's.
- Lips, Sticks, Pat, Flake and Other Girl Musicians:** Players in the band. All attractive, in their early twenties.
- Two older women:** These are women from the 1945 band, fifty years later. One is seventy, the other late seventies. We learn who they are as the play progresses.
- Other:** A mother, a father, assistant, band leader, waiter, agent, young man, radio announcer, theatre manager, two strippers, thugs. These very small roles (in addition to the role of Joey) can be triple cast.

SET

The set should be light and open, with a sleek elegance, allowing the action to move fluidly from scene to scene. Areas should be defined by lighting, in combination with minimal pieces. Although most of the musical is set in 1945, the design will have a more abstract “contemporary” feel, rather than a highly detailed, realistic quality.

A NOTE REGARDING CASTING

Hot and Sweet requires a cast of twenty-three, *including* all musicians. (There is no need for additional pit musicians.) The most important girl musician roles (Adele, Naleen, Lana, Brit) are played by non-musician actresses who, on occasion, mime their playing. Sticks, Beats, Lips and the rest of the band actually play. In other words, the show has been designed so that the leading roles are played by actress-singers who do not actually have to play. It has also been designed so that the true musicians will have relatively few demands in singing and acting. In this way, it appears to the audience that all of the women can do everything equally well.

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ACT I
Scene 1

An empty stage, 1995.
A sign "Boston College of Music
Women in Jazz Festival" hangs
from above.

(Two OLDER WOMEN, ages seventy and seventy-eight, are seated off to one side. In front of them is a small table with two glasses of water and a pitcher, as well as a small basket. THEY address the audience as YOUNG WOMEN MUSICIANS dressed in 1945 clothes, take out their horns and warm up in various parts of the stage.)

OLDER WOMAN 1

Well, I suppose we should be grateful for International Women's Day or we wouldn't be here. Funny how everyone is perfectly comfortable ignoring the accomplishments of women all year long—then suddenly, on one of the coldest, bleakest days of March, higher educational institutions everywhere find it necessary to honor some long forgotten soul who can't get arrested the other eleven months of the year.

(LIGHTS change, a swing jazz lick is played by one of the YOUNG WOMEN MUSICIANS. OLDER WOMAN 2 holds up her hand, a bag wrapped around it.)

OLDER WOMAN 2

Frozen peas, in case you're wondering. My hand's stiff from jamming into the wee hours, and tomorrow I've got a gig in Palm Springs.

(LIGHTS change, another lick is played.)

OLDER WOMAN 1

So I phoned back the Dean of your esteemed college and said "I appreciate your awarding me the Posthumous Award of Excellence, but it so happens I'm not dead." And he says "I'm terribly sorry. Maybe next year." (SHE laughs.) Well, I've been invited none-the-less, without the pomp and circumstance, which is just as well. The composer Charles Ives said "An award is a badge of mediocrity", and I've never allowed myself to be mediocre.

(LIGHTS change, another jazz lick.)

OLDER WOMAN 2

We were Rosie the Riveters with rhythm.

OLDER WOMAN 1

In '42 I toured Europe with the USO, but when my brother was killed in action, my mother and father insisted I return to the States. Then in '45, I hitched a ride to Chicago with just ten dollars in my horn case...

(LIGHTS change, a slower lick as OLDER WOMAN 2 picks up a paper from the basket, and reads the question.)

OLDER WOMAN 2

Were we successful? I would say yes. There were some tough times, but we were certainly a success.

OLDER WOMAN 1

(overlapping)

A success? No. We were never able to—we were not what you'd call—no.

(THEY look at one another, puzzled at the other's response.)

(Segue into the opening number, which takes us back to Chicago, March, 1945, as we continued to meet the YOUNG WOMEN MUSICIANS destined to be a part of the all-girl band. A hot jazz suite will weave itself throughout the vignettes. The scenes take place in a variety of locations, designated mainly by LIGHTING. One by one, during the course of the number, each PLAYER takes her place in the band, until every chair but one is filled.)

(LOU, a tough man, around fifty, built close to the ground, speaks to ADELE, a thin, attractive woman, around thirty. THEY sit at a luncheonette table. A WAITRESS serves sandwiches and desserts.)

LOU

Dig in.

ADELE

I just ate, thanks.

LOU

Please. It's on me.

(ADELE begins to wolf down a sandwich.)

LOU

I need a girl musical director.

ADELE

I'm your man!

LOU

Good. I need someone dependable and you obviously need the dough.

ADELE

(defensive)

No, I do all right.

LOU

Come on. You're eating like King Kong at a banana stand.

(SHE reacts.)

ADELE

So, I'll be in charge of the sound?

LOU

Of course. You're the musical director.

SONG: "I WANT TO BE A SIDEMAN—
IN AN ALL GIRL BAND"

(LOU takes a paper out of his pocket and "reads" aloud, as GIRL
PLAYERS on other parts of the stage, also "read" aloud.)

LOU

"BEAUTIFUL SHAPELY YOUNG WOMEN ARE NEEDED
FOR PROFESSIONAL ALL GIRL BIG BAND...
Photo a must."

PLAYERS

BEAUTIFUL, SHAPELY
AND YOUNG...

ADELE

(rolling eyes)

How about photo and *musical ability* a must?

LOU

Sure. Why not?

(LOU exits.)

IT'S BEEN SO LONG, ADELE

OLDER WOMAN 1
Every one of us was desperate to play. We were willing to give up nearly anything to be in that band.

TOO LONG... ADELE

OLDER WOMAN 2
Others of us were so poor, we had nothing to lose.

(LIGHTS change. ADELE on the phone to STICKS.)

ADELE
You'll have to get to Chicago on your own nickel. And it won't pay much to start.

STICKS
Hey. Right now, I *pay* to play! Who's behind it?

ADELE
Blossom Lee. Apparently, some rich hotel owner's daughter.

STICKS
Sounds like we won't starve this time.

STICKS
(Continued)
WANNA BE A SIDEMAN...

PLAYERS 1 AND 2
WANNA BE A SIDEMAN...

PLAYERS 3 AND 4
WANNA BE A SIDEMAN...

(STICKS starts to lay down a beat on her drums.
LIGHTS change. ADELE auditions a BASS PLAYER.)

ADELE
(pleased)
We start a week from tomorrow.

(The BASS PLAYER joins STICKS, adding to her snare.)

ADELE

NOW, ONCE AGAIN,
I'LL HAVE COLORS TO HEAR,
SOUNDS TO TASTE,
NEW IDEAS FERMENTING,
WHILE INVENTING A SOUND
NO OTHER BAND HAS WITH
PULSING, GRITTY, WITTY

ADELE AND PLAYERS

JAZZ...
WITH JAZZ.

ADELE

IT FEELS REAL GOOD...

OLDER WOMAN 1

We were so young...

ADELE

FIND A NEW SOUND...

OLDER WOMAN 2

Can't believe how young...

(LIGHTS dim on OLDER WOMEN.

VARIOUS PLAYERS' SOLOS

I WANNA BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND,
I WANNA PLAY JAZZ, WANNA SWING,
I WANNA BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND,
SLIDE IT SMOOTH AS SILK, THEN FEEL THE STING.

PLAYERS

I WANNA PLAY THOSE CHANGES WITH AN ALL GIRL BAND,
I WANNA TAKE OFF, WANNA RIDE,
SOME FINE IMPROVISATION WITH MY AXE IN HAND,
PLAY LIKE DORSEY OR GOODMAN ON THE HEP SOUTH SIDE.

(ADELE dials number, sings as LIGHTS come up on BEATS, a
very overweight young woman playing trumpet.)

ADELE
A GREAT PLAYER RIFFS,
SHE SOARS AS SHE CHOOSES
FROM A THOUSAND NEW NOTES
TEEMING DOWN FROM THE MUSES...

ADELE
(continued, into PHONE)
I once heard you play a trumpet solo Satchmo would have bragged about. I could offer
you the jazz chair.

BEATS
(turning to her MOTHER)
Mama, I hate the factory. I'll die if I stay there.

MOTHER
But your brother and I depend on you.

BEATS
Mama—If it doesn't work after a couple of months, I'll come home.

PLEASE LET ME BE A SIDEMAN...

(LIGHTS change. ADELE crosses to STICKS.)

STICKS
Loretta Liest. She goes by Lips.

ADELE
I really hate asking this, but—

STICKS
Yeah, she's pretty.

BEATS and PLAYERS
WANNA RIFF, WANNA RIDE,
LET RHYTHM BE MY GUIDE,
THAT DEVIL RHYTHM INSIDE,
I WANNA BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND...

ADELE

(while auditioning several SAX PLAYERS, two of them bad)
A BAND IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE PLAYERS IN IT,
HOW GOOD IS HER TECHNIQUE?
DOES SHE HAVE A WEAK APPROACH?
IF THEY CAN'T REALLY SWING,
YOU DON'T BOTHER TO BEGIN IT,
'CAUSE WITHOUT GREAT PLAYERS,
YOU'RE A LOUSY COACH.

(ADELE auditions LIPS over the phone. LIPS finishes the phrase, and hesitantly picks up the receiver.)

LIPS

Well?

ADELE

We start next Monday.

(LIPS jumps for joy. LIGHTS UP on YOUNG MAN and PAT.)

YOUNG MAN

But we're engaged!

PAT

Please, Henry. I want to play jazz. And you're in training, anyhow.

(Back to LIPS, now with elegantly dressed Southern PARENTS)

FATHER

No, Loretta! You'll be traveling around like a hussy again.

MOTHER

Why don't you take up the violin or harp, like your sisters?

LIPS

(disgusted)

Because I play the saxophone!!

MOTHER

Ladies don't play the saxophone.

(SHE keeps talking, but we no longer hear her.)

PAT

(to HENRY)

LATER THERE'LL BE TIME TO GET A WEDDING PLANNED.

LIPS

(to PARENTS)

WHY DID I EVER THINK THAT YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND...

YOUNG MAN

(to PAT, as he huffs off.)

I can't promise I'll wait for you.

PAT

(suddenly regretful)

Henry?

LIPS

...WHY I'VE GOTTA BE A SIDEMAN,
BEATS, PAT, and OTHER PLAYERS
A SIDEMAN, A SIDEMAN
IN AN ALL GIRL BAND.

ALL PLAYERS

WANNA FLOAT, (WANNA FLOAT),
WANNA FLY, (WANNA FLY),
IT'S HARD TO TELL THEM WHY,
WHY SHOULD WE TRY!

(LIGHTS change. A sign descends, noting "Sammy and His Saturday Night Swells" Band Auditions. THREE WOMEN are waiting on a bench. It appears THEY have been waiting a long time. THEY perk up when AN ASSISTANT sticks his head out of a door. HE motions to a BOY of fifteen.)

ASSISTANT

You're next.

BRIT

He just got here. We've been waiting for three bloody hours!

ASSISTANT

I was told to take the men first.

BRIT

Men? He doesn't even shave!

(LIGHTS change. LANA, a breathtaking beauty, speaks to TOMMY, her six year old son, as he draws a line on the back of her legs to suggest the seams.)

LANA

Are they straight?

TOMMY

(admiring his crooked work)

Perfect.

LANA

Hey, where's my good luck hug?

(HE hugs her. CROSSFADE. ADELE auditions a TROMBONE PLAYER, gives her the thumbs up.)

(LANA enters, nervously prepares to blow.)

LANA

ASK INSPIRATION TO SPEND THE NIGHT,
OH, SHE'LL NOD HER HEAD AND ACT POLITE,
BUT TURN YOUR BACK AND SHE'S OUT OF SIGHT.

ADELE

Are you ready?

LANA

I'm never ready.

(LANA lifts her trombone to begin. LIGHTS change, returning to the THREE WOMEN still waiting.. ANOTHER GIRL PLAYER bursts in.)

PLAYER

I just came from the union. Some New York lady's holding auditions for an all girl band.

FLAKE

(getting up)

Hallelujah!

BRIT
A girl band. I suppose it's better than nothing.

(LIGHTS change. BRIT and FLAKE and TWO OTHER PLAYERS audition for ADELE.)

BRIT
SHE'S BOUND TO SEE MY TALENT—

FLAKE
I HEAR SHE'S TOUGH—

TROMBONE PLAYER
(frustrated and nervous)
THIS GODDAMN SLIDE IS STICKING!

TRUMPET PLAYER
AM I GOOD ENOUGH?

ADELE
(To BRIT and FLAKE, dismissing the others)
There's no time to send your photo—You'll need to meet the manager.

(CROSSFADE. BRIT and FLAKE stand in front of LOU.
LANA enters, leaving TOMMY outside the door.)

FLAKE
GOTTA MAKE A BUCK,
ALL
GOTTA BLOW,
LANA
GOTTA FEED MY BOY,
BRIT
GOTTA PROVE I'M GOOD,
ALL
(referring to their horns)
GOTTA CHOP SOME WOOD WITH MY AX,
LANA
MY BONE,
FLAKE
MY HORN,

LOU
(LANA looks up, LOU likes what he sees)
My god...

LIPS
WITH MY SAX...

LOU
No, you can leave your horn.

(LOU motions with his hand for each to turn around slowly; LOU studies their "talent" as THEY sing with irony.)

BRIT, FLAKE AND LANA
HE'S GOT TO SEE MY TALENT—

LOU
Just turn and stand...

BRIT/FLAKE/LANA
THAT'S HOW YOU GET TO BE A SIDEMAN
B/F/L and HALF OF THE WOMEN
IN AN ALL GIRL BAND.
OTHER HALF OF THE WOMEN
BEAUTIFUL, SHAPELY AND YOUNG...

LOU
All right, girls. Sign here.

(ADELE crosses to LOU, who is holding NALEEN's photo.)

ADELE
I still don't have a lead sax.

LOU
I got a real cutie-pie auditioning over the phone in a few minutes. I'll let you know.

ADELE
(sighs)
Swell.

LOU
SO THIS IS WHERE I'VE SUNK TO—
I RUN AN ALL GIRL BAND,
I FIGURE, WHAT THE HELL,
GOT HALF MY FEE UPFRONT,
SO IF IT'S HARD TO SELL,
JUST PLAY MY EXIT MUSIC,
AND IT'S SO LONG, FAREWELL!
IN THE MEANTIME,
I'LL BE IN COMMAND...

ALL PLAYERS
(A PLAYER refers to her trombone)
GONNA BRING MY BABY,
(A PLAYER refers to her sax)
GOT MY JOE BY HIS THROAT,
GONNA RIFF, GONNA BLOW,
GONNA BEND THAT NOTE,
(A PLAYER refers to her trumpet)
GONNA TAKE MY LOVER IN HAND...

(ADELE and PLAYERS in counterpoint.)

PLAYERS
I WANNA BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND,
I WANNA PLAY JAZZ, WANNA SWING,
I WANNA BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND,
SLIDE IT SMOOTH AS SILK, THEN FEEL THE STING.

ADELE
NOW, I'LL HAVE COLORS,
I'LL HAVE SOUNDS TO TASTE...
WHILE INVENTING A SOUND
NO OTHER BAND HAS...

OTHER PLAYERS
WANNA RIFF, WANNA RIDE,
LET RHYTHM BE MY GUIDE,
THAT DEVIL RHYTHM INSIDE.
BIG BAND...

OTHER PLAYERS
BEAUTIFUL SHAPELY AND YOUNG
WOMEN ARE NEEDED FOR
PROFESSIONAL ALL GIRL BIG BAND,

ALL PLAYERS
WANNA BE A SIDEMAN...
STICKS
FEEL THAT RHYTHM...
PAT
HOPE THEY LIKE ME...
BEATS
(to her trumpet)
READY, ERNIE?

WANNA BE A SIDEMAN...	ALL PLAYERS
	STICKS
(to LIPS, about busty TROMBONE PLAYER)	
SHE CAN'T PLAY,	LIPS
BUT SHE'S GOT BIG ONES...	LANA
SAME OLD STORY—	ALL PLAYERS
WANNA BE A SIDEMAN...	LOU
WHO'S THE FATTY?	BRIT
WHO'S THE ASSHOLE?	ADELE
GOT MY PLAYERS!	ADELE AND PLAYERS
IN AN ALL GIRL BAND!	

ACT I
Scene 2

Chicago, March, 1945.

A tiny rehearsal room, immediately following.

THE GIRL MUSICIANS are dressed in casual clothes, bundled up in hats, gloves and mufflers. THEY are sardine-packed into the tiny rehearsal room. LOU watches from the side of the room. ADELE leads the band from the trombone section as THEY play a corny arrangement of "One Kiss Ago." TOMMY is coloring in a book on the floor. After sixteen bars, ADELE cuts them off.

Lou. What in God's name is this? ADELE

What's the problem? LOU

This corny arrangement. It's sickeningly sweet. ADELE

(BAND ADLIBS, "You're not kidding...etc.)

ADELE

(continued)

Never mind, Ladies. I'll write us something that swings.

LOU

New arrangements are not in the budget.

ADELE

Then I'll speak to Miss Lee.

TRUMPET 2

While you're at it, could you speak to her about getting some heat?

TROMBONE 2

Yeah, we're freezing to death.

(NALEEN, a pretty, unsophisticated young woman of seventeen, enters, stands hesitantly by the door.)

LOU

You must be Withers.

ADELE

(to LOU, astonished)

She's our first alto? Shirley Temple better know how to blow.

(approaching NALEEN, going through the motions to be pleasant)

Hello. I'm Adele, the musical director and "arranger". Welcome to the Honeytones.

LIPS

What is she, ten?

(Laughter in the group. NALEEN is clearly uncomfortable.)

LOU

(to NALEEN)

You're playing first alto.

BRIT

(taken aback)

What? I thought--

LOU

You thought wrong.

SAX 3

(to BRIT)

But you're tenor.

BRIT
I play alto, too. I played lead in my band back home.

LOU
Then go back home.

ADELE
Please, won't you take your seat?

(NALEEN starts to move to her chair, sits. BRIT glares at her.
JIMMY, an energetic, good-looking young man of seventeen
enters with two music stands and stands quietly at the back.)

LOU
Quit yapping. I got some notes.

ADELE
Notes? Lou, they've only played sixteen bars!

LOU
(crossing to TROMBONE 2)
Lose ten pounds. (to LIPS)
Gain ten pounds. And buy yourself some falsies. This is an all *girl* band. (to NALEEN)
Wear lipstick. (to PAT)
Change your lipstick. (to STICKS)
New hairdo. (to LANA)
Perfect. (to BEATS)
Hopeless. (BEATS looks away, humiliated.)

LIPS
Why don't they send *him* to fight the Germans?

ADELE
(pained for BEATS)
That'll do, Lou.

LOU
I'm not finished. Jimmy?

(JIMMY comes out of hiding and crosses to LOU.)

LOU

The kid's bright--He's arranged for his highschool band upstate--

TRUMPET 2

He's adorable. I could arrange something with him.

(The WOMEN ADLIB, teasing him. JIMMY blushes.)

LOU

(to ADELE)

He'll be assisting me for a couple of weeks and he can pass out the parts, whatever you need.

(JIMMY catches NALEEN's eye, she looks away.)

ADELE

Great. What's your name?

JIMMY

James—Jimmy Meisner.

ADELE

(to LOU)

Son?

LOU

Nephew.

ADELE

Delighted to have you with us.

LOU

Let him arrange something.

ADELE

What?

LOU

Let the kid have a crack at a tune.

ADELE

This is a professional—

LOU

I said, let him have a go at it.

ADELE

For God's sake.

(really piqued)

All right. Here's "One Kiss Ago." Let's see what you can do. Have it ready Wednesday.

JIMMY

This Wednesday??

(EVERYONE is shocked at her request.)

ADELE

(cool)

Is that a problem?

JIMMY

(nervous)

Of course not.

ADELE

(for LOU'S benefit)

Good. I'm sure you can give it some of Eddie Sauter's orchestral blends and layer it with Bill Finegan's bitonal harmonies.

(JIMMY half nods, sits.)

LIPS

(to STICKS)

She is tough.

ADELE

Ladies, it looks like I'll be writing most of the new arrangements, but please don't be shy if you've got an idea for a number. I know a few of you sat in with some of the big male bands—you must have picked up some things there...

TROMBONE 2

I'll say! I'm still scratching.

(BLOSSOM LEE enters. SHE is a striking woman in her early forties, elegantly dressed, with a commanding presence. Her speech, like her clothes, reflect an acquired elegance which she unwittingly drops when she is angry, or caught off guard.)

BLOSSOM

Good afternoon, ladies! At last, we meet. We are going to work very hard to create the most successful all-girl band in America!

(stops suddenly, less elegant, more herself)

Christ, it's freezing in here.

LOU

Until we get a date, we cut corners.

BLOSSOM

Poor darlings! They're shivering!

LOU

This ain't the Ritz.

BLOSSOM

Or Alcatraz! Book a decent space with some heat--by tomorrow!

(The WOMEN cheer, LOU is stone-faced.)

BLOSSOM

(continued)

You must be Adele. Lou tells me we're so very lucky to have found you.

ADELE

Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Lee. We've got a great group of players.

BLOSSOM

Of course we do.

ADELE

No point wasting them on a bunch of sweet stuff.

BLOSSOM

There's nothing wrong with sweet music.

ADELE

Miss Lee, I didn't agree to musical direct this group so I could lead a silly society band.

BLOSSOM

Adele. It is, Adele, isn't it? What is the most popular, most successful all-girl band today? Come, come.

ADELE

Phil Spitalney And His All Girl Orchestra.

BLOSSOM

Right. A *sweet* band. And which is the only band that has its own radio show?
(ADELE doesn't answer.)

Phil Spitalney again.

ADELE

The corniest band alive.

BRIT

"Alive"? You're too kind.

BLOSSOM

We're a new group and it's tough enough out there...

ADELE

Because no one takes girl players seriously. *Why should* they, if all we ever play is syrupy stuff like this?

(reads from magazine)

I'm reading from Down Beat. "Why Women Musicians are Inferior."

(WOMEN grumble ADLIBS throughout.)

"The woman musician was never born capable of sending anyone further than the nearest exit. Emotionally unstable, they could never be consistent performers on musical instruments; lacking the time, ambition, and economic motivation to woodshed.

STICKS

What a jerk!

ADELE

(to STICKS)

You'll like this one! "If more girl drummers had egg beating and cradlerocking experience before their musical endeavors, they might come closer to getting on the beat."

(vociferous ADLIBS, so ADELE motions them to pipe down)

"Let women remain in the home where they truly shine, knitting in the parlor, or making jam in the kitchen."

BRIT

What a limp-weened ass.

SONG: "JAM AIN'T MADE IN THE KITCHEN!"

ADELE

LET OTHER GALS FILL THEIR LADLES,
AND LET THEIR HOUSE PLANTS BLOOM,
LET THEM ROCK THEIR CRADLES,
WE'LL ROCK THE ROOM!

ADELE

(continued)

JAM AINT MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
LADIES, LET'S MAKE THAT CLEAR,
JAM AINT MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
AND WE GOT THE BEST RECIPE HERE.

JAM AINT MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
BUT WHEN WE COOK, THERE IS HEAT,
EVERY COURSE'LL BE BEWITCHIN',
EVERY MUSICAL MORSEL'S A TREAT.

START WITH SOME RHYTHM,

(Rhythm section comes in playing very hot. BLOSSOM reacts.)

LANA

ADD SOME BONES,

(Jazz trombones are added. Again, BLOSSOM is not pleased.)

BEATS

STIR IN THOSE TRUMPETS,

(Horns soar, BLOSSOM rolls her eyes at LOU.)

LIPS

AND SOME SAXOPHONES!

(Saxes sweep a phrase at Blossom.)

IT MAKES YOU WANNA MOVE,

STICKS

GIVES YOU ITCHY FEET,

ADELE

I'M AFRAID SMUCKERS CANNOT COMPETE!

ALL

TURN IT DOWN TO A SIMMER,
SOFT, DELICIOUS, SUBLIME,
OUR JAM MAKES A GIRL SLIMMER,
'CAUSE SHE'LL WANNA DANCE ALL THE TIME.

(Dance break with jamming among the women.)

BEATS plays a fantastic jazz solo, impressing THE PLAYERS.)

LIPS
I COULD NEVER SERVE PEAR PRESERVE,

(LIPS plays a lick.)

LANA
MY ORANGE MARMELADE WOULD NEVER MAKE THE GRADE,

(She tops her lick.)

PAT
MY RASBERRY JELLY WOULD POISON YOUR BELLY!

(PAT really goes to town.)

ALL
JAM AIN'T MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
MR. DOWNBEAT, TUNE UP YOUR EAR,

BRIT
(refined, British)
YOU CAN SAVE YOUR JAM FOR YOUR TEA AND CRUMPET,

ALL
(big and brassy)
WE'LL SLATHER OURS ON WITH A RED HOT TRUMPET...

SO SIR, MUTE ALL YOUR BITCHIN',
NO SIR, DON'T INTERFERE,
JAM AIN'T MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
IT'S MADE HERE, IT'S MADE HERE,
IT'S MADE HERE, IT'S MADE HERE!!!

(As the song ends, THE WOMEN are exuberant, celebratory.)

BLOSSOM
(pleasant, but emphatic)
You can play whatever you want on your own time. But while I'm paying your salaries,
you play what I tell you to.

(ADELE and THE PLAYERS share a look of disbelief.)

BLOSSOM

(continued)

I'll be fronting the band and doing most of the singing—A few years back I sang on Broadway—Still, I don't intend to be piggy. The best bands feature the individual talents of all its members, so any of you golden-throated gals will have your turn.

BRIT

All right!

BLOSSOM

Now, as for the actual leading, I'll be in charge from now on.

ADELE

Miss Lee...Even once you're fronting the band, the players take the tempo off me.

BLOSSOM

But I have the baton.

ADELE

But that's no reason for you to actually lead.

LOU

Everyone in the house will assume they're following you anyway.

BLOSSOM

(gleefully)

And they will be!

(ADELE and THE PLAYERS exchange looks.)

LANA

(whispers to next PLAYER)

I smell disaster.

BRIT

Another rich bitch with a music itch!

BLOSSOM

(to BRIT, unsure of what she said)

Excuse me?

(NALEEN has taken out her horn, an old model.)

BRIT

(covering)

Uh, I was just commenting on the horn of our first alto. It's quite something.

(NALEEN, thinking BRIT friendly, proudly hands it to her.)

NALEEN

It's been in my family a long time. It was my Granddaddy's.

BRIT

A student horn! What a hoot!

(SEVERAL girls can't help but laugh. OTHERS feel badly. NALEEN suddenly bolts out of the rehearsal space. ADELE starts after her.)

LOU

I didn't excuse you.

BLOSSOM

I didn't excuse you.

ADELE

(ignores them, to WOMEN)

We're on break.

(ADELE exits; THE WOMEN hesitate, not knowing who to listen to.)

BLOSSOM

(not to be outdone)

Better yet, we'll see one another at ten o'clock tomorrow morning. Mr. Meisner will let us know where. Go home and take a hot bath. All of you.

(MUSICIANS start to pack up.)

LOU

Ladies, I was able to get you free passes to the Palmer House tonight.

(THE PLAYERS ADLIB exclamations of excitement.)

LANA

(taking TOMMY's hand)

First he freezes us to death, then he gets us passes.

BRIT

So what. They say Hitler loves children.

(as THE PLAYERS take passes, exit)

BEATS

I hope that kid's okay.

BRIT

Oh Christ. If *she* can blow, I'm Scarlet O'Hara.

(Suddenly we hear a beautiful, melancholy sound of NALEEN's alto sax emanating from the next room. THE WOMEN look at one another, surprised. JIMMY is impressed and moved.)

STICKS

(to BRIT, imitating Rhett Butler)

Frankly, my dear...

(THE WOMEN exit, leaving only BLOSSOM and LOU.)

BLOSSOM

Fire that woman.

LOU

You'll lose the players that came with her. Besides, she'll come around.

BLOSSOM

Says you.

LOU

That's right. And don't ever cross me again like you did in front of the girls.

BLOSSOM

I think your choice of this rehearsal space went beyond concern for my pocketbook.

LOU

What's that supposed to mean?

BLOSSOM

You think Phil Spitalney tortures *his* girls?

LOU

You'll be sorry if you spoil them early on.

BLOSSOM

I don't think having heat and a decent place to rehearse is spoiling them.

LOU

I guess being from such a fancy family, you're real sensitive to things like that.

BLOSSOM

(resuming her more proper self)

Well, perhaps. Perhaps I am.

LOU

You make me laugh. Broads like you think a bottle of peroxide can wash away your past, but a businessman knows how to do a little research.

BLOSSOM

(proper)

I'm sure I don't know what you mean, but if I did,

(her real self)

I wouldn't ever want to hear about it again.

LOU

Suit yourself. I'm warning you. I'll leave you like *that* if you ever cross me again in front of the players. You don't know a rat's ass about the band business and like it or not, you need me.

BLOSSOM

Said the worm to the bird.

(LOU exits, a concerned BLOSSOM watches him leave. LIGHTS dim and come up on:)

ACT I

Scene 3

An adjacent small practice room with piano,
Immediately following.

(NALEEN stops playing when ADELE enters.)

ADELE

You really can wail, can't you!

NALEEN
(not responding to ADELE's enthusiasm)
I never thought of my horn as cheap.

ADELE
If you're going to let some jealous second-rate musician affect how you feel, it's your own fault. In this business you've got to have big brass ones.

NALEEN
Brass what?

ADELE
Never mind.

NALEEN
It's just—This is my first professional job—

ADELE
Don't let *her* make you nervous. Let *me* make you nervous.

(NALEEN doesn't smile.)

ADELE
(continued)
I'm trying to revoice some of the chords...I'm no Count Basie. Cut me some slack if I hit a clam.

(ADELE starts to play a jazz tune. NALEEN crosses to her.)

NALEEN
I know that one.

THE PHONOGRAPH IS PLAYING,
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH YOU'RE STAYING,
ONCE AGAIN YOUR EYES HAVE GOT THAT GLOW.

ADELE
Wow! Your singing chops are as good as your playing chops. You're really going give those girls something to be jealous about.

(then)

We'll be rooming together here in Chicago. We're the two double U's. Withers, Weinstein...

NALEEN
You're Jewish!

ADELE

Glenn Miller says you can't have a good band without at least one Jew in it.

NALEEN

Ever since I was little and learned that Jesus was a Jew, I wanted to meet a Jewish person.

ADELE

I take it you've never been to New York.

NALEEN

It's my dream. To play there with a big band. You think you might take the Honeytones to New York on tour?

ADELE

We will if I have anything to say about it. Of course, we'll have to make some real noise here to get a tour.

NALEEN

Make noise?

ADELE

Make an impression. How did Lou ever find you?

NALEEN

I saw an ad in the Tribune. My mother passed away over New Year's and I don't have any other family, so I need the work.

ADELE

A band can be like a home. And the girls, like family, if you can stand having so many sisters.

(ADELE nods to NALEEN, who starts to sing.)

NALEEN

I TRIED SO HARD TO HATE YOU,
BUT HOW COULD I NEGATE YOU...
WHEN MY LOVE HAS NO WHERE ELSE TO GO?

ADELE

Have you ever been in love?

NALEEN

No, why?

ADELE

It's just maybe a girl's got to have her heart broken before she can really do this song justice. I'll come up with something better suited to you.

NALEEN

Have you had a real love affair?

ADELE

No. Just a marriage. Up 'til last year.

NALEEN

What happened?

ADELE

Well, my husband felt no woman could be a musician and a good wife and he was right. Not good in the way most men expect, at any rate. He wanted me to give up playing, but I knew I'd be miserable. So when I went back on the road, he fell in love with a woman who wasn't cursed by talent. Getting more than you bargained for, huh?

NALEEN

I didn't mean to ask a lot of...

ADELE

No. It's fine. It's over. What do you say we get some dinner?

NALEEN

I'd like that. Oh, I left my music in the—

ADELE

Go ahead. I'll wait for you.

(NALEEN exits. ADELE begins to sing, her rendition reflecting her recent heartbreak.)

SONG: "ALL I NEED TO KNOW"

ADELE

THE PHONOGRAPH IS PLAYING,
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH YOU'RE STAYING,
ONCE AGAIN YOUR EYES HAVE GOT THAT GLOW.
SO TENDERLY YOU KISSED ME,
CONVINCING ME YOU MISSED ME,
THAT'S ALL I NEED TO KNOW.

ADELE

(continued)

I TRIED SO HARD TO HATE YOU,
BUT HOW COULD I NEGATE YOU,
WHEN MY LOVE HAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO?
WE'RE IN YOUR EASY CHAIR NOW,
YOU'VE ENDED YOUR AFFAIR,
NOW THAT'S ALL I NEED TO KNOW.

DON'T CARE TO HEAR THE WHERE OR WHY,
OR WORSE, SOME CLEVER ALIBI,
CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH YOU LOOK AWAY,
WHEN I DON'T BELIEVE A WORD YOU SAY.

YOU WANT THIS ALL BEHIND US,
SO NOTHING WILL REMIND US,
BUT SOMETIMES WE MUST REAP THE PAIN WE SOW,
NO LONGER WILL YOU ROAM NOW,
YOU LEFT, BUT YOU'VE COME HOME NOW,
THAT'S ALL I NEED TO KNOW,
THAT'S ALL I NEED TO KNOW.

(BLACK OUT.)

ACT I
Scene 4

BLOSSOM'S house, Chicago, that night.
A phone booth in a burlesque hall.
on the other side of the stage.
Burlesque music plays throughout the scene.

(The phone rings, BLOSSOM answers.)

Hi Sugar.

JOEY

What do you want?

BLOSSOM

Now that's no way to greet your number one and only backer, is it?

JOEY

To what do I owe the pleasure of your call?

BLOSSOM

JOEY

I was thinking, Sunday we could take a drive up to the country--

BLOSSOM

We're rehearsing.

JOEY

Take the day off.

BLOSSOM

Can't.

JOEY

But you're the boss.

BLOSSOM

I hate the country.

JOEY

You used to love it.

BLOSSOM

All that fresh air without a purpose.

JOEY

I haven't forgotten how it was with us.

BLOSSOM

Neither have I. That's why I'm on my own now.

JOEY

(suddenly piqued)

You think you're the first broad who quit stripping to try to make it in music or the movies? I even had one who set her heart on becoming a nurse. A nurse! Every one of them returned--even Florence Nightingale is back in her g-string.

BLOSSOM

If you're so sure I can't make it, then why'd you lend me the money?

JOEY

If I'm wrong, I get my money back and a healthy piece of your profits. If I'm right, I get to watch you fall on your beautiful ass.

BLOSSOM

(angry)

You're gonna get your money on time--half six months from now and the rest in a year.

Half in three months, the rest in six.

JOEY

We made a deal!

BLOSSOM

Then have your attorney speak to my attorney.

JOEY

You bastard.

BLOSSOM

There's a thousand girls half your age, all trying to do the same thing. Face the facts, Lucy La Rose.

JOEY

(He hangs up.)

Fact! You're a loser! Fact! You're jealous!

BLOSSOM

(yelling into receiver)

(BLOSSOM hangs up, is suddenly vulnerable, distraught.
BLACKOUT.)

ACT I
Scene 5

The Congress Hotel, Chicago.
The hallway outside ADELE and
NALEEN's room. That night.

(NALEEN is on her way out as JIMMY passes by.)

Aren't you going dancing?

JIMMY

Yes--(then, realizes) I'm not sure...Are you?

NALEEN

Nope--I'm going to listen to my arrangement.

JIMMY

On the radio?

NALEEN

(confused)

JIMMY

I wish! No, no. Inside my head.

NALEEN

What?

JIMMY

I lie back on my pillow and keep myself very still and think of the melody --in this case it's "One Kiss Ago," right? And little by little I start to hear the arrangement --you know-- what instruments I'm going to use. We start to have a kind of conversation. The brass say "Start with me" (JIMMY imitates the phrase with brass) and the bass says "If you have any class at all, you'll start with me." (imitates bass) Then the alto sax gets uppity-- she can be downright arrogant--"What about me? Time for a solo!" (imitates sax) And when I listen really close and don't make them into something they don't want to be, I can come up with something really good.

NALEEN

(enthralled)

You make it sound so easy.

JIMMY

I do? Well, it's not. For the verse, I was hearing trumpet—

NALEEN

Baritone sax would give it a darker quality

JIMMY

(a bit reluctant to concede)

Bari sax could work.

(pauses, as if listening to it both ways in his head, then)

Bari sax would be better.

NALEEN

(suddenly apologetic)

But trumpet is a wonderful idea.

JIMMY

I never knew a girl I could really talk music with.

NALEEN

I still have a lot to learn.

JIMMY

Me too. Especially if I get to arrange for the army band--I turn eighteen this summer...

NALEEN

I'm sure you'll make a lot of noise as an arranger.

JIMMY

(insulted, confused)

Noise?

NALEEN

It's an expression. It means people are going to hear about you. You'll be successful.

JIMMY

Well, I heard you play this morning, and you're going to "make more noise" than all the rest of us put together.

NALEEN

You really mean that?

JIMMY

Of course I do, Naleen.

SONG: "WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU"

NALEEN

WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU,
FROM THAT MOMENT, YOU NO LONGER FEEL ALONE,
WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU,
HE WILL TAKE YOU TO A PLACE
WHERE DREAMS ARE GROWN,
IT TAKES JUST A WORD OR TWO,
IF SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU.

JIMMY

WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU,
WHEN A GIRL THAT YOU ADMIRE SAYS YOU'LL GO FAR,
YOU KNOW THAT YOU MUST COME THROUGH,
SHE'LL BE WATCHING AS YOU CHASE THAT FAR OFF STAR,
THERE'S NOTHING THAT YOU CAN'T DO,
WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU.

BOTH

SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE YOUR DREAM IS UNREACHABLE,
SOME DAYS YOU FEEL LIKE A FOOL TO PRESS ON,
THEN HE/SHE TELLS YOU THAT HE/SHE HAS FAITH IN YOU,
HIS/HER WORDS BECOME YOUR WINGS,
YOU CAN DO A THOUSAND THINGS,
YOUR FEARS ARE GONE.

WHEN SOMEONE IS ON YOUR SIDE,
SUDDENLY THERE IS MUSIC,
AND A LISTENER FOR YOUR SONG,
A MELODY GROWS INSIDE,
AS YOU SING IT, YOU WILL LOVE HIM/HER ALL LIFE LONG,
THE MELODY'S SWEET AND NEW,
WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU,
WHEN SOMEONE WONDERFUL BELIEVES IN YOU.

(THEY are brimming with emotion and deperately want to kiss,
but do not.)

JIMMY

(fired up)

Uncle Lou's got me running errands tomorrow--What do you say we get some supper
after your rehearsal? I could show you what I've come up with so far.

NALEEN

I'd like that.

(MUSIC swells. Impulsively, JIMMY moves to NALEEN and
kisses her. As JIMMY exits, NALEEN is beaming,
BLACK OUT.)

ACT I
Scene 6

The Palmer House Lobby,
Immediately following.

(GINO, a tough, handsome "businessman", sporting a dark suit,
speaks excitedly into a telephone near where LOU is standing.)

GINO

What do you mean they're not coming? Didn't Angelo send them the final contract?
Well? For crying out loud--It's my ass on the line--How am I supposed to find a great
band between now and the twenty-seventh? (Hangs up.)

LOU

Excuse me--I couldn't help overhearing--I manage a band--Blossom Lee and her
Honeytones...

GINO

Never heard of them.

LOU

Don't tell that to the Paramount. We're opening a two week engagement in New York next month.

GINO

No kidding.

LOU

Wait a minute...Did you say the 27th?

GINO

Yeah. So?

LOU

They can't postpone their recording date...We booked the studio...

GINO

Move the date.

LOU

I never forfeit a deposit.

GINO

Nuts to your deposit. How much was it?

LOU

A grand.

GINO

Here's your deposit. Now, let's work out the details over a drink.

LOU

All right. But don't sell me...I don't like to be pushed...

GINO

If I push, you'll know.

(LIGHTS DIM on GINO and LOU and COME UP on:)

ACT I

Scene 7

The Palmer House, minutes later.

(An infectious arrangement wails from the hot juice of (an offstage) big band. BRIT, BEATS, LANA, STICKS, LIPS and

OTHER MUSICIANS sit at a table close to the dance floor. In the back corner, LOU and BLOSSOM watch tail end of a dancing couple doing a floor show. MUSIC plays throughout this scene.)

LANA

I can't believe it. A girl drummer! At the Palmer House!

STICKS

(envious)

Good for her.

BRIT

I wonder whose horn she's tooting.

TROMBONE 2

She's not even great looking.

BEATS

(offended)

Maybe she's a good musician.

LANA

(to TROMBONE 2)

Really. You're as bad as the guys.

(BRIT smiles at YOUNG MAN at next table.)

BRIT

Ooh! Is he ever cute!

LANA

What about your husband?

BRIT

I'm married, not dead. "A little flirtation keeps the blood in circulation!"

(YOUNG MAN approaches BRIT's table.)

YOUNG MAN

Care to dance?

BRIT

Does your mother know you're out this late?

YOUNG MAN

I happen to be a senior at Northwestern.

BRIT

I don't dance with school boys. They don't know how to lead.

YOUNG MAN

Is that so?

(HE pulls BRIT toward him and carries her onto the dance floor.)

BRIT

Ooh! The campus caveman!

LANA

The flat-footed guys never had it so good.

(ADELE and NALEEN enter, are shown to a side table.)

ADELE

(about the music)

Ooh, those fellows are good!

NALEEN

(still floating)

Do you have a beau?

ADELE

A beau?

(to PASSING WAITER)

Waiter!

(amused, to NALEEN)

Yeah, I have "a beau." Max Siegel, a professor at Columbia University.

NALEEN

A professor!

ADELE

He would love to see you looking so impressed.

NALEEN

Is he handsome?

ADELE

Unfortunately, yes. Waiter!

NALEEN

So he's a lady's man.

ADELE

No, although he's been running around with a lady of questionable reputation for some time now.

NALEEN

(dismayed)

But what about *you* ?

ADELE

I am that lady.

NALEEN

(relieved)

Oh! So you can count on him? You think he's the marrying kind?

ADELE

Definitely.

NALEEN

How can you be sure?

ADELE

Because he's married.

(NALEEN reacts.)

What does a girl have to do to get a drink here?

(THE BAND begins to play an instrumental.)

NALEEN

(shocked)

Why would you go with a married man?

ADELE

(ironic, pretends to survey the room)

Is my mother here?

NALEEN

Don't you ever want to get married?

ADELE

I'll vamp until ready. No, this arrangement is much better. Max has his wife and I have my music. He can't ask me to give up my music because I don't ask him to give up his wife.

NALEEN

It's not very romantic.

ADELE

Thank goodness, no. I'll tell you what's romantic...Coming up with a wild and magical improvisation on a night you didn't know you had it in you.

(GINO enters, makes his way over to LOU.)

GINO

(to LOU)

May I have this dance?

LOU

(introducing GINO to BLOSSOM)

Gino, Blossom.

(BLOSSOM nods politely. GINO barely looks at her.)

GINO

I need a word with you.

LOU

(to BLOSSOM)

Excuse me.

(GINO and LOU cross away from the tumult. MUSIC is in full swing.)

GINO

Just heard a new joke. How do you know a girl musician is at your door?

LOU

How?

GINO

She can't find the key and she doesn't know when to come in.

LOU

That's good.

GINO

Yeah, I just heard it from your guy in New York.

(dropping friendly facade)

Paramount Theater, my ass. He can't stand girl bands and never books them.

LOU

(nervous)

So I got a little carried away. The Chicago crowd's gonna love them.

GINO

What crowd? The only way I could get a crowd is if your girls agreed to play butt naked.

LOU

It's paying butts in seats that you want, isn't it?

GINO

Yeah? So? Don't screw with me.

LOU

Have you heard of Lucy La Rose?

GINO

What red blooded Chicagoan hasn't? She stopped stripping a ways back. I've been flying my pecker at half-mast ever since.

LOU

Would you remember her face?

GINO

I'd remember the rest of her better.

LOU

(gesturing back toward the table)

Take a good look at Miss Blossom Lee.

GINO

(relishing the sight)

That is perfection! La Rose by any other name is still as sweet.

LOU

With one call to your P.R. man, you think he can fill the house now?

GINO

Why didn't you say so in the first place?

LOU

She's dead set against it, that's why. She's stayed out of Chicago for seven years and figures no one will recognize her. So you didn't hear this from me.

GINO

How does she sing?

LOU

Meisner never lets anyone down.

GINO

Let's hope not or you'll be jamming with Gabriel. And I'll take that grand back.

(LOU hands him the money. GINO moves to the band, chats with BAND LEADER, who glances over in BLOSSOM'S direction. LANA enters as LOU is about to sit. HE approaches her as she makes her way to her table.)

LOU

Hello, gorgeous.

LANA

Mr. Meisner.

LOU

Lou, please.

LANA

I didn't think...

LOU

I know how to enjoy myself? Sure I do. Where's that cute kid of yours?

LANA

At the hotel with one of the girls.

LOU

Great. How 'bout we dance?

LANA

Sure.

(stuck)

(LOU and LANA dance.)

LOU

You really play well.

LANA

Thanks.

LOU

You have real power. If I was to close my eyes and listen, I'd swear you were a man.

LANA

(transcending)

Thanks.

LOU

(looking at her shape, pulls her closer)

Otherwise, you are one hundred percent woman.

LANA

(pulling back)

My husband died in the war.

LOU

I'm sorry. I didn't know. So you're not ready.

LANA

Thanks for understanding.

LOU

I can't promise I won't try.

(seeing an impatient BLOSSOM, continues)

Don't fill up that dance card, gorgeous. I'll be back.

(LOU crosses to BLOSSOM.)

BLOSSOM

What did the gentleman have to say?

LOU

He wanted to send me some perfume and wished to know my scent.

BLOSSOM

I'm surprised he didn't smell a rat.

LOU

So I should tell him we don't want the featured band spot at the State Lake?

BLOSSOM

What? The State Lake? Us? You're joking? How?

LOU

Isn't that why you hired me? Next Friday.

BLOSSOM

Friday? That's crazy, that's impossible!

LOU

You told me to find the band work.

BLOSSOM

I know, but next Friday! I haven't rehearsed.

LOU

Is this a hobby or you want a paying gig?

(BEATS, LANA and LIPS at a table. BEATS starts to cry.)

LANA

What's wrong?

BEATS

Lou said he'd never have hired me if he had seen me first.

LANA

He saw your photo.

BEATS

No, I never sent him mine. He took me on Adele's say so.

LANA

It's just his way.

LIPS

Hey, he told me my upper register sounds like a dying monkey having forced relations.

BEATS

He's looking for a replacement. Sticks heard him asking the hotel manager about players.

LANA

What's your name?

BEATS

Beats.

LANA

Beats. You're one of the best players in the band. He's not going to fire you.

(BEATS gets up to leave, LANA stops her.)

BEATS

Please stay. I'm fine. Really I am.

LIPS

He's just cranky because he's old. He's got to be at least forty.

(LANA and LIPS watch BEATS leave.)

(LOU crosses to ADELE's table, tells her the news. From her expression, it's clear she is not happy with what she's heard. ADELE crosses with LOU to BLOSSOM as BRIT and YOUNG MAN cut the rug on the dance floor.)

YOUNG MAN

My uncle's a pal of Tommy Dorsey's.

BRIT

Really?

YOUNG MAN

He taught me chopstix--syncopated, of course. I could introduce you, if you like. He's always looking for new girl singers.

BRIT

(gives him a little kiss)

Let's get out of this place.

(YOUNG MAN follows BRIT out of the ballroom.)

(BLOSSOM and LOU's table)

LOU

I landed the most prestigious gig in Chicago!

ADELE

You know we can't be ready by the 27th!

BLOSSOM

We'll work round the clock if we have to.

ADELE

Horn players can't. Their mouths swell up or bleed. And some of the finest bands in the country have played there this season and I'm not going to make a fool out of myself or the other musicians.

LOU

(taking ADELE aside)

Look, our collective asses are on the line. She's got the bucks, you've got the experience, and like it or not, you need each other.

ADELE

I have the girls to think about.

LOU

The girls? If we lose this gig they could all be back book-keeping and coat checking next month. Weren't you driving a hearse part time?

(ADELE looks shocked that he knows.)

LOU

I do my research.

ADELE

All right. I'll help pull the band together the best I'm able and hope for a miracle--

BLOSSOM
(ironic)

Bless you.

LOU
(overlap)

Smart girl.

ADELE

On two conditions. First, we get to perform a couple of new arrangements.

BLOSSOM

You mean hot arrangements.

ADELE

Right. I'll do it for nothing. I'll even copy out the parts myself, if I must.

BLOSSOM

I'm not about to perform a hot, jazzy—

ADELE

You won't have to—One of the other girls can. And *L* lead from my section. You can wave your baton, but the players take their cues from *me*.

(BLOSSOM looks at LOU who nods.)

BLOSSOM

All right. You win.

ADELE

I wish you didn't think of it that way.

(ADELE crosses back to her table.)

NALEEN

Jimmy's taking me to dinner tomorrow night!

ADELE

(alarmed, stern)

Naleen. I'm going to speak to Blossom about featuring you as a singer at the State Lake Theater.

NALEEN

(confused)

The State Lake? But I've never—

ADELE

You're a natural. But you've got to focus your energies on your work. Don't get stuck on some silly go-fer of Lou's. Do you understand?

NALEEN

Yes, yes. When?

ADELE

Soon enough. Just go back to the room and get some sleep.

NALEEN

All right. Thank you, Adele!

(NALEEN exits as BANDLEADER speaks.)

BANDLEADER

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to invite up to the bandstand a very talented singer, who will grace us with a song of her choosing. Miss Blossom Lee.

BLOSSOM

(shocked, terrified)

What? How could you?

LOU

(glancing over at GINO)

It wasn't me. But you better get up and chirp, Canary.

(BLOSSOM pastes on a smile and walks to the bandstand. LOU holds his breath, as he sees GINO watching with interest.)

LIPS

She has a real good walk.

(ADELE and THE PLAYERS watch intently as BLOSSOM whispers into the ear of the BAND LEADER and takes the mike.)

BANDLEADER

Uh one, uh two, uh three...

(BLOSSOM is nervous and sings tentatively.)

BLOSSOM
ONE KISS AGO, YOU WERE JUST A FRIEND,
WE HAD NO IDEA THAT LOVE WAS NEAR,
FOR WHO COULD KNOW HOW OUR LIPS WOULD BLEND,
AND THAT THE TENDERNESS WE YEARNED FOR WAS HERE?

BLOSSOM
(continued, forgetting the words)
LA LA LA... ..

(BLOSSOM tries in vain to salvage the number, but her debut is clearly a disaster. The Palmer House BANDLEADER tactfully takes the mike away from a humiliated BLOSSOM.)

LIPS

Holy cow.

BANDLEADER

Thank you, and now let's get you swingophiles jumping as our brass arsenal gears up for "Victory Swing."

(GINO walks across the room toward LOU. BLACKOUT. Scene changes to:)

ACT I
Scene 8

A hallway at the Congress Hotel, Chicago.
Later that night.

(LIGHTS UP ON NALEEN, hesitating outside JIMMY's door. She knocks.)

JIMMY

Well, hello.

NALEEN

Adele wants me to sing at the State Lake!

JIMMY

Sing? You *sing*, too?

NALEEN

Adele thinks so.

JIMMY

At the State Lake! That's wonderful! See, I told you, Naleen. I knew it!

NALEEN

I just had to see you.

(JIMMY takes her hand, closes the door behind them, kisses her. LIGHTS dim and come up on:)

(The hallway outside ADELE and NALEEN's room; LANA and ADELE stop to talk.)

ADELE

It wouldn't be the first time a girl got sacked for not being pretty. I knew it was a risk when I hired her.

LANA

Did you ever take a good look at the guys in a male band? Big bellies, bad teeth and more hair growing out of their ears than on top of their heads.

ADELE

Nothing we can do about it tonight. I better get going on my arrangement.

LANA

(looking at watch)

And Tommy gave me a midnight curfew. He waits up for me now.

ADELE

It must be tough for him. I heard about your husband.

(LANA's smile fades.)

ADELE

(continued)

I lost my kid brother in North Africa six weeks after he enlisted. He would have been twenty-two next week.

LANA

I'm so sorry. It's a terrible war.

ADELE

Unlike all the good ones. Good-night.

(ADELE enters, looking exhausted.)

Giddy-up, Giddy-up. TOMMY

(to FLAKE)
We're rehearsing. ADELE

Rides over, cowboy. FLAKE

Jimmy? ADELE

Yes, maam? JIMMY

ADELE
If you had time to socialize last night that must mean you finished your arrangement.

JIMMY
You said tomorrow—(sees ADELE's look) But uh, actually, I've got it right here.

(ADELE is surprised. SHE peruses the score.)

Bet it's damn good. LOU

JIMMY
I got a kind of Gene Krupa thing going on here in the drums.

That's my boy! STICKS

(STICKS plays a loud Krupa drum lick, as LANA enters with instrumental parts and leaves them by ADELE.)

ADELE
Sticks! Please!

(to JIMMY, still cool)
The brass needs work. The rhythm's not bad, but you need to relax the beat here and wait to drive it there.

JIMMY
Hmm. I suppose you're right.

ADELE

(snapping)

I know I'm right. Why do the saxes drop out?

JIMMY

They don't. I was going to finish this afternoon—

ADELE

So you're saying you *haven't* finished it.

STICKS

What's with *her*?

LANA

She was up all night arranging.

ADELE

(to JIMMY, significantly)

Where's Naleen?

JIMMY

I don't know.

ADELE

You don't know? Please pass these parts out.

JIMMY

(at a loss)

What about my--?

ADELE

(dismissive)

The parts please.

(JIMMY passes out the music. PAT enters with a newspaper.)

ADELE

Pat. Don't be late again.

PAT

I'm sorry, but we took Iwo Jima!

(THE PLAYERS cheer.)

LOU

With any luck the war will be over in a few months and I can get a real job.

You're a real charmer, Lou.

ADELE

It'll be back to waitressing for me.

FLAKE

I hope the war continues a while.

BRIT

What?

LANA

SONG: "WHILE THEY KEEP SHOOTING, WE KEEP TOOTING"

BRIT

I'M NOT A FAN OF WAR,
I DIDN'T PLAN THIS WAR,
BUT LET'S FACE THE FACTS,
IN TIMES OF PEACE OUR GIGS DECREASE,
AND YOU WON'T BE BLOWING YOUR SAX.

I'M NOT SAYING WE'RE HAPPY PLAYING
WHEN ONE OF OUR SHIPS IS SINKING,
BUT I'M THE ONLY SHIT,
WHO'S WILLING TO ADMIT
WHAT EVERYONE ELSE IS THINKING!

WHILE THEY KEEP SHOOTING,
WE KEEP TOOTING,
LADIES, YOU KNOW THE SCORE,
WHILE THEY'RE INVADING,
WE'RE SYNCOPATING,
I PRAY FOR A HUNDRED YEARS WAR.

WHILE THEY KEEP SHOOTING,
WE KEEP TOOTING,
WHAT'S THE USE OF PRETENDING?
WE'VE GOT SOME WORK,
IT'S A BLOODY PERK,
I CRIED WHEN THE WAR BEGAN...
I'LL CRY EVEN MORE IF IT'S ENDING.

THE OTHER WOMEN

(incensed, with patriotic fervor)

PRAY NOW FOR OUR COUNTRY,
MAY WAR SOON BE THROUGH!
OUR BOYS WILL COME HOME THEN,
HERE'S TO RED, WHITE AND BLUE,
RED, WHITE AND BLUE.

BRIT

I WANT NO SERMONS
ON JAPS AND GERMANS,
I'VE DONE MY PART FOR THE WAR,
IF FATE DETERMINES
WE'RE WOODY HERMANS,
AN ARMISTICE IS A BORE!

BRIT

WHILE THEY KEEP SHOOTING,
WE KEEP TOOTING,
LADIES, YOU KNOW THE SCORE,
WHILE THEY'RE INVADING,
WE'RE SYNCOPATING,
I PRAY FOR A HUNDRED YEARS WAR

WOMEN

PRAY NOW FOR OUR COUNTRY,
MAY WAR SOON BE THROUGH,
OUR BOYS WILL COME HOME, THEN,
HERE'S TO RED, WHITE, AND BLUE,
RED, WHITE AND BLUE!

PAT

(reluctantly agreeing)

THOSE OLD WOLVES WHO RUN THE CLUBS
USED TO FONDLE AND ANNOY ME,
THE CALL TO ARMS HAS CHANGED THEIR TUNE,
NOW THEY JUST EMPLOY ME.

FLAKE

(also reconsidering)

WE USE OUR CHOPS TILL THREE A.M.,
JAMMING ON SOME BALLAD,
OUR TALENTS WHEN THE MEN RETURN
COULD STOP AT CHOPPING SALAD.

BRIT/FLAKE/PAT

WHILE THEY KEEP SHOOTING,
WE KEEP TOOTING,
WE DIDN'T ASK FOR THIS WAR,
BUT WE'VE GOT SOME WORK,
IT'S A BLOODY PERK,

(BRIT goes to town riffing on her horn.)

BRIT/FLAKE/PAT

AND WE WANNA TOOT,
WE DONT GIVE A HOOT,
WE WANNA TOOT SOME MORE!!!

THE OTHERS

BOYS, COME HOME!
PRAY NOW FOR OUR SOLDIERS
MAY WAR SOON BE THROUGH!

(SONG ends. NALEEN sneaks in.)

ADELE

(severe)

Naleen, you're late.

NALEEN

(dodging her bullet)

You got a message from Max.

ADELE

We're rehearsing, Naleen.

(continued, to PLAYERS, feigning excitement)

Can I have your attention for a minute? I have some exciting news. We're going to be playing as the featured band at the State Lake!

(BAND squeals with delight, ADLIBS)

Next Friday night.

(Silence, then ADLIBS: "Friday night? And you agreed? Whose idea is that? That's crazy! Why not open when we're ready?)

ADELE

(continued)

The good news is we're going to be performing something hot.

(ADLIBS "Hallelujah" "At least we'll die happy", etc)

ADELE

Let's read it down, huh? Uh, one, two, three, four.

SONG: "IF YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT"

ADELE

IF YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME,
YOU BETTER NOT DENY IT,
CAUSE I'VE GOTTEN SMART,
WHEN IT COMES TO MY HEART,
IF YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT.

ADELE

(continued)

SWEET NOTHINGS THAT YOU WHISPER,
I'VE TAKEN OFF MY DIET,
'CAUSE NEXT ON MY PLATE,
SHOULD BE OUR WEDDING DATE,
IF YOU BREAK IT, I'LL RIOT.

MY PA CAN'T WAIT 'TIL I'M A BRIDE,
SO IF YOU COME TO WOO,
HE'LL PROUDLY HAVE ME BY HIS SIDE,
HE'LL HAVE HIS SHOTGUN, TOO!

SO IF YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME,
YOU BETTER NOT DENY IT,
'CAUSE I'VE GOTTEN SMART
WHEN IT COMES TO MY HEART,
IF YOU BREAK IT,
YOU CAN'T FORESAKE IT,
IF YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT!

(THE PLAYERS love the arrangement, ADLIB their appreciation.
BLOSSOM enters in a rage. She holds several newspapers.)

BLOSSOM

Lou! Over here! Now!

LOU

(to ADELE)

Play something. Loud.

ADELE

Letter B, Ladies.

(BLOSSOM and LOU cross DOWNSTAGE as THE BAND plays
the uptempo. ADELE suddenly motions to play softly, and THEY
can't help but overhear BLOSSOM and LOU'S conversation.)

BLOSSOM

How did this happen? I want an answer.

LOU

(reading)

"Blossom Lee, alias Lucy La Rose, the former stripper..."

(to BLOSSOM, a concerned expression on his face)

LOU

(continued, keeps reading)

"who made her name as one of Chicago's class act burlesque shows..."

(To BLOSSOM, again)

Well, they say you're a class act--

(Dirty look from BLOSSOM)

"will appear at the State Lake next week-end. The question is, will Blossom be dropping her petals like she used to?"

(Shakes his head.)

I had nothing to do with it.

BLOSSOM

If you did, you'll be singing soprano at the Lyric Opera in no time.

(As BLOSSOM starts to cross back to THE BAND, SHE sees their jaws dropped. A silence. BRIT sings the traditional "take it off" strippers' theme and STICKS adds the strip drum beat. THE WOMEN break up laughing, ADLIBBING.)

BLOSSOM

Stop that. Lou!

LOU

Ladies. Enough. Ladies!

(THEY stop.)

BLOSSOM

Now, I'll be leading on Friday night.

LOU

Blossom. There's too much to do and not enough time. Just pretend.

ADELE

Wave your stick. No one will know the difference.

BLOSSOM

I'll know!

(to LOU)

And I suggest you stay out of this.

ADELE

The front man is supposed to charm the crowd—not worry about the downbeat! And it'll be especially hard in the hot numbers.

We're not playing hot.

BLOSSOM

What? You agreed--

ADELE

BLOSSOM

(losing it)

I didn't start this band so I could wiggle my ass like a chorus girl to some jungle beat! We're playing *sweet* and *refined* when we open Friday night or you'll all be out looking for jobs after the weekend. Get it?

(BLOSSOM exits. THE BAND is speechless.)

PAT

Next thing you know, we'll be doing Gregorian chant.

NALEEN

We should play at least one hot number! Especially when you went to all the trouble--

(ADLIBS of approval from THE BAND)

ADELE

Okay, okay. Let's break for lunch.

FLAKE

It's only ten thirty.

ADELE

Then order oatmeal. I gotta think.

(THE BAND exits as LOU crosses to ADELE.)

LOU

It's rotten luck for her. Someone leaked to the press.

ADELE

(nobody's fool)

Now what S.O.B. would do that?

LOU

(moving right along)

Blossom's forbidden hot arrangements. But you never agreed to that, and Jimmy just wrote something that really swings.

ADELE

I don't get you. First you insist on sweet, now you're suggesting--

LOU

The players are upset... If they're too unhappy, some may walk.

ADELE

It's that easy for you, isn't it? Don't you even feel drawn to one kind of sound or another?

LOU

I'm only concerned about the sound at the cash register.

ADELE

It must be liberating to have no soul.

(LOU is stung, says nothing as ADELE exits. CROSSFADE TO:)

ACT I

Scene 10

Women in Jazz Festival, Boston, 1995.

OLDER WOMAN 1

I worked for some tougher managers than Lou—The worst one was shorter, fatter, almost as bald—and a woman!

OLDER WOMAN 2

Crazy Maisy. Is she still around?

OLDER WOMAN 1

No, she met an untimely death at 91. Untimely, because it should have been fifty years before.

(OLDER WOMAN 1 picks up a question from the basket, reads it to herself, hesitates, hands it to OLDER WOMAN 2)

OLDER WOMAN 2

"Do we still play?" Yes, I'm happy to say we've both continued to be quite active in music. This lady here, Adele Weinstein, is a musician's musician.

(WE now know that OLDER WOMAN 1 is OLDER ADELE.)

OLDER WOMAN 2

(continued)

She leads her own first rate sextet. And she's been a highly respected high school bandleader and teacher for more than thirty years.

OLDER WOMAN 1 (OLDER ADELE)

(uncomfortable)

Please.

OLDER WOMAN 2

(cheerfully)

As for me, I've also been part of an all female sextet as far back as I can remember. When we all hit fifty, we called ourselves "The Hot Flashes." A decade later we six became the Hexagons, and now, at seventy, we're the Sex-ages! We do cocktail parties, weddings, bar mitzvahs. We're not cheap, though. Tomorrow I've got a grand opening for Chevrolet—

OLDER ADELE

She deserved better.

OLDER WOMAN 2

I love to play. I play whenever and wherever I can.

OLDER ADELE

(an edge)

Michaelangelo didn't do house painting. That's why we have the Sistine Chapel.

(OLDER WOMAN 2 is taken aback,)

OLDER ADELE

(continued, softer)

You should have heard her in the old days.

(An uncomfortable moment between the WOMEN as LIGHTS dim.)

ACT I

Scene 11

The State Lake Theater, Chicago, 1945.

(LIGHTS UP on WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOM.
THE WOMEN are putting on their make-up. We hear
a MALE TRIO performing ONSTAGE.)

NALEEN

Why are you using mercurochrome?

BEATS

Lou insists. Lipstick comes off after you've been blowing a while.

LIPS

Whereas this stays on twenty years after they bury you.

NALEEN

Isn't it poisonous?

LIPS

I hope so. I'm not sure I want to witness our opening.

(LIGHTS COME UP on LOU and LANA outside dressing room door.)

LOU

(a little shy)

I know you collect four leaf clovers...

LANA

(looking at a silver clover on a chain)

Lou--I—Thank you—But you really shouldn't have--

LOU

It was in search of a beautiful neck.

(LOU puts it on her, beams. LANA crosses back into dressing room. STICKS enters, hands an impressive flower arrangement to ADELE.)

STICKS

For you. There's enough flowers here for a funeral.

NALEEN

Max must have arrived.

ADELE

(taking flowers)

Max must have cancelled. Thanks.

NALEEN

Why do you say that? They're beautiful. What are they?

ADELE

(admiring the lavish arrangement)

Looks like sheepishness and guilt to me.

(ADELE opens door, hands flowers to a passing stage hand.)

ADELE

Could you please give these to the theater manager? From Blossom Lee and her Honeytones?

NALEEN

You gave away Max's flowers?

(ADELE finally reads Max's card to herself.)

ADELE

(to NALEEN)

It's good for the band. Learn to turn every disappointment into a victory.

(ironic)

My life is full of victories!

NALEEN

(crossing to LIPS)

I'm so nervous...

LIPS

(teasing)

Why? There's only three thousand people out there.

NALEEN

It's more because Jimmy's watching. Gosh I'm nauseous. I guess I've just got the willies.

LIPS

Let's hope it's not from *his* willy.

NALEEN

You think I could be--?

LIPS

Why? Weren't you *there*? Pray you've only got butterflies in your stomach.

(LOU knocks on dressing room door.)

LOU

Everyone dressed?

(The scantily clad girls scream, and turn away.)

LOU

(continued)

We're on in ten.

(LOU exits. The MUSIC from a juggling act is now audible.)

VOICE OF M.C.

Let's hear it for the fabulous Frederick Brothers!

BRIT

(to NALEEN)

You must be really nervous. It's so easy to freeze the first time out.

PAT

Don't jinx her Brit.

STICKS

Yeah, haven't you got enough to worry about?

LIPS

Like coming in on time with the rest of our section?

BRIT

What about you? First you're sharp, then you're flat--

LIPS

I am not!

BRIT

Come on! Your pitch goes up and down like a whore's drawers!

STICKS

You should know!

ADELE

Ladies! Please! You're all accomplished musicians. I'm very proud of all of us. I've just got one note.

ADELE and ALL

Keep listening to one another.

ADELE

Right. We're an ensemble.

BLOSSOM

(not to be outdone)

Well, we all pulled together, and I just know we are going to be fantastic out there tonight. As Shakespeare says, "Courage mounteth with occasion" and since you're going to have to follow *me*, you certainly have an occasion!

(SET moves so that we now see full view of stage. M.C. is CENTERSTAGE.)

M.C.

Ladies and gentlemen. The State Lake theater is proud to present Blossom Lee and her Honeytones!

ADELE

Good luck.

(THE HONEYTONES take their positions on stage. SOUNDS of an exuberant audience, mainly male, showing their "appreciation" in advance.)

BLOSSOM

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen.

(Whistles, cat calls continue. THE WOMEN look at one another uncomfortably. BLOSSOM keeps her composure.)

VOICE OF HECKLER 1

Take it off, Lucy La Rose!

VOICE OF HECKLER 2

Open your petals, baby.

BLOSSOM

(ignoring whistles and comments)

I'm grateful to have these fine musicians behind me...

VOICE OF HECKLER 3

I'd like to be behind you!

BLOSSOM

Don't let their beauty fool you—they're first rate players. As a matter of fact, since the time they began playing as little girls, these ladies have practiced more than three hundred thousand hours. About as long as it takes you fellas to decide to propose.

VOICE OF HECKLER 4

Take it off, Lucy! Show us your talent!

VOICE OF HECKLER 2

Let's see you syncopate your garters!

BLOSSOM

Uh, one, two, three, four.

(In sharp contrast to ADELE'S earlier hot jazz version, BLOSSOM opens with a sweet, romantic, old fashioned arrangement of "IF YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT.")

BLOSSOM

ONCE YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME,
YOU BETTER NOT DENY IT,
'CAUSE I'VE GOTTEN SMART,
WHEN IT COMES TO MY HEART,
IF YOU BREAK IT, YOU BUY IT.

HECKLER 3

I love you!

SWEET NOTHINGS THAT YOU WHISPER,
I'VE TAKEN OFF MY DIET,
'CAUSE NEXT ON MY PLATE
SHOULD BE MY WEDDING DATE,
IF YOU BREAK IT, I'LL RIOT.

(Cat calls and whistling continues.)

VOICE OF HECKLER 4

We didn't come to hear you sing!

BLOSSOM

(turning to BAND)

Ladies. We don't deserve this and they don't deserve us. Let's go.

(THE WOMEN get up from their chairs, leave the stage and hurry to their dressing room.)

NALEEN

I didn't get to sing.

BRIT

That's show biz!

LIPS

I must say I admire her for walking off the stage.

(LOU finds BLOSSOM outside her dressing room.)

LOU

(furious)

We were the featured act! I told Gino we'd deliver!

BLOSSOM

That's not all you told him.

LOU

You're damn right I did! When they announced Blossom Lee and The Honeytones for tonight, the box office sold thirty seven tickets. Within one day, the name Lucy La Rose sold two thousand!

BLOSSOM

Two thousand too many. I would have gladly played to those thirty seven.

LOU

So suddenly you're an artiste?

BLOSSOM

You heard those pigs out there. If you'd been in my shoes—

LOU

We're both gonna be in *cement* shoes!

ADELE

(entering, to LOU)

Are you pleased with yourself?

(BLOSSOM storms into her dressing room, slams the door.
ADELE exits as GINO enters. LOU is very nervous.)

LOU

I've got nothing to do with what happened. She pulled the plug all on her own.

GINO

(quietly, coolly)

I want to see her.

(BLOSSOM emerges from her dressing room, still enraged.)

BLOSSOM

And since when did you—

(SHE suddenly sees GINO, falls silent.)

GINO

There you are.

(BLOSSOM steels herself.)

LOU

Apologize! Say you're sorry!

GINO

Shut up.

(GINO slowly circles BLOSSOM, gets close to her.)

GINO

(continued)

I'm disappointed.

(moves closer)

I don't like being disappointed.

(moves even closer. An excruciating pause. No one breathes.)

Truth is, you are one hell of a classy chick.

(LOU'S jaw drops, BLOSSOM gives a half smile)

GINO

(continued)

You owe me. How about dinner?

BLOSSOM

(aloof)

Dinner and what?

GINO

I never mix business with pleasure. You've got first-rate talent, you need first rate management. Excuse me.

(GINO walks back onto the stage.)

VOICE OF HECKLER 1

Hey, what the hell's going on? I want my money back!

(Other angry, rude calls from audience. GINO shoots off his gun several times, creating total silence in the audience. THE WOMEN creep back into the wings, amazed and terrified.)

GINO

In the theater business they say "break a leg." In my business, we are also familiar with this concept. We got a class act here and I know none of you wants to be disrespectful to as gifted a lady as Miss Blossom Lee. So let's have a big hand for Miss Lee and her Honeytones!

(A polite applause. Angry, GINO shoots off his gun again.)

GINO

(continued)

Once more with feeling!

(Huge applause. BLOSSOM and THE PLAYERS enter and take their places. GINO steps down into the house.)

BLOSSOM

Thank you. Thank you very much. Our youngest Honeytone, the lovely Miss Naleen Withers.

(THE BAND starts the opening vamp of "ONE KISS AGO."
NALEEN begins the verse slowly and sweetly.)

NALEEN

ALTHOUGH OF LOVE I DREAMED,
MY WHOLE LIFE LONG IT SEEMED
THAT LONELINESS WAS ALL I'D EVER KNOW.
TOO HESITANT AND SHY,
NO HOPE HAD I,
JUST ONE KISS AGO.

(THE PLAYERS look at one another as ADELE calls out a fast beat.)

ADELE

Uh one, two, three, four!

(BLOSSOM is shocked, furious, as the band launches into hot swing.)

BLOSSOM

Dammit! Of all the--

(THE BAND plays the red hot, vigorous arrangement with gusto, and BLOSSOM has no choice but to match their tempo with her baton.)

NALEEN

ONE KISS AGO,
YOU WERE JUST A FRIEND,
WE HAD NO IDEA THAT LOVE WAS NEAR.
SO WHO COULD KNOW
HOW OUR LIPS WOULD BLEND,
AND THAT THE TENDERNESS WE YEARNED FOR
WAS HERE?

ADELE

That a girl.

(NALEEN sings with confidence. THE BAND exchanges looks of triumph.)

NALEEN

WHAT SWEET SURPRISE
I FOUND IN YOUR EYES,
THEY REVEALED THAT LOVE WAS OURS TO KNOW...

(A nervous AGENT approaches GINO.)

AGENT

Mr. Benedetti...

GINO

Yeah? What?

AGENT

Uh, Ralph Pippis...

(no reaction)

We spoke on the phone?

(still no reaction)

From MCA?...

GINO

I know who you are. So what's the verdict?

AGENT

The truth is, my boss only had me come down here as a favor to you--

GINO

Well, I've done a couple of favors for him, in my day.

AGENT

But these girls are tremendous! I'm going to recommend that we start booking them right away.

GINO

Keep talking, my friend.

NALEEN

OH, SOMETHING WAS AMISS,
OUR HEARTS FELT NO SUCH BLISS,
ONLY A KISS AGO,
ONE SWEET, COMPLETE, DELICIOUS KISS,
JUST ONE KISS AGO.

(Saxophones scream, the music jumps, and a sweet feeling of victory sweeps through THE BAND. BLOSSOM is outraged, but smiles to disguise her fury. BLACKOUT.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

Women in Jazz Festival, Boston, 1995.

OLDER ADELE

The State Lake was a great night for us.

OLDER WOMAN 2

With MCA behind us, in the next couple of months, we played a number of high-class engagements in Chicago's theatres and ballrooms. Most of the time we did five shows a day, from early afternoon until after midnight.

OLDER ADELE

And those were the days before air conditioning. We played as *well* as guys and we smelled as *bad* as guys.

OLDER WOMAN 2

At the theatres there'd be a newsreel and a movie between shows so we had a little time to relax while Gary Cooper was breaking Myrna Loy's heart. Then before you knew it, it was time to stuff your swollen ankles back into your high heels...

OLDER ADELE

(a realization)

We were dead tired, our feet and our backs ached, but those long difficult days were the best of my life.

(LIGHTS DIM and come up on:)

ACT II
Scene 2

(1945, in the early summer, several months after the State Lake. A series of performances in theaters and ballrooms. A change in venue is denoted by a change in LIGHTING and a back drop. Through out the number, BLOSSOM sings slow and sweet, ADELE sings hot.)

SONG: "C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOOD-BYE"

BLOSSOM

(putting on French accent)

ALL AROUND THE WORLD,
FROM JAKHARTA TO JAPAN,
WHEN A GIRL IS LEFT,
SHE PURSUES THE WRETCHED MAN.
WE GAULOISE GIRLS THINK IT'S A CRIME
YOU LADIES WASTE YOUR PRECIOUS TIME,
FOR WHILE YOU DO YOUR CRYING,
YOUR DESPERATE "WHY OH WHYING",
WONDERING WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG,
WE'VE ALREADY KISSED ANOTHER,
PERHAPS HIS BEST FRIEND—OR BROTHER...
FOR WHEN WE WERE JUST BABIES,
MAMA SANG US THIS SONG:

YOU HAVE MAMA'S SWEET LOVE,
DARLING LITTLE BEBE,
BUT ONE DAY YOU'LL GROW UP
AND GIVE YOUR HEART AWAY,
THEN YOUR HEART WILL BE BROKEN,
FOR YOUR LOVER WON'T STAY,
AND A TEARDROP WILL FALL FROM YOUR EYE.

C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOODBYE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOODBYE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR,
THERE IS ONLY ONE CURE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOODBYE.

ADELE

(without French accent)

FOR OUR "ANNIVERSAIRE",
ALFRED BROUGHT ME "BIJOUX",
OH THE CARROTS HE DANGLED
WERE AT LEAST TWENTY-TWO,
THEN HE GAVE ME A HOOVER,
AND I KNEW I WAS THROUGH,
THERE WAS NO POINT IN ASKING HIM WHY...

C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOOD-BYE,
S.O.B., NOW FOR SURE, IT'S BYE-BYE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR,
I HAD LOST MY ALLURE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST LA GUERRE, SAY GOOD-BYE.

BLOSSOM

OH THEY MET BY THE SEINE,
ON THOSE WARM AFTERNOONS,
HOW THE SINGER, EMILE,
WOODED CECILE WITH HIS TUNES,
THEN SHE MARRIED HIS FATHER,
WHO MADE MILLIONS IN PRUNES,
TO HER TENOR, SHE SANG "DO NOT CRY" ...
C'EST LAVIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOODBYE,
PASS THE BRIE AND CHABLIS,

ADELE

ZIP YOUR FLY!

BLOSSOM

(having to rise above)

C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR,
YOU ARE SIMPLY TOO POOR,
OUI, OUI, OUI, WE AGREE, SING GOODBYE.

ADELE

ANNE BOLEYN WAS THE NAME
OF ONE SWELL MADAMOISELLE,
OH, SHE WON THE KING'S HEART
BUT SHE MADE HIS LIFE HELL.
HENRY THOUGHT SHE WAS KISSING
MANY OTHERS AS WELL,
THOUGH HIS CHARGES SHE TRIED TO DENY...

ADELE
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOOD-BYE,
POOR MISS B., BY DECREE, YE MUST DIE,
SAID THE KING, "JUST RELAX,
IT'S MY VERY BEST AX",

BLOSSOM
AND RIGHT THEN, WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE,
HENRY CUT OFF HER HEAD,
AND IT SAID AS IT BLED,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR,

(THE WOMEN start to interact more, their conflict showing.)

ADELE
(as HENRY)
"YOU ARE GUILTY FOR SURE!"
C'EST LA VIE...

BLOSSOM
(sweet)
C'EST LA VIE...

ADELE
(hot!)
HEY, C'EST "OOH LA LA" L'AMOUR...

BLOSSOM
(sweet)
C'EST L'AMOUR...

ADELE
(hot!)
SAY G, DOUBLE O, D, B, Y, E...

BLOSSOM
(sweet)
SAY GOOD-BYE.

(BLACK OUT)

ACT II
Scene 3

Backstage, after the performance.

(LOU, LANA and TOMMY.)

LOU

A buddy of mine came to hear us--he's got a connection with some top sponsors. He won't bring 'em unless she's out.

LANA

So we can find another sponsor.

LOU

Is Beats such a good friend of yours?

LANA

I know how she must feel.

LOU

(amused)

You?

(looks at her top to bottom)

I don't think so.

LANA

Please, Lou?

LOU

Okay, we'll see what else comes along.

LANA

Thank you.

LOU

Whatever the princess wants.

(HE takes her hand, kisses it. SHE forces a smile, uncomfortable.)

ACT II
Scene 4

Onstage, after the engagement.

(BLOSSOM finds GINO enjoying a smoke.)

BLOSSOM

I agreed to let the band do one hot number for every five sweet. But with all the jazz solos she's got them doing, she's sneaking in more and more time each set.

GINO

Still, you should be excited. Not every band gets a first rate tour this early on in the game.

BLOSSOM

(still riled)

One of these days I'm really going to give her a piece of my mind.

GINO

I would think you'd be fresh out of pieces by now. (pause) You originally a Chicago girl?

BLOSSOM

What's it to you?

GINO

Truth is, I'd like to get to know you.

BLOSSOM

Why is it people assume if they know where someone was born and what they like to eat for lunch, they're getting to know a person?

GINO

It's a start.

BLOSSOM

Anderson, Indiana, if you must know. A drunk of a father, a mother who ran off with a missionary when I was five, and several well meaning aunts and uncles from Oregon to Georgia who took turns raising me until one by one I wore them out with my---what did they call it--my "impossible nature."

GINO

I think nature was very good to you. So, where'd you start singing?

BLOSSOM

What *is* this?

GINO

Come on.

In church. **BLOSSOM**

You? In church? **GINO**

I used to love singing those hymns. It made me feel--I don't know, like everything would turn out all right. Of course it never did. **BLOSSOM**

You in a pew. Hard to picture. **GINO**

That's because you got no goddamn imagination. **BLOSSOM**

You'd say that after last night? **GINO**

Don't fish. You might come up with an empty hook. **BLOSSOM**

You know, watching you at the Pink Flamingo all feathers and flesh, I'd never have believed you were such a tough cookie. **GINO**

Well, you're not exactly what I imagined a big time gangster to be. **BLOSSOM**

(SONG: "YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED")

GINO
PART DEVIL, PART MADONNA,
YOUR EYES AN ICY BLUE,
CAPONE AND GIANCANA
WOULDN'T WANNA FIGHT WITH YOU!

THE MOMENT THAT I MET YOU,
SOME ANGEL CAST A SPELL,
I'M CERTAIN IF I LET YOU,
YOU'D MAKE LIFE HEAVENLY...HELL!

YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED,
YOUR LIPS ARE SOFT AND SWEET,
YET PHRASES THEY'VE PERFECTED,
DRUNKEN SAILORS WOULD NEVER REPEAT.

That's a Goddamn lie!

BLOSSOM

GINO

YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED,
YOU LEAVE ME UNPREPARED,
MY HEART IS UNPROTECTED,
YOU'VE GOT ME RUNNING SCARED.

BLOSSOM

I THOUGHT YOU'D BE A NIGHTMARE,
A BULLY AND A THUG,
BUT NOW I SEE YOU MIGHT CARE,
YOU'RE JUST A LUG WHO NEEDS A HUG.

YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED,
COULD NOT PICK OUT YOUR KEY,
BUT NOW THAT WE'VE CONNECTED,
I RATHER LIKE YOUR MELODY.

(THEY dance as they talk.)

BLOSSOM

I don't get it. Most guys like you got as much rhythm as a sardine sandwich.

GINO

You're not the only one with music in your blood. My dream was to conduct opera.

BLOSSOM

(laughs)

Go on!

GINO

Truth is, I never wanted to be in my line of work--but I was pressured to go into the family business. I know 'em all...Turandot's got beheadings, Boheme's got tuberculosis, Butterfly's got suicide...

BLOSSOM

Sounds cheerful.

T.B. AND GROSS BEHEADINGS,
AND SOME OLD FASHIONED SUICIDE,
AT LEAST YOU LEFT OUT WEDDINGS,
THAT'S ONE HORROR I CANNOT ABIDE.

GINO
I'VE GROWN QUITE FOND OF BOTH OF YOU,
THE ANGEL AND THE SHREW.

BLOSSOM
A HOOD WHO SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT CLASS IS,
YOU'VE GOT YOUR FORTY-FIVE AND YOUR OPERA GLASSES!

BOTH
YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED,

GINO
NATURE SMILED DESIGNING YOU,

BOTH
NOW THAT I STAND CORRECTED,

BLOSSOM
I COULD STAND SOME RECLINING, TOO!

(Underscore continues as THEY dance.)

GINO
The prince falls madly in love with Princess Turandot-- but he doesn't want her unless
she loves him.

BLOSSOM
Foolish guy. Why would he ruin a perfectly romantic night by bringing up love?
Anyway, I thought you didn't mix business with pleasure.

GINO
I don't. I'm talking about love. That's torture, not pleasure.

BLOSSOM
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE BRUTAL,
THOUGHT YOU'D BE MEAN AND LOW--

GINO
THOUGHT YOU'D BE SWEET AS STRUDEL,
BUT YOU'RE THE TOUGHEST BROAD I KNOW!

YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED,

BLOSSOM
LIKE SOME OLD VAUDEVILLE PRANK,

GINO
YOU'RE SUBTLE AS A TANK,
BUT WHAT CAN I DO?

BLOSSOM
WHAT CAN YA DO?

BOTH
THOUGH YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED,
THE PASSION WE'VE DETECTED,
YOU HAVEN'T YET OBJECTED TO...

GINO
LOVE CAN BE A THING SUBLIME,

BLOSSOM
BUT IT'S A DANGEROUS HEIST, AN IMPERFECT CRIME,

GINO
SO I GUESS I'LL EXPECT TO DO SOME TIME...

BLOSSOM
I'M--

BOTH
WITH YOU!

(SONG ends. BLACK OUT. LIGHTS COME UP on :)

ACT II
Scene 5

Various backstage areas, the same night.

(JIMMY and NALEEN)

JIMMY
What would a talented girl want to get married for?

NALEEN
The usual reasons, I guess.

JIMMY
Gee, Naleen--I don't have any money--I may even be going overseas--and if the war ever ends, I'll be studying music-- --I don't see how, right now...I do love you, Naleen, but--

I'm going to have a baby, Jimmy.

NALEEN

A baby...

(in utter shock)

JIMMY

Yes.

NALEEN

(LIGHTS dim on NALEEN and JIMMY and come up on LANA.
backstage. LOU appears suddenly, in a rage.)

Where did your husband serve?

LOU

In the South Pacific.

LANA

How did he die?

(grabbing her)

LOU

His ship was attacked--torpedoed.

LANA

Liar! How dare you lead me on...

(shaking her, slaps her once)

LOU

I never--

LANA

I spoke to a drummer who knows you.

(letting her go)

LOU

What a waste. There are a million real women who'd die to have your looks.

(LOU exits. LANA is visibly shaken. BLACKOUT.)

(LIGHTS UP on LIPS and THE BAND singing to
the tune of "On the Road to Mandalay")

LIPS
ON THE ROAD FOR M.C.A.,
FORTY NIGHTS WITHOUT A LAY,

OTHERS
BUT WHO KNOWS, WITHOUT OUR SWEETHEARTS,
SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT COME OUR WAY!

(THE WOMEN break up laughing. CROSSFADE TO
BLOSSOM and LANA in BLOSSOM'S dressing room.)

BLOSSOM

You sure you're all right?

(LANA nods.)

I don't want to hear any more talk about you leaving the band. Don't worry about Lou.
I'll deal with him in my own way.

LANA

I'm afraid...

BLOSSOM

I said, you leave that to me. Now, if you don't mind my asking...

LANA

How'd I get Tommy? I lived with—and got involved with—his mother—a singer—of
sorts. She'd gotten pregnant by one of her dealers and one day she just left. She left the
baby, too.

BLOSSOM

Why didn't you give him up?

LANA

I loved him. I had helped care for him. And I had always wanted a child.

BLOSSOM

Well, as far as your love life goes, I don't care what you do—Some of the women I knew
in the theater did things I don't think they've even got a name for—And as far as I'm
concerned, it doesn't say much for the rest of us that we're attracted to men. There's a
theory says we were never meant to be with either—there was some—some third sex that
both men and women got along fine with, had children with—Then this group got wiped
out in some fire or ice age—after that, men and women were stuck with each other.

LANA

(amused)

Where'd you hear that?

BLOSSOM

You'd be surprised what inspired thoughts pop into your head when you've been thrown
down a flight of stairs by some jerk and have to perform with a broken jaw.

I'm sorry.

LANA

All part of my education. Now, does anyone else know about this?

BLOSSOM

Just Adele.

LANA

Of course.

BLOSSOM

(sighs)

But she wouldn't—

LANA

Listen Lana. Professionally speaking, I can't have it getting around that my prettiest girl prefers gals to guys. Our male audience doesn't want to know it...So you and Adele keep this quiet, understand? I like you and I like that kid of yours, so I'd hate to have to fire your ass. Now you go change, huh?

BLOSSOM

(LIGHTS DOWN on BLOSSOM and LANA, LIGHTS UP on OLDER ADELE and WOMAN 2.)

Now the truth is, there were plenty of women like Lana in the girl bands.

OLDER ADELE

I think maybe Sticks was, too, don't you think?

OLDER WOMAN 2

She's a drummer!

OLDER ADELE

(a confirmation)

With no men around, even the regular girls experimented a little.

OLDER WOMAN 2

(to AUDIENCE)

(OLDER ADELE gives her a look. OLDER WOMAN 2, realizing she has revealed herself, looks embarrassed, then laughs. LIGHTS dim, come up on women's dressing room (1945).

(BLOSSOM enters.)

BLOSSOM
Hello girls.

STICKS
You really outdid yourself tonight.

BLOSSOM
Well that wasn't hard, was it?

(THEY laugh. NALEEN enters.)

NALEEN
(glowing, covers any anxiety)
Hey everybody, I'm getting married.

(There is a moment of complete silence as THE BAND recovers from the news. Then ADLIBS and hugs of congratulations. ADELE doesn't move from her spot.)

LIPS
If you need a band for your wedding, I know just the one.

STICKS
Did you pick a date yet?

LIPS
I imagine it'll be Jimmy.

(Laughter from the group.)

ADELE
(to LIPS and BAND)
How can you joke about this?

NALEEN
(sensing the strained feeling in the group)
If it's all right with Adele, I was hoping you could all come over to the room tonight-- since it's my last night--

ADELE
Your last night?

BLOSSOM
What about the tour?

NALEEN

I'm going to stay with Jimmy and his folks.

BLOSSOM

What? Why did you wait until the last minute?

NALEEN

I shouldn't have--I wasn't sure--I wanted to tell you--really I did.

BLOSSOM

You owe it to us to still come on tour.

NALEEN

No--I--It's impossible.

BLOSSOM

Why?

NALEEN

I just can't, that's all.

ADELE

Are you pregnant?

NALEEN

Yes.

(after a pause)

BLOSSOM

Just how pregnant are you?

NALEEN

Three months I think.

STICKS

Jimmy's just a boy!

BRIT

Obviously not.

PAT

This tour's a big break for all of us.

BLOSSOM

Please stay a few weeks--we need time to find a replacement.

NALEEN

I wish I could, but Jimmy thinks I need to get settled with his folks, in case he's called for basic training.

ADELE

Naleen. The whole world is just opening up to you. You're beautiful. You sing. You play.

NALEEN

I want a *normal* life, too.

ADELE

There is no "too", Naleen. For women like ourselves it's either-*or*.

NALEEN

I can still play--

ADELE

Who with? The ladies from the Osh Kosh sewing club?

BRIT

Let her be.

ADELE

Stay out of this, Brit.

NALEEN

I don't want to spend my Easter like you, waiting by a telephone for a call that never comes--

BRIT

(to NALEEN, about ADELE)

Why should you listen to her? Marriage can be a beautiful thing.

ADELE

Do you tell that to your husband before or after you shack up with someone?

BRIT

What?!

LANA

You'd love for Naleen to leave so you could take her solos.

NALEEN

Why are we fighting? This is the last time I'll ever be with all of you!

(MUSIC UNDERSCORE begins.)

ADELE

(desperate, to BLOSSOM)

For God's sake. Talk some sense into her.

BLOSSOM

I can't tell her what to do.

ADELE

She's our lead alto!

BLOSSOM

Is that all you can think about?

ADELE

Well, someone around here has to!

BLOSSOM

We're talking about the girl's whole life!

ADELE

I know we are.

"TALENTED WOMEN"

ADELE

(to NALEEN)

TALENTED WOMEN NEED TO MAKE CHOICES,
MOST OF US NEVER DO,
SO FATE CHOOSES FOR US,
WE SOON JOIN THE CHORUS
OF VOICES THE WORLD HAS STOPPED LISTENING TO.

TALENTED WOMEN CAN NEVER BE FREE,
WE SEE EVERY SHADE OF THE BLUES,
AND HEARING THE CRY
OF A DREAM THAT WON'T DIE,
SOME OF US FIND INSPIRATION IN BOOZE.

TALENTS UNTAPPED,
GIFTS NEVER UNWRAPPED,
WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR MUSIC?
THE DREAM THAT YOU'LL BURN,
THE BREAKDOWN YOU'LL EARN,
AS YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON MUSIC.

ADELE

The glow you get when you sing and win over the crowd--you think you can just cut that part out of you? Soon you won't even be able to stand listening to the radio.

NALEEN

(miserable)

I love him!

ADELE

YOU LOVE HIM NOW BUT YOUR PASSION WILL FADE,
AS YOU BLAME HIM FOR THE TRAP THAT HE NEVER LAID,
FUNNY, WHEN HE LEAVES YOU, *HE'LL* FEEL BETRAYED.

TALENTED WOMEN CANNOT UNDERSTAND
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DREAM THAT THEY NEVER PLANNED,
WE NEVER GIVE THE DOWNBEAT THOUGH THE STICK'S IN OUR HAND.

ADELE

(continued)

You don't have to get married to have the baby. Stay with the band.

BLOSSOM

We can't have a baby on tour.

ADELE

Why not?

BLOSSOM

Because I said so.

ADELE

It's been done. Everyone can help.

BLOSSOM

She's not asking to come with us! For God's sake, let her marry the boy if she wants.

(to NALEEN)

A CHILD IN YOUR ARMS
MAY BE ALL THE MUSIC THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED,
AND IF YOU LOVE HIM, AS YOU SAY,
YOU SHOULD GO...

ADELE

I can't believe you're encouraging her!

BLOSSOM

Why? Is it such a prize to end up like the two of us?

TALENTED WOMEN KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS,

(gesturing to ADELE)

LISTEN TO HER EXPLAIN,
NO CHILDREN TO FOLLOW,
OUR "FULL" LIVES ARE HOLLOW,
SO WE PLAY LOUD ENOUGH TO BURY THE PAIN.

BLOSSOM AND ADELE

TALENTED WOMEN CAN NEVER BE FREE,

WE SEE EVERY SHADE OF THE BLUES,

ADELE

THE PATH THAT YOU TAKE,

BLOSSOM

THE CHOICE THAT YOU MAKE,

BOTH

WON'T QUIET THE ACHE FOR THE DREAM YOU MUST LOSE.

ADELE

Naleen, you're still a kid, yourself. You have plenty of time for babies.

NALEEN

What are you saying?

ADELE

Sometimes the best thing--

NALEEN

(horrified)

I'm having Jimmy's baby!

ADELE

All right! Ruin your life.

(LIGHTS DIM slightly on THE WOMEN and come up on LOU
and JIMMY by the club.)

LOU

How are you going to support a wife and baby and go to music school?

JIMMY

I can't. I figure I'll just pick things up along the way.

LOU

It doesn't work like that!

SUDDENLY TRAPPED,
YOUR ENERGY SAPPED,
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR MUSIC?
THERE'S ALWAYS A COST
FOR TIME THAT'S BEEN LOST,
SOON YOU'VE TOSSED AWAY YOUR MUSIC.

I REMEMBER A BOY A LOT LIKE YOU,
HIS GIFT WAS GREAT AND HIS DREAM WAS NEW,
MUSIC HAD BURNED ITS SONG IN HIS SOUL,
ONLY WHEN HE PLAYED HIS HORN WAS HE WHOLE.
BUT HE SACRIFICED IT ALL FOR A GIRL HE KNEW,
HE SACRIFICED IT ALL FOR A GIRL...

DON'T MAKE HIS MISTAKE--HE STILL LIES AWAKE,
I'M TELLING IT TO YOU PLAIN,
A DREAM GONE WRONG IS A SILENCED SONG,
HEARTACHE ITS ONLY REFRAIN,
YOU CAN NEVER ESCAPE THE GROWING DIN,
THAT RECURRING RIFF OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

(LIGHTS change, the melody becomes a rag, and in a memory, LOU sees a small combo playing; LOU as a young man takes a brilliant cornet solo. LIGHTS change again, to indicate present tense (1945.) Both sides of the stage are lit. LOU sings to JIMMY and ADELE sings to NALEEN.)

ADELE
TALENTS UNTAPPED,
GIFTS NEVER UNWRAPPED,

LOU
SUDDENLY TRAPPED,
ENERGY SAPPED,

BOTH
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR MUSIC?

ADELE
THERE IS A COST,
YEARS CAN BE LOST,

LOU
THERE'S ALWAYS A COST,
FOR TIME THAT'S BEEN LOST,

BOTH
SOON YOU'VE TOSSED AWAY YOUR MUSIC.

(JIMMY sings to LOU, NALEEN sings to ADELE.)

JIMMY/NALEEN
WHEN SOMEONE BELIEVES IN YOU,
THERE IS MUSIC,
THERE'S A LISTENER FOR YOUR SONG...

ADELE/LOU
WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR MUSIC?

JIMMY/NALEEN
A MELODY GROWS INSIDE,
AS YOU SING IT,
YOU WILL LOVE HER/HIM ALL LIFE LONG...

ADELE/LOU
WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MUSIC?

ADELE/BLOSSOM/NALEEN
TALENTED WOMEN CAN NEVER BE FREE,
WE SEE EVERY SHADE OF THE BLUES,
AND HEARING THE CRY
OF A DREAM THAT WON'T DIE,
YOU MAY ASK YOURSELF WHY
YOU MUST SUDDENLY CHOOSE.

THE OTHER WOMEN

TALENTED WOMEN CAN NEVER BE FREE,
WE SEE EVERY SHADE OF THE BLUES...

TALENTED WOMEN NEED TO MAKE CHOICES,
MOST OF US NEVER DO,
SO FATE CHOOSES FOR US,
WE SOON JOIN THE CHORUS
OF VOICES THE WORLD HAS STOPPED
LISTENING TO.

THE PATH THAT YOU TAKE,
THE CHOICE THAT YOU MAKE,
WON'T QUIET THE ACHE
OF THE DREAM YOU MUST LOSE.

LOU AND JIMMY
TALENTED WOMEN CAN BE DISARMING,
LOU
LOVE THEM AND TOSS THE DICE,
JIMMY
SO EASY TO TALK TO,
LOU
GIFTED AND CHARMING,
LOU AND JIMMY
BUT SOON ENOUGH YOU'LL BE PAYING THE PRICE.

(The following four stanzas are sung in counterpoint.)

BLOSSOM
A CHILD IN YOUR ARMS
MAY BE ALL THE MUSIC
THAT YOU'LL EVERY NEED,
AND IF YOU LOVE HIM,
LOVE HIM SO,
YOU SHOULD GO,
(to ADELE)
LET HER GO.

LOU
I REMEMBER A BOY
A LOT LIKE YOU,
HIS GIFT WAS GREAT,
HIS DREAM WAS NEW.

NALEEN AND JIMMY
(trying to convince themselves)
SOMETIMES YOU FEEL LIKE A FOOL TO PRESS ON,
THEN HE/SHE TELLS YOU THAT HE/SHE HAS FAITH IN YOU,
HIS/HER WORDS BECOME YOUR WINGS,
YOUR FEARS ARE GONE.

ADELE
TALENTED WOMEN NEED TO MAKE CHOICES,
MOST OF US NEVER DO,
SO FATE CHOOSES FOR US,
WE SOON JOIN THE CHORUS
OF VOICES THE WORLD HAS STOPPED LISTENING TO...

ALL
DONT THINK THAT IT CAN'T HAPPEN TO YOU!

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT II
Scene 6

Later that night.
The front door of BLOSSOM'S house.

BLOSSOM
Our bus driver tells me that even with a B ration card we may not have enough gas for the whole tour.

GINO
He's right. You need a G ration card.

(GINO takes a paper out of his pocket.)

BLOSSOM
I never heard of a G card.

GINO
It stands for Gino.

BLOSSOM

(reading)

Roses are red, Violets are blue, Fill up their tank, If life's precious to you. Gino Benedetti.

(kisses him)

Thanks. You're a real--gangster.

GINO

Too bad about that young singer.

BLOSSOM

Yeah, she reminds me a little of myself.

GINO

(laughs)

Like the Pope and me.

BLOSSOM

(good natured)

Shut up, will ya? I meant when I was young—I was sixteen, singing in a club about a mile from here, and more than a couple of folks said I had what it takes—that I was headed for the big time on Broadway--so I saved a little and bought my ticket for New York--like a million other girls before me—Then a week before I was supposed to leave, a “friend of the family” convinced me that I wouldn’t have anything to live on when I got there and suggested I first do a little—“dancing”--here in Chicago—so I’d have something to keep me afloat in New York...Would you believe I still have that bus ticket tucked away in my purse...

(shaking off the sentiment)

And the rest, as Shakespeare said, is one bitch of a mystery.

GINO

You’re a funny broad...You’re from the street, like me, but every once in a while you’ve gotta quote from a guy whose been dead three hundred years.

BLOSSOM

I like older men.

GINO

As if you’re ashamed or something—

BLOSSOM

What the hell is wrong with improving yourself?

GINO

Nothing. But I think you’re terrific—just like you are, without any of the dead guys.

BLOSSOM

(softer)

Thanks.

(GINO starts to come in.)

BLOSSOM (cont.)

Not tonight.

GINO

Miss faucet, you run hot and cold.

BLOSSOM

Please, Gino. I'm too tired to argue.

GINO

Well, that's a red letter day.

(HE kisses her, she smiles.)

BLOSSOM

My Aunt Betty taught me "never trust a man who kisses well."

GINO

Well, my Uncle Eddie taught me "find a woman who knows the difference."

(HE kisses her hand, exits. BLOSSOM stands on the porch and watches him leave. JOEY WADE jumps onto the porch, having seen her with GINO.)

JOEY

(sarcastic)

Today makes three months and when you didn't call home, I was worried about you.

BLOSSOM

You know I never agreed to three months.

JOEY

I suddenly got some expenses of my own.

BLOSSOM

All right, tomorrow we're going on tour. We're playing some top rooms--I'll be able to pay you in--

JOEY
(jumps up, lunges for her, threatens her physically)
If you got Gino Benedetti, you don't need my money.

BLOSSOM
(struggling)
It's not like you think.

JOEY
You got one month from today, understand?
(HE lets her go.)
One month.

(JOEY exits. BLOSSOM, shaken, runs to the phone, dials.)

BLOSSOM
Lou?

LOU
What's the matter?

BLOSSOM
How much money do we have right now?

LOU
This week we're a few dollars ahead..

BLOSSOM
We need profits--real profits.

LOU
You locate the genie. It doesn't happen overnight, even with MCA behind you.

BLOSSOM
What expenses can we cut?

LOU
Sounds like you had some common sense for dinner. Whenever I suggest a cut—

BLOSSOM
I'm listening to you now, right?

LOU
The hotels on the tour can come down a peg.

Do it. BLOSSOM

No new fancy costumes. LOU

(This one's painful.)

Agreed. BLOSSOM

Fire that trombone player. Her kid's an unnecessary expense. LOU

I know all about you and Lana. The boy and her stay. And don't you ever touch her again. BLOSSOM

(tough)
Now, what else?

Fire that fat trumpet player. LOU

Beats is a great player. BLOSSOM

You see any ugly duckings in Phil Spitalney's outfit? LOU

No. BLOSSOM

Because men are coming to see lookers. In a girl band, music comes second. On tour we'll be making a first impression on some very important promoters around the country. If you want return engagements, you get rid of her now. LOU

The players won't like it. Adele especially. BLOSSOM

Show up fifteen minutes late tomorrow. LOU

All right. Thanks. (hesitates, then) BLOSSOM

That's what I'm here for.

LOU

(BLACK OUT.)

ACT II

Scene 7

The rehearsal room, the morning after the
Joey Wade visit.

(BEATS takes the featured trumpet solo as BRIT, LANA
and LIPS stand down front and sing the novelty
tango/swing number.)

SONG: "THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU"

BRIT/LANA/LIPS

WHEN BENNY GOODMAN CAN'T FIND THE BEAT,
WHEN FRED ASTAIRE CANNOT MOVE HIS FEET,
WHEN RITA HAYWORTH HAS LOST HER HEAT,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU...

WHEN MUSSOLINI FINDS HEAVEN'S GATE,
WHEN TOMMY DORSEY WON'T SYNCOPATE,
WHEN AVA GARDNER CAN'T RATE A DATE,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU.

BUT UNTIL THEN,
I'LL THRILL WHEN-
EVER THE KISSES START,
FOR YOUR CHARMS
SOUND ALARMS
'ROUND MY HEART—
(AND EVERY OTHER PART!)

WHEN CHARLIE CHAPLIN SHAVES HIS MOUSTACHE,
WHEN ESTHER WILLIAMS CAN'T MAKE A SPLASH,
WHEN SHIRLEY TEMPLE STARTS SMOKING HASH,
WE'LL BE THROUGH...

WHEN THE ANDREWS SISTERS CAN'T HARMONIZE,
WHEN COCA COLA WON'T ADVERTIZE,
WHEN ETHEL MERMAN SINGS LULLABIES,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING...

WHEN LITTLE ABNER BECOMES URBANE,
WHEN RICHARD ROGERS WRITES NO REFRAIN,
WHEN HENRY FORD TELLS US "TAKE A TRAIN!"
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU.

WHEN J. PAUL GETTY HAS LOST HIS LOOT,
WHEN BIG JOHN WAYNE COMPLAINS HE CAN'T SHOOT,
WHEN MISS MIRANDA HAS CANNED HER FRUIT,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU.

BUT UNTIL THEN,
I'LL THRILL WHEN-
EVER THE LIGHTS ARE LOW,
FOR YOUR SPARK,
IN THE DARK,
MAKES ME GLOW,
(WHERE YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO GO!)

WHEN SIGMUND FREUD AVOIDS TALK OF SEX,
WHEN ROCKEFELLER STARTS BOUNCING CHECKS,
WHEN DRACULA RECOMMENDS TURTLENECKS,
WE'LL BE THROUGH...

WHEN CHEVALIER'S NO LONGER FRENCH,
WHEN MRS. ROOSEVELT'S A WILD WENCH,
WHEN THE SMELL CHANEL SELLS IS CALLED "LA STENCH",
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU,
THAT'S WHEN I'LL STOP LOVING YOU.

(SONG ends with another exciting Latin trumpet cadenza by BEATS.
THE WOMEN are exuberant.)

ADELE

Great, Ladies! We can still use more punch in the final chorus. Thank you Beats!

TRUMPET 2

Your mom had a Latin milkman, for sure!

(LOU crosses to CENTER.)

LOU

There's a problem in the trumpet section.

ADELE

Oh? What's that?

BLOSSOM

Well, Ladies...Last rehearsal before we begin the tour! Are we all ready to rehearse?

ADELE

All except Beats.

BLOSSOM

Yes. It wasn't an easy decision—for Lou—

LANA

No girl blows a horn like Beats within a thousand miles of here.

LOU

Look, everyone knows she plays great.

ADELE

That's her real crime, isn't it?

LOU

What are you yacking about?

ADELE

You're jealous of her. When you were twenty, you played with the best cats in town. I do my research.

LOU

(cut to the quick, covers)

The girl's fat. There's nothing more to it than that.

ADELE

We've already lost Naleen. You can't let Beats leave.

BLOSSOM

This is a business, not a hobby. She has to go. That's all there is to it.

GINO

It would be great if she was a knockout--But you gotta think about the sound. A band's gotta have a sound. And hot or sweet, she's a big part of it.

BLOSSOM

(ignoring him)

Ladies, I wish we could keep Beats—but we have to survive. We can't sacrifice everything we've worked for—I don't have to tell you how hard we've worked—

GINO

She only makes the other girls look that much prettier. In my business when we're meeting with another group we take a soft guy with us. It makes the boss look that much tougher.

BLOSSOM

This is a band—not a convention of hit men.

GINO

What's eating you? Calm down, Baby...

BLOSSOM

Don't "Baby" me. How dare you turn against me. Do you know how many people in this town are just waiting for me to fall flat on my ass? Every joint I stri—performed in thinks I'm turning up my nose at them by wanting to have my own band. They want me to fail.

GINO

--I just happen to disagree with you about the girl.

BLOSSOM

I don't need to take advice from a tone deaf thug.

GINO

It so happens I have perfect pitch and I got you this tour.

BLOSSOM

Our talent got us this tour.

GINO

(furious)

That's my guy up at MCA and don't you forget it.

BLOSSOM

I don't need your slimy connections.

GINO

Oh, you don't, do you? Then the tour is off and so is your MCA contract.

BLOSSOM

Get out!

GINO

With pleasure!

(GINO exits. BLOSSOM paces, enraged.)

You sure showed him, didn't you?
BRIT

I hope you're satisfied.
ADELE

That's what you get when your band leader's a stripper.
BRIT

You're fired!
BLOSSOM

What?
BRIT

Oh, for God's sake!
ADELE

She's been a thorn in my side since day one!
BLOSSOM

Good riddance to you, too. I should have known any band of yours would end up a bust.
This whole thing smelled rotten from the start.
BRIT

Said the skunk to the rose!
BLOSSOM

(BRIT looks at the other players, exits.)

Let's rehearse.
BLOSSOM

For what?
ADELE

I said, let's rehearse.
BLOSSOM

(THE PLAYERS look at one another, then at ADELE, who nods.
THEY pick up their instruments. BLACKOUT.)

ACT II
SCENE 8
Various Locals.

An ironic REPRISE of opening number ("I WANT TO BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND") will interweave a number of vignettes that occur over the course of several weeks.)

ALL
I WANNA BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND...

(LOU, in the rehearsal room. ADELE and SEVERAL PLAYERS enter.)

LOU
No rehearsal today. You have the day off.

ADELE
Again?

STICKS
What about lunch?

LOU
We don't provide lunch on days off.

STICKS and TROMBONE III
THIS IS NOT THE REPERTOIRE I HAD PLANNED...

(THE WOMEN look at one another. CROSSFADE to LANA, TOMMY, PAT and FLAKE in a room at the hotel. PAT and FLAKE share a bed as do LANA and TOMMY. PAT and FLAKE are trying to sleep head to foot.)

PAT
I haven't had a decent night's sleep in weeks.

FLAKE
Stop stealing the covers.

PAT
Me? God, your feet stink.

FLAKE
They do not. And we wouldn't have to sleep head to foot if you didn't snore.

I do not. PAT
Witnesses? (loudly, to LANA) FLAKE
Sh... He's asleep. LANA
Mom? TOMMY
Was asleep. LANA
(annoyed, to FLAKE)
(PAT moves to the floor. FLAKE looks at her.)
PAT
At least I won't get kicked in the head. Figures Lou still gets his own room.

FLAKE
AIN'T IT GLAMOUROUS?
PAT
AIN'T IT GRAND?
PAT AND FLAKE
(ironic)
SO GLAD I GOT TO BE A SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND.
(CROSSFADE. THE WOMEN, LOU, BLOSSOM in the rehearsal room.)

TRUMPET II
What's the point? No one's gonna touch us. Gino put the word out.

BLOSSOM
Pat is downtown right now meeting with her manager friend at the Harmony Club.

LIPS
We would have been playing the Howard Theater in D.C. tonight! The Howard Theater!

BLOSSOM
Tell that to your manager.

LOU
Don't blame me. We agreed to can Beats, not Gino.

(PAT enters, looking faint.)

ADELE
What happened?

PAT
He books a lot of MCA groups and can't take the risk.

(BAND ADLIBS "What's the point", "It's useless", etc.)

LIPS
WE NEVER EVEN PLAYED THERE,
PAT
EVEN SO, WE'RE PANNED,
STICKS AND OTHERS
BECAUSE WE HAD A REAL LIVE GANGSTER
IN OUR ALL GIRL BAND.

(CROSSFADE. STICKS, LIPS, ADELE in hotel room. They are eating like starving dogs.)

ADELE
Sticks, how in God's name did you manage all this tuna?

LIPS
She pawned her drums.

ADELE
What?

STICKS
Big mouth.

ADELE
Sticks!

STICKS
I had to. I can't think when I'm hungry.

ADELE
Obviously not.

STICKS

A gig will come through before they're sold.

LIPS

Don't count on it.

ADELE

But we can't *do* a gig without drums!

(STICKS looks at ADELE, realizing what she's done.)

LIPS

WHEN "FINE DINING" MEANS IT'S CANNED,
YOU BECOME A SKINNY SIDEMAN IN AN ALL GIRL BAND.

(CROSSFADE to the rehearsal room. THE BAND is sitting,
exhausted.)

TROMBONE 2

My feet. Jeeze. Will you look at those blisters?

TOMMY

We walked a zillion miles today.

LANA

(brushing Tommy's hair)

It's true. No one's interested in booking us. I'm not putting him through that again.

LANA AND TROMBONE 2

(continued)

POUNDING THE PAVEMENT

'TIL YOU CAN BARELY STAND,

STICKS

YOU'RE REALLY IN THE MONEY WITH A BUCK IN HAND,

PAT

FROM DAY TO DAY YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE YOU MAY
LAND,

ALL

IF YOU GET TO BE A SIDEMAN, A SIDEMAN, A SIDEMAN,

(ironic)

IN A FIRST RATE, TOP FLIGHT, ALL GIRL BAND!

(REPRISE ends, with THE PLAYERS completely down.)

(LOU enters, excitedly.)

LOU

The Dapper Dans' whole brass section came down with the flu! They had to bow out of their Radio Swing appearance--

BLOSSOM

(excited)

And?

LOU

Mario--their manager--he's a buddy of mine--he was just about to phone in the cancellation when I happen to call him. I insisted he suggest The Honeytones and we got the date!

ALL

Radio!

LOU

WMPW!

LANA

They broadcast clear to the East Coast and as far North as Canada!

ADELE

Promoters, bookers and agents will be listening. We've got one chance to define our sound.

BLOSSOM

You're goddamn right we got one chance--and that's why we're going to pick a sweet ballad with a sweet arrangement.

ADELE

Then count me out.

BLOSSOM

Fine. Anyone else care to join her?

(LANA, holding TOMMY's hand, moves to ADELE's side.)

BLOSSOM

You got a kid to think about. I'll give you a chance to change your mind.

(LANA stays. STICKS joins them. So does LIPS, PAT, FLAKE, and all of THE PLAYERS)

BLOSSOM

(swallowing hard, transcends, pretends to be almost delighted)
As the great Dante once said, "you can't fight city hall."

(THE PLAYERS cheer, hug ADELE. BLACK OUT.)

ACT II

Scene 9

The rehearsal room, that night.

(A table with a phone where LOU sits.)

LOU

(on phone)

Clayton. They're on in a couple of minutes. But they don't play like girls. Just take a listen--you'll like what you hear. All right, I just thought I'd mention it. Good luck on your new release.

LOU

(continued, hanging up)

Lucky bastard.

(LOU pours himself a drink.)

TOMMY

Lou?

LOU

Yeah?

TOMMY

Would you teach me to play the trumpet?

LOU

Who said I play?

TOMMY

My Mom.

LOU

I'm sorry, kid. You got the wrong guy.

(LIGHTS UP STAGE RIGHT on the radio station. THE WOMEN are all poised to play.)

Is my lipstick okay?
TROMBONE 2

It's radio!
(rolling her eyes)
TRUMPET 2

How'd you get the drums back?
(to STICKS)
LIPS

Turns out the pawnbroker used to be a sideman. He took pity on me.
STICKS

That's "Blossom Lee and Her Honeytones." Can you say it before and after we play?
BLOSSOM
(taking ANNOUNCER aside)

Relax, Sweetheart. We're about to air. Stand by.
ANNOUNCER

(LIGHTS dim and come back up on LOU. NALEEN enters with her horn and a small bag. She appears tired and sad.)

Hello, Lou.
NALEEN

Naleen. What are you doing here?
LOU

Hi Tommy. I brought you something.
NALEEN

(TOMMY takes the gift.)

What do you say?
LOU

Thanks, Naleen.
TOMMY

(HE sits back down, opens a little boy drummer.)

I've come back to play in the band.
NALEEN

LOU
I can't have a knocked up girl playing lead sax.

NALEEN
But Adele said I could still--

LOU
Is Adele the manager?

NALEEN
No, but I--

LOU
There's one person who decides who plays and who doesn't and that's me. (then)
Where's Jimmy?

NALEEN
With his family.

LOU
Why aren't you with him?

NALEEN
His parents didn't want me, and I could see he didn't really want me either— Not that he said it--I'd be ruining his life-- I left this morning when he was sleeping.

LOU
You did right, Naleen.

NALEEN
Where is everybody?

(THE WOMEN play the up-tune with a vigorous beat. LOU motions to the radio on the desk. NALEEN's eyes light up.)

LOU
That's them, all right. I landed them the spot.

NALEEN
They're playing hot!

LOU
Yeah.

NALEEN
Blossom went for it?

LOU

You could say that.

(Over the radio we hear BLOSSOM singing a completely convincing hot version of the song.)

BLOSSOM

C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOOD-BYE...
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOOD-BYE,

NALEEN

I can't believe that's Blossom!

BLOSSOM

C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR,
THERE IS ONLY ONE CURE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY GOOD-BYE.

(PAT takes a trumpet solo.)

NALEEN

Who's that on trumpet?.

LOU

Pat's taken over the jazz chair.

NALEEN

Why? Nobody plays trumpet like Beats.

(LOU angrily shuts off the radio.)

LOU

They don't need Beats. And they don't need you. Everyone likes to believe the world needs their talent, but it does just fine without it. There are a lot of people who fall through the cracks.

NALEEN

They would want me to play.

LOU

In another two months you'll look ridiculous!

NALEEN

I could play from out of sight--no one would see me--

LOU

Don't be absurd.

NALEEN

(desperate)

Or, I don't even have to play--for now, don't pay me--I've been saving up--Then, after the baby comes, I could start playing again...

LOU

Take my advice. Get out of this lousy business. It's no place for a woman. It's no place for anyone.

NALEEN

(starting to break down)

Please Lou...I'm so tired.

LOU

Go home to your family.

NALEEN

I don't have--

LOU

There's nothing for you here.

(to himself, listening to what had been BEAT'S solo)

You missed your chance.

(Defeated, NALEEN exits. LIGHTS dim on LOU and come up on NALEEN on a dingy street. Distraught, SHE sings an a capella verse of "C'est La Vie, C'est L'Amour, Say Good-bye" slowly and sadly, which reveals her fragility and desperation.)

NALEEN

YOU HAVE MAMA'S SWEET LOVE,
DARLING LITTLE BEBE,
BUT ONE DAY YOU'LL GROW UP
AND GIVE YOUR HEART AWAY,
THEN YOUR HEART WILL BE BROKEN,
FOR YOUR LOVER WON'T STAY,
AND A TEARDROP WILL FALL FROM YOUR EYE.

C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, SAY...

(SHE walks up a short flight of stairs. A MAN approaches her.)

MAN

Do you have the money?

(NALEEN nods, exits with MAN. LIGHTS UP on BLOSSOM and THE BAND as THEY wail on the final chorus.)

BLOSSOM
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, C'EST GOODBYE,
OUI, OUI, OUI, WE AGREE, IT'S BYE-BYE,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR,
LOVE'S A DRUMMER ON TOUR,
C'EST LA VIE, C'EST L'AMOUR, C'EST GOODBYE!

(THE BAND is thrilled by their own and BLOSSOM'S performance. THEY are bursting with excitement. THEY all give her thumbs up signs and mouth "bravo." Even BLOSSOM seems to have enjoyed letting loose.)

ANNOUNCER
We're listening to The Cadets. And now I'd like to wish all of our listeners good night from WMPW.

(On hearing "The Cadets", THE WOMEN'S expressions reveal their shock and fury.)

ANNOUNCER
We're off the air. Thank you, ladies.

BLOSSOM
The Cadets? The Cadets? We're Blossom Lee and The Honeytones, Goddammit!

ANNOUNCER
Sorry, Ladies. But the program was for three male bands and that's what our listeners were expecting.

(ANNOUNCER exits.)

ADELE
No one's going to know it was us!

LIPS
We didn't even get paid.

BLOSSOM
We busted our asses to get our name out there!

STICKS
Oh, what's the use. If you want respect, you 've got to be with a male band.

BLOSSOM
I must admit, I had some fun up there—with all of you “Cadets.”

LANA
How broke are we?

BLOSSOM
Dead broke.

(LIGHTS dim and come up on:)

ACT II
Scene 10

One hour later.
The regular rehearsal room.

(MANY OF THE WOMEN enter at once.)

TOMMY
Hi Mommy!

LANA
Hi Sweetheart. Did you draw me something pretty?

(TOMMY takes her aside to show her his work.)

LOU
I gave them hell over the phone and now I'll do it in person.

TOMMY
Mommy. Look what Naleen brought me.

LOU
Yeah, she was here.

BLOSSOM
With Jimmy?

LOU
No. Alone.

LANA
How did she seem?

LOU

I don't know. I was watching the kid and listening to the show. I'm off.

(LOU exits.)

TOMMY

She was crying. She wanted to play in the band and Lou said to go away.

ADELE

(unnerved)

Lana-you and Sticks try O'Malley's-- I'll check the bus station. The rest of you keep an eye out at the hotel!

(LIGHTS dim, come up on:)

ACT II

Scene 11

The rehearsal room.

Several days later.

(LANA, BLOSSOM, ADELE, LIPS, and STICKS are sitting in a circle, in a state of shock and despair. PAT prays in a corner.)

ADELE

(privately, to LANA)

The doctor said even if she does pull through, she might not ever be able to have children.

LANA

(to BLOSSOM)

You give Lou too much power. If she had thought she could have come to you instead--

BLOSSOM

I wish she *had* come to me.

ADELE

You? You're the one who said she couldn't stay with a baby.

BLOSSOM

Who are you to talk? You made her feel like a criminal for loving that boy, for wanting something outside this band.

ADELE

That's not so.

BLOSSOM
You put the idea in her head!

LANA
It's true! You did!

(LANA starts to cry. ADELE is cut to the quick.)

ADELE
(still on BLOSSOM's case)
I never meant for her--She could have stayed with us and had that baby!

BLOSSOM
That was impossible.

ADELE
We all would have looked after it!

BLOSSOM
(blurts out)
I can't be around babies, don't you understand? I just can't be around them!
(THE GROUP is surprised by her vehemence. A beat, then)
It was a long time ago. I gave her up for adoption.
(The GROUP looks at one another. After a moment, LOU enters.)

LOU
I came as soon as I --What happened?

BLOSSOM
(cool as ice)
She went to a back alley "doctor" so she could join the band again. When it was over, she was on her way back when she collapsed. Someone on the street called an ambulance.

LOU
(very uncomfortable)
Oh. And, how's she doing?

ADELE
(with contempt)
We don't know. It's not looking good.

(LOU looks around the room. SOME stare back at him, others look away.)

LOU

Oh my God!

(LOU slouches into a chair, ADELE crosses away from the group, sits. After a moment, LANA moves to ADELE. THEY are out of earshot of the other women.)

LANA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

ADELE

No, I *was* the one who put the idea in her head.

LANA

It's not your fault.

ADELE

It's true... I made her feel she was throwing her life away.

(TRUMPET PLAYER bounds into the room.)

TRUMPET PLAYER

The war is over! Japan surrendered!

(THE WOMEN look at her, no reaction of joy.)

Ladies! Didn't you hear me? This goddamn war is over!

(THE WOMEN look at one another, unable to respond. BLACK OUT.)

ACT II

Scene 12

The hotel lobby, immediately following.

(LOU and BLOSSOM in mid-conversation)

BLOSSOM

The Paramount? *The* Paramount Theater in New York City?

LOU

It's a damn shame. They heard us on the radio. We would have been featured in their Tuesday night "Star Bands of Tomorrow".

BLOSSOM

So Adele was right. They liked our sound.

LOU

The band was great. They played like guys.

BLOSSOM

They played like *women*. No, they played like musicians. First rate musicians. Tell the Paramount we'll be there.

LOU

Blossom, it's over, we're broke.

BLOSSOM

I'll get the money. You get Adele started on the arrangements. As hot as she wants.

(BLOSSOM crosses to the pay phone in the lobby. As she dials, LIGHTS UP on JOEY WADE, who picks up in his club. LOU moves closer to hear BLOSSOM'S side of the conversation.)

BLOSSOM

It's Blossom Lee. Please get me Joey Wade.

(LOU shakes his head.)

JOEY WADE

(coming to phone)

Lucy La Rose. A week early. What a surprise.

BLOSSOM

(overly pleasant)

Hello, Joey. How are you?

JOEY WADE

(gruff, suspicious)

Older and wiser. What do you want?

BLOSSOM

A fantastic opportunity has come up. I can get you all your money and plenty of profits..

JOEY WADE

Then why are you calling me?

BLOSSOM

I just need a little more capital—

JOEY WADE

"Capital?" You're sounding awfully fancy for a broad who's broke. You want "capital", you get your profitable ass back here for a return engagement.

BLOSSOM

Please, Joey. Do it for *me*.

JOEY WADE

For you, huh? Where's Benedetti?

BLOSSOM

It's over. He's out.

JOEY WADE

And us? (a long silence) Sure I'll help you. One of my girls got herself arrested. It's not the star spot, but at least I know you'll bring in some business.

BLOSSOM

All right, wire me a thousand now, and as soon as we finish in New York I'll come back to the club—

JOEY WADE

You think I was born yesterday? You want another grand, you start tomorrow night or not at all, get it? With what you owe me and this new bread on top of that, we're talking six months, maybe a year.

(JOEY WADE hangs up. BLOSSOM lowers her head, rests it on the phone, desperate. LOU approaches her.)

LOU

How could you have taken money from Joey Wade? He's a creep's creep.

BLOSSOM

Well, J.P. Morgan and I haven't been seeing eye to eye lately.

LOU

Forget about the Paramount. Don't go back to burlesque. I'll get you a couple of singing gigs here in town so you can send him a few grand and keep him off your back for a while. Play it safe. Don't dig yourself in deeper with him.

BLOSSOM

What else can I do? I failed them. This is their one chance to feel like they've really made it and I'm not going to let them down. They could be a real hit in New York--

LOU

Sure, but you've gotta face the facts.

BLOSSOM

Why? That never got anyone anywhere.

(LOU shakes his head, exits.)

(SONG: "I'LL NEVER FACE THE FACTS")

BLOSSOM

FACT: I OWE THAT CREEP.
FACT: WE HAVEN'T GOT A DIME.
FACT: WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
FACT: I'M SCARED.

Daddy faced the facts.

HE SAID "SOME FOLKS GET THE MELON,
WE JUST GET THE RIND",
PART PHILOSOPHER, PART FELON,
HE PREACHED "QUIT WHILE YOU'RE BEHIND."

SHOULD I FACE THE FACTS?
SHOULD I READ THE WRITING ON THE WALL?
SHOULD I CALL IT QUILTS AND TURN BACK NOW?
OR SHOULD I WASH AWAY THE SCRAWL?

WHEN THEY MAKE THEIR CRACKS ABOUT MY FADING YOUTH,
WHAT A FOOL I'LL SEEM,
WILL THE COLD HARD EDGE OF TRUTH,
CUT AWAY MY DREAM?

SHOULD I FACE THE FACTS?
SHOULD I GIVE UP NOW OR GIVE MY ALL?
I GOT A LOT TO PROVE, BUT MORE TO LOSE,
AM I TOO OLD TO TAKE A FALL?

WITH EVERYTHING AT STAKE,
THEIR HEARTS ABOUT TO BREAK,
IT'S ALL TOO CLEAR WHERE I MUST GO...
THE ROAD AHEAD IS STEEP,
AND WHEN YOU TAKE A LEAP OF FAITH,
THERE'S NO NET BELOW.

THE GREATER THE LEAP, THE BIGGER THE FALL,
AND MOST DREAMS DON'T COME TRUE,
STILL SOMETHING KEEPS TELLING ME PLAYING IT SAFE,
IS THE MOST DANGEROUS THING I COULD DO.

I'LL NEVER FACE THE FACTS,
I REFUSE TO READ THE WRITING ON THE WALL,
I'LL NEVER FACE THE FACTS,
BETTER TO FAIL THAN NEVER TRY AT ALL.

I'LL DO WHAT I HAVE TO DO,
MAYBE THEY'LL SEE THEIR DREAM COME TRUE,
I'LL PAY THE PRICE,
I KNOW THE COST,
WE ALL GOTTA SCORE WITH THE LIFE WE'RE TOSSED!

I WON'T ALLOW THEIR DREAM
TO FALL BETWEEN THE CRACKS,
I WILL NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER,
NEVER FACE THE FACTS.

(BLACKOUT. LIGHTS UP on:)

ACT II
Scene 13
Outside the hotel.

(THE WOMEN stand outside the hotel. LANA reads from
a newspaper.)

LANA

"The Cadets have a style of their own—a tight rhythm section, first rate brass players and a terrific girl singer performing with a hot, exciting sound."

STICKS

Well, we wouldn't have gotten reviewed as The Honeytones. I suppose we should be grateful.

ADELE

I must have written to Downbeat ten times, trying to get them to see us and I never heard back. Wouldn't you know, as The Cadets we get reviewed without even trying.

BASS PLAYER

Well, if any of you are stranded here, my mom and dad have the most comfortable floor on the South Side.

LIPS

(crosses to ADELE)

I took these the night of our State Lake debut. There's one of all of us in the dressing room.

ADELE

(smiles)

Those costumes.

(THE OTHERS gather round, ADLIB, then fall silent
when LIPS shows the next photo of Naleen.)

LIPS

You were congratulating her right after her number. I wasn't sure if you—well, if I
should—

ADELE

(moved, takes the photo)

Thank you.

STICKS

Any news?

(ADELE shakes her head no. THE GROUP is quiet again.)

(LOU enters.)

LOU

We're playing the Paramount next Tuesday night! They heard our broadcast and they're
wiring us an advance this afternoon!

LANA

The Paramount?

LIPS

Oh my Sweet Jesus.

(THE WOMEN take a moment to digest the news, then ADLIB,
hug one another.)

BLOSSOM

Unfortunately, Blossom won't be able to join you—She'll be in Hollywood--

ADELE and OTHERS

What?

LOU

A movie producer spotted her and thinks she's perfect for a role.

ADELE

We finally get a break and she deserts us.

LOU

I wouldn't judge her too harshly.

I can't believe she'd be that selfish--

LANA

Blossom's doing the best she can.

LOU

How can you excuse her?

ADELE

(unable to contain himself)
It so happens she's gone back to stripping to save the band!
(a beat, softer)
It's the only way she could get the money for New York.

LOU

(ADELE and THE BAND are dumbfounded, moved.
ADELE looks at LOU. LIGHTS DIM and COME UP ON:)

ACT II
Scene 14

An Italian Restaurant and Mafia hangout.
That evening.

(GINO is dining with a couple of thugs.)

Vinnie tells me that the take at the lobby concession stand is down again.

GINO

Luigi says it's been real slow.

THUG 1

Yeah. Well, it happens to be my opinion that he's squirreling away nuts for the winter.

GINO

Luigi? Nah. Not Luigi.

THUG 2

I know he's your friend. So you tell him that it would be an even tougher winter for him if he was to lose his nuts.

GINO

(ADELE approaches his table.)

Excuse me, gentlemen.

GINO

(THEY exit. GINO motions for ADELE to sit down.)

ADELE

Blossom needs your help.

GINO

She sent you?

ADELE

No.

GINO

Then I'm busy.

ADELE

You care for her, don't you?

GINO

I'm not a sentimental man.

ADELE

You told me you love opera.

GINO

(flaunting gun)

Because everybody kills everybody else in Act III.

ADELE

Oh, you gonna shoot a skinny girl trombonist from New York? It won't even make The Tribune. Anyway, you don't have the guts. Now Blossom, *she* would shoot me.

GINO

You calling me a coward?

ADELE

Yeah. Blossom hurt your feelings, so you decide to destroy the band.

GINO

This is a funny twist. You defending Blossom.

ADELE

She needs you, Gino.

GINO

Then let her tell me herself!

ADELE
Blossom's taken money from a loanshark...Joey Wade...

GINO
(hit with the news)
Of all the dumb things--

ADELE
You can take the credit. She's working off her debt at the Sweet Peach in order to save the band.

(A moment, as HE recovers. ADELE waits for a reaction.)

GINO
It's her own damn fault.

ADELE
What are you saying?

GINO
I'm saying I can't help her.
(yelling, out of control)
I'm saying, get out!

(ADELE, frightened, exits. BLACKOUT.)

ACT II
Scene 15

The Chicago train station.
The next morning.

(THE WOMEN are gathered on the platform.)

PAT
(reading a newspaper)
Wow. It says it's a hundred and four in Manhattan.

LIPS
Good. I can't wait to pass out on fifty-second street, right in front of Swing Palace.

FLAKE
I'm glad you're all so excited, but how are we gonna pull off the Paramount when the promoter is famous for hating girl bands?

BASS PLAYER

Yeah, he thinks he's getting the Cadets.

PIANIST

Adele says she's got a plan.

FLAKE

(doubtful)

A plan, huh?

(BRIT enters with a suitcase. SHE has lost her cocky edge.)

BRIT

I just thought I'd say good-bye. I've got my own train to catch.

LANA

Where to?

BRIT

Iowa. Cliff's home. He's got a whole bunch of medals.

LIPS

How does he sound?

BRIT

I spoke to his mother. I won't see him until the day after tomorrow...I hope Keokuk isn't too dreary after Chicago.

LANA

I don't know. I wouldn't mind a little country living for a while.

BRIT

Well, I just wanted to say good-bye. Good luck at The Paramount.

ADELE

Good luck to you, Brit.

(A FEW PLAYERS give her a hug, OTHERS keep their distance.
ADELE goes to take her hand and BRIT starts to cry.)

BRIT

He's blind. Six weeks ago in the Philippines. I'm being punished, I know it.

(THE GROUP is speechless. ADELE puts her arm around her.)

ADELE

No you're not. Go home and take care of your husband. And play your horn. Keep playing your horn. Even a few minutes a day. It'll help.

(ADELE walks with BRIT as BRIT exits, LEFT.)

(LOU enters STAGE RIGHT with a frail NALEEN. SHE spots ADELE and sings a cappella to the tune of "ALL I NEED TO KNOW" which she sang the first day she met Adele.)

NALEEN

NO LONGER WILL I ROAM NOW,
I LEFT--BUT I'VE COME HOME NOW...

You said a girl had to have her heart broken to really sing that song. I think I could do it justice now...

(ADELE moves to NALEEN and THEY break down in one another's arms. The BAND gathers around her. BLACKOUT.)

ACT II

Scene 16

The dressing room in JOEY WADE's
strip joint.

(Strip music plays in the background. TWO STRIPPERS put on their make-up. BLOSSOM enters, looking detached, empty.)

FLORA

Hey, Violet. Look who's making her grand entrance? Blossom Lee, the queen of the band leaders. Or is it Lucy La Rose, the burlesque queen? Come to think of it, she looks a lot older than the Lucy La Rose I remember.

BLOSSOM

It so happens I'm only here to do a favor for a friend.

FLORA

Of course you are. And Violet and I are professors at Harvard.

VIOLET

Ah, leave her alone.

(GINO appears, unseen to everyone.)

FLORA

Still stuck on that greasy Mafioso? (no response) Gino's just a small time gangster using his family name for prestige in this town.

VIOLET

Yeah, I heard he never even knocked off anyone.

GINO

(surprising them, takes out his gun)

There's always a first time for everything.

(VIOLET and FLORA run out, terrified. BLOSSOM is shocked, looks in the mirror self-consciously, quickly straightens her hair.)

GINO

(embarrassed)

You might as well know, what they said is true.

BLOSSOM

Don't be so modest. You certainly succeeded at killing the tour and murdering my career.

GINO

(hesitant)

If you want to come back to me, I won't stand in your way.

BLOSSOM

Sorry. I'm giving up gangsters for lent. Even ones with perfect pitch.

GINO

I paid a visit to Joey Wade—he won't be bothering you anymore. And there's a car outside that might just get us to New York in time for the show at the Paramount.

REPRISE: "YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED"

GINO

(continued)

THE MOMENT THAT I MET YOU,
SOME ANGEL CAST A SPELL,
YOU LOVELY BAYONET, YOU,
YOU PIERCED MY HEART AND I FELL.

YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED...

(BLOSSOM softens, joins him.)

BLOSSOM
YOU'RE NOT WHAT I EXPECTED...

(THEY kiss.)

BLOSSOM
I guess I got a little hot headed myself. I'm sorry, Darling.

GINO

(moved)

"Darling"?

BLOSSOM

Don't make me sorry I said it. Let's get going. We've got to make a stop first.

GINO

(looking at his watch)

But there's no time--

(BLOSSOM gives him a look.)

GINO

Whatever you say, dear.

(SHE beams a smile, LIGHTS DIM and COME UP ON:)

ACT II

Scene 17

The stage of The Paramount Theater,
New York City.

(THE WOMEN are disguised as THE CADETS. Some are more convincing as men than others. THE BAND stands gaping at the place.)

LIPS

The Paramount Theatre!

STICKS

Do you realize who's stood right where we're standing?

LIPS

Just some of the greatest players of all time!

(THEY squeal with delight, hug each other.)

LOU

(alarmed at their female display of affection)

Gentlemen! Remember you're the Cadets!

(LOU crosses STAGE LEFT to TOMMY and hands him a large case.)

LOU

Open it. It's for you.

(TOMMY takes out a gleaming trumpet.)

TOMMY

Wow! Thanks, Lou.

LOU

I shined it up. For when you're bigger.

(TOMMY tries to blow it. MALLOY, a strong yet rotund man enters, shouts to the back of the house.)

MALLOY

Hey, Gallagher! There's still no lights stage left.

(then, to LOU)

I'm Malloy. I run this place.

LOU

(shaking hands)

Louis Meisner.

MALLOY

You're late. No time for a full sound check.

LOU

Sorry. We'll make do.

MALLOY

It's just, I want you guys to sound great. I'm proud to be showcasing your talent.

ADELE

(lowering voice)

We're happy to have the opportunity, sir. Thanks.

MALLOY

If you play like you did on the air, after tonight you'll be well on your way.

(MALLOY takes a closer look at one of the well-endowed PLAYERS and is suddenly suspicious.)

MALLOY

Young man—There's a spider on your collar.

TROMBONE PLAYER

(shrieking)

Get it off! Get it off!

MALLOY

For crying out loud. I didn't book an all girl band.

ADELE

You sure did. We're Blossom Lee and her Honeytones, alias the Cadets.

MALLOY

I don't believe it. No girl band plays like that.

LOU

(crossing to him)

This one does.

MALLOY

This isn't the girl scouts! This is Live From The Paramount! We're talking three thousand ticket buyers, we're talking coast to coast radio--the red line and the blue--and I'll be damned if I'm going to waste that on a girl band!

LANA

But you chose us! When you didn't know we were women, you picked us over hundreds of other bands!

MALLOY

Look. With the boys coming home, even promoters who *like* booking girl bands are canceling them. Even if I *wanted* to present you--which I don't- it would be unpatriotic for me to let you play and take their jobs.

LIPS

Unpatriotic? I worked for the U.S. O. for two years!

STICKS

Me too. Nearly got my head blown off.

LIPS

And if this is our last chance to be heard, all the more reason we should play tonight.

MALLOY

(calling to the booth)

Gallagher! The Cadets are off the program. We'll start with the GimmeJimmies instead.

NALEEN

Please, Mr. Malloy? We've all worked so hard--

MALLOY

I'm surprised at you ladies! The boys will be needing these jobs! You girls'll get married. Now, please, ladies, clear the stage!

(MALLOY exits. A long beat as the WOMEN take in the news.)

SAX III

So this is it, then?

TROMBONE 2

Well, I guess it'll be good to be home for a while.

ADELE

It must be nice to feel that way. This band is home to me.

SONG: "MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR YOU"

PAT

NOW I'LL GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP, AT LEAST,

STICKS

AND EVERY MEAL WILL SEEM A FEAST,

LANA

TOURING BANDS,
ONE NIGHT STANDS,

BASS PLAYER

FINGERS ACHING,

LANA

LIPS ARE CRACKED,

LIPS

CRAZY HOURS,

PAT

FREEZING SHOWERS,

FLAKE
A BAG THAT'S ALWAYS PACKED.

TROMBONE 2
FIVE SHOWS A DAY,

TRUMPET 2
FOR LOUSY PAY,
ALL
WHAT WE GO THROUGH JUST TO PLAY!
WHO NEEDS THE MADNESS?

ADELE
I DO.
(THEY look at her.)

ADELE
(continued)
I DO.
MUSIC NEVER DISAPPOINTS ME,
MUSIC NEVER LETS ME DOWN,
IT'S WHAT KEEPS ME GOING
AS I MOVE FROM TOWN TO TOWN.

MUSIC KNOWS YOUR JOY,
AND FEELS YOUR PAIN
LIKE A FRIEND WHO'S ALWAYS NEAR YOU,
AND IT UNDERSTANDS
WHAT YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR YOU.

NALEEN
THERE'S A STARLESS SKY,
YOUR DREAM GROWS DIM,
AND THOUGH NO ONE'S THERE TO CHEER YOU,
IN THE ACHE OF NIGHT,
LIVES A PERFECT HYMN,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR YOU.

STICKS
SOMETIMES IT'S A HIDING PLACE,
LIPS
OR A SOOTHING, WARM EMBRACE,
PAT
IT CAN LULL YOUR DEEPEST FEARS,
ADELE
MUSIC DRIES A THOUSAND TEARS.

(UNDERSCORE. THE WOMEN hug one another and say their goodbyes.)

LANA

MUSIC WAS CREATED
THE NIGHT THE STARS WERE MADE,
ALL DAY THE ANGELS WAITED,
EAGER AND AFRAID,
WHEN THAT FIRST SONG FILLED THE HEAVENS,
THE ANGELS COULD REJOICE,
THEY WISHED TO SHARE ITS BEAUTY,
AND GAVE US EACH A VOICE.

ALL

MUSIC KNOWS MY JOY,
AND FEELS MY PAIN,
LIKE A FRIEND WHO'S ALWAYS NEAR ME,
AND IT UNDERSTANDS
WHAT I CAN'T EXPLAIN,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR ME.

STICKS

(to LIPS)
I MAY FORGET YOUR FACE,

LIPS

(to STICKS)
I MAY FORGET YOUR NAME,

ALL

WE WON'T RECALL A HUNDRED DETAILS
THAT TIME MAY CLAIM.

BUT MUSIC WILL ALWAYS KNOW ME,
AN ENDURING LOVE IT WILL SHOW ME,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS GUIDE ME,
AND LIGHT THE WAY INSIDE ME,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR ME,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR ME,
MUSIC WILL ALWAYS HEAR ME.
HEAR ME.

(THE SONG ends in a hush.)

(The mood changes drastically when BLOSSOM enters with GINO. THEY are shocked to see THE BAND dressed as CADETS.)

BLOSSOM

(covering her surprise)

I didn't get the part. I was too young.

(THE WOMEN gasp when they see GINO, then rush to BLOSSOM. ADELE gives GINO an appreciative look. BAND ADLIBS "Blossom! We're so glad to see you...etc.

(BEATS emerges from behind BLOSSOM and GINO.)

LANA

Beats!

LIPS

Beats!

(THE WOMEN rush to her, embrace her. ADLIBS.)

BEATS

I missed all of you, too.

BLOSSOM

Cadets! What genius thought of that?

(THE WOMEN look at one another sadly.)

ADELE

No genius. He knows we're a girl band--

LANA

And won't let us play.

BLOSSOM

(crestfallen)

What?

(MALLOY enters.)

MALLOY

(tougher)

Hey—Let's go—I told you I need you to clear the stage. Now!

GINO

(crossing to MALLOY)

Excuse me...You're making a big mistake. These girls are terrific.

MALLOY

Yeah? Who the hell are *you*?

GINO

Gino Benedetti, of M.O.B. records.

(MALLOY turns white. A beat.)

MALLOY

Well, I guess they'll have to do.

(THE WOMEN cheer.)

BLOSSOM

You won't be sorry.

MALLOY

I'm already sorry. Just make sure the crowd doesn't figure it out. This way to the men's dressing rooms.

(THE WOMEN exit excitedly with MALLOY, LOU and GINO, leaving ADELE and BLOSSOM alone.)

ADELE

I know what you did for us.

BLOSSOM

Well, you could have sung a syncopated requiem with Gino's boys. Thanks.

(a beat)

So what are we playing? None of that corny sweet stuff, I hope.

ADELE

What?

BLOSSOM

Lou didn't tell you? We're playing hot tonight. We'd better rehearse something quick.

ADELE

We did.

BLOSSOM

I figured as much. (THEY laugh.) You want to set the tempos?

ADELE

Why? You've gotten pretty good yourself.

BLOSSOM

I have, haven't I? Still, let's everybody do what she does best...Just don't ever try to steal my bump and grind. It took years of classical training to perfect.

ADELE

(laughing)

I promise!

(BLOSSOM and ADELE exit. CROSSFADE to:)

ACT II
Scene 17

Boston College of Music, 1995.

OLDER ADELE

(overlapping with her younger self)

I promise!

OLDER WOMAN 2

You know, my sextet still uses that arrangement of yours from the Paramount.

OLDER ADELE

Really?

OLDER WOMAN 2

We reduced it for six players. But it still works like a charm.

(OLDER ADELE, pleased, is about to respond, but stops when she sees YOUNG WOMAN PRESENTER holding an award plaque.)

YOUNG WOMAN PRESENTER

(reading from plaque)

"To Adele Weinstein... For her unique contribution to women in jazz and for a lifetime devoted to music."

(OLDER ADELE, suddenly at a loss, looks to OLDER WOMAN 2, who motions for her to take the award. OLDER ADELE reluctantly crosses and takes the plaque from the YOUNG WOMAN PRESENTER.)

OLDER ADELE

(continued, to AUDIENCE)

I see you folks are determined to get me dead or alive. *Now* I know what Charles Ives meant about putting too much stock in awards.

(an uncomfortable pause)

I really can't accept this.

OLDER WOMAN 2

Why on earth...

(We hear a faint chorus of "I WANT TO BE A SIDEMAN..." in the background. OLDER ADELE hesitates, then begins.)

OLDER ADELE

(to OLDER WOMAN 2)

You remember how after the war, there was more work for women as pianists than horn players, so I brushed up my piano chops.

(glibly to AUDIENCE, as INSTRUMENTAL UNDERSCORE continues)

I accompanied a children's ballet class for a while. Then I was an organist at the Church of Heavenly Rest—for a Jewish girl I played one hellavuh "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross". Finally I started getting dates as a horn player—but they were just for weddings and Bar Mitzvahs, like my friend here. One Saturday night in the summer of '55, playing for the Cliffside Manor Country Club Orchestra, a shining example of the musical mediocrity to which I had sunk, halfway through the Hora, I got up and left. I haven't played since. So, "a lifetime devoted to music" couldn't be less true.

WOMAN 2

(hiding her shock)

But your own group, your sextet—

OLDER ADELE

Didn't last a year. The clubs didn't want us.

OFFSTAGE VOICES

I WANT TO BE A SIDEMAN...

OLDER WOMAN 2

What about your students? You inspired so many—

OLDER ADELE

The kids took to me, it's true. But I realized I was discouraging them—my female students, that is. I kept reminding them about the tremendous odds against them. What good was it, my giving them skill while taking away their hope? So I quit teaching, too, and enrolled myself at the Sarah Jenkins secretarial school and got my big break with the Coca Cola company as an executive secretary. Don't look at me that way—These chops can still take a pretty mean shorthand.

OFFSTAGE VOICES
WANNA PLAY JAZZ, WANNA SWING...

OLDER ADELE

Excuse me...I just need a moment...

(ADELE leaves the stage. OLDER WOMAN 2, speechless, glances at YOUNG WOMAN PRESENTER, then also leaves the stage. LIGHTS COME UP on an area OFFSTAGE RIGHT. Spare instrumental of "I WANT TO BE A SIDEMAN" continues.)

OLDER WOMAN 2

You ought to have told one of us. We might have encouraged you.

OLDER ADELE

That's what I was afraid of.

OLDER WOMAN 2

(at a loss)

Well...At least you kept your standards.

OLDER ADELE

(glib)

That I did.

OLDER WOMAN 2

And you always sought perfection. I didn't.

OLDER ADELE

You had the compensation of a husband and children. You could afford to settle for less. I didn't dare.

OFFSTAGE VOICES
WHILE INVENTING A SOUND...NO OTHER BAND HAS...

OLDER WOMAN 2

Have you forgotten who you are?

OLDER ADELE

(snaps angrily)

Who I *was*! Who I *could* have been, *should* have been...

(MUSIC stops abruptly. THE BAND, in a freeze, is now dimly lit, UPSTAGE)

OLDER WOMAN 2

Do you know why I flew three thousand miles to come today? After years of playing "The Alleycat" and "Hava Nagilah" I wanted to remember how it felt to be taken seriously as a musician. I wanted to feel your belief in me again. Everyday I blow, you're still there inside my head, encouraging me to play the phrase instead of just the notes, reminding me to listen to the other players. You made a deep impression on all of us, but most especially on a painfully shy, fat, unhappy girl from Creekfalls, Illinois.

(YOUNG BEATS steps forward from THE BAND. We now know that the slim, confidant OLDER WOMAN 2 is OLDER BEATS. Soft UNDERSCORE of "I WANT TO BE A SIDEMAN...")

OLDER WOMAN 2 (OLDER BEATS)

You gave me confidence -- not just in playing. You changed the way I felt about myself...So we didn't "make a lot of noise." So the world doesn't know about us. For a little while we made some pretty great music. *We* know it. I like to believe God knows it. In our own way, we *were* a success—*You were—~~are~~—*a success. Don't you think the young gal musicians here today have it a little easier because of women like you paving the way for them?

OLDER ADELE

(extremely moved)

Thank you.

(OLDER BEATS motions to the STAGE. ADELE takes the award from her and THEY both walk back onstage.)

OLDER ADELE

(to audience, holding up the award)

I bet Charles Ives was a jealous son of a bitch!

(then)

Thanks for vamping 'til ready.

(a beat)

We all know, when it comes to praising women, history has lousy chops. But you honored our work, here today, so I guess that's a good sign.

(with real energy and life)

All right, I accept this on behalf of Blossom Lee, may she rest in peace, and the Honeytones, and especially on behalf of all the unrecognized, yet, we believe, *highly successful* female musicians whose music brought joy to so many listeners.

(CROSSFADE TO:)

ACT II

Scene 18

Stage of the Paramount Theatre.

MALLOY

(in a SPOTLIGHT)

**Ladies and gentlemen...Welcome to Live at The Paramount, Star Bands of Tomorrow.
Tonight you are hearing four of the best new bands in the country and now, I am
(This is painful for him)
very proud to present my latest discovery...**

**(A fantastic band shell rises from the stage. In theatrical lighting,
"THE CADETS" appear like a vision, marching to a jazz version
of a military march.)**

MALLOY

The Cadets!

**(THE BAND plays a hot thirty-two bars of "If You Break It You
Buy It", wildly appreciated by the crowd.)**

BLOSSOM

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

(THE WOMEN let down their hair, revealing they are women.)

We are Blossom Lee And Her Honeytones!"

**(A furious MALLOY is restrained by GINO. THE PLAYERS
joyfully play their fiery, pulsating, hot jazz beat as BEATS wails
on an extraordinary solo. OLDER ADELE and OLDER BEATS
watch with pride.)**

OLDER ADELE

(to AUDIENCE)

As for all you musicians out there...Keep on jamming!

**THE BAND, with OLDER ADELE and OLDER BEATS
JAM AIN'T MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
LADIES, LET'S MAKE IT CLEAR,
JAM AIN'T MADE IN THE KITCHEN,
IT'S MADE HERE,
IT'S MADE HERE,
IT'S MADE HERE,
IT'S MADE HERE.**

Now *that's* sweet!

END OF PLAY