

# W-O-R-D Radio, Christmas on the Homefront

*By Dave Tippett*

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## **DEDICATION**

*To the wonderfully talented Thom Sneed, my long-time drama buddy, friend, encourager and fierce (in a good way) editor...thanks for all you did to bring this to the stage.*

*To the wonderfully talented cast and crew of the Oregon (Ohio) Church of the Nazarene, who gave the gift of their gut-busting comedic talent and dramatic genius.*

*And, most importantly, to my wife, Jill, who is always pushing me to be the best I can be. She has had her share of laughs and drama being married to me for so long. I am glad we are still sharing the stage, my love.*

*The Playwright, Dave Tippet*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

It's Christmas time, December, 1944. Long-suffering Arthur Kensington finds himself in the midst of a battle to keep his tiny station, W-O-R-D, on the air. He's planned a special holiday show with his eclectic staff of decidedly not-ready-for-prime time radio players, including a dyslexic sound man, a poetry/drama queen, and a pompous actor who has written a new radio play retelling the Nativity as a hard-boiled detective story. If that's not bad enough, everyone's hopes are dashed when an anticipated visit from the famous singing Andrews Sisters turns out to be the not-so-famous Epstein Cousins.

In the midst of all the chaos, we meet an Army hero who has lost more than his arm, he's lost his faith. Add in an impressionable young man dreaming of war's glory, a lonely orphan boy, and a young wife whose husband is missing in action, and we realize this special show is more important than ever. Join us now as W-O-R-D Radio gets Christmas on the air and into the hearts of everyone!

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*Lead roles for 8 m, 8 w, 3 flexible, 1 boy and 2 girls.  
Also numerous supporting roles for adults and children.*

#### **Lead roles:**

**ARTHUR KENNISTON:** Older man in charge of the radio station.

**KATIE PLUMMER:** Hard-working assistant to Arthur.

**SIMON BECKWITH:** Actor who rewrites the Christmas story.

**JOHN THOMAS:** Early 20s. War hero who is missing an arm.

**DANNY ARNOLD:** Male or female. Operates the sound effects.

**JIMMY:** 17-year-old who desperately wants to enlist.

**BRENDA:** 20s, the "Barter Queen." Her husband is away at war.

**CHARLENE:** Jimmy's grandmother and guardian. Shop owner.

**PASTOR SHIRLEY BROWN:** Middle-aged woman. Organizes the orphans for the show. Runs an afternoon radio show.

**SAM #1 and #2:** Soldiers who perform a comedy ventriloquist act for the show. *(Can be USO volunteer women.)*

**MARTHA:** Older woman, overly refined.

**EPSTEIN COUSINS:** Two women who can sing.

**PETER:** Young orphan who befriends Jimmy.

**JANE:** Young orphan.

**EMILY:** Young orphan.

**ANNOUNCER:** Adult, any age.

**MARY:** Adult, actress who plays Mary. Any age.

**JOSEPH:** Adult, actor who plays Joseph. Any age.

**W-L-O-W Staffers #1 & #2:** Any age men.

#### **Supporting roles:**

**MP CAPTAIN:** Middle-aged.

**PAMELA:** *(First caller.)* Little girl. *(Can be offstage.)*

**CALLER #2:** Old man. *(Offstage.)*

**WESTERN UNION MESSENGER:** Non-speaking.

**CHOIR:** Any number of members. Sing for radio show.

**ORPHANS:** 2-3 children.

**SERVICE MEN:** Dressed in uniform. Sing for the radio show.

## SETTING

There are three distinct parts of the stage. At stage right is the studio of radio station W-O-R-D; center stage is a converted toy store that now houses a USO; and at stage left is a train station facade.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### Act I

Scene 1: USO. Evening of Dec. 22, 1944.

Scene 2: Toy store / USO. Morning of Dec. 23.

Scene 3: W-O-R-D studio. Afternoon of Dec. 23.

Scene 4: USO. Evening of Dec. 23.

### ACT II

Scene 1: USO. Later that evening.

Scene 2: Train station, a short time later.

Scene 3: Outside the USO. Late that evening.

Scene 4: W-O-R-D studio. Evening of Dec. 24.

## PROPS

Small horn- Sam #1	Radio station phone – pre-set
Working "On Air Sign" – pre-set	Microphones – pre-set
Clipboard and pen – Katie	Sound effects – Danny
Scripts – Simon and Actors	Paper and pen – Sam #2
Poem – Martha	Burlap bag with box – Brenda
Bag of scrap – Jimmy	Wrapper – soldier
Cash register – pre-set	Playing cards – pre-set
Box labeled "orphans" with a ragged toy soldier – Jimmy	Gum – Jimmy
Broom – pre-set	LP record – pre-set
Medal – John	Pay phone – pre-set
Home phone – pre-set	Newspaper – Danny
Papers – Shirley	Coffee – Arthur
Gas coupons – Arthur	Water – Danny
Telegram – Messenger	Train ticket – Shirley
Coffeepot, cup – pre-set	Duffel bag – Jimmy
Train whistle – pre-set	Cup of eggnog – Sam #2
Fake mustache – Jimmy	

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: The USO, evening, Dec. 22, 1944. A small CHOIR is singing the last strains of a lively Christmas carol. In the background, rehearsal is in full swing. SERVICE MEN are practicing a few bars of a song; a group of energetic ORPHANS are watched by PASTOR SHIRLEY; and three actors, MARY, JOSEPH and SIMON, are conferring with the sound effects man, DANNY, who has his special effects laid out on a table next to him. ARTHUR is standing off to the side, his hair and suit in disarray, as well as his temperament. At his side is his assistant, KATIE, holding a clipboard and writing frantically as Arthur dictates. ANNOUNCER is also nearby. The song ends and the TWO SAMS step up to perform. They are energetic with a very vaudeville feel. Sam #1 holds a small horn.)*

SAM #1: Hey there, Sam!

SAM #2: Hey there, Sam!

SAM #1: Hey, Sam. So, this is Bethlehem, eh? Any great men ever born in this little town?

SAM #2: No! Only babies! *(Horn honk.)* Hey, Sam!

SAM #1: Yes, Sam?

SAM #2: What do you think of that twenty-foot fence your neighbor put up behind the stable?

SAM #1: That twenty-foot fence my neighbor put up behind the stable? I can't get over it! *(Horn honk.)*

*(Like everyone else, ARTHUR has been groaning, shaking his head and rolling his eyes at each bad joke. He starts to give the SAMS the "wind up" sign.)*

SAM #1: *(Ignoring ARTHUR.)* Oh, this is terrible! Here we are lost in the expanse of this desert and cannot find our way home. This is terrible. Lost, lost, probably forever. My wife and I are such inseparable companions.

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SAM #2: Yeah ... my wife never lets me out of her sight, either!  
(Horn honk.)

(ARTHUR is giving the "one more" sign.)

SAM #1: (*Frustrated at being hurried.*) Uh, er, believe it or not,  
Officer Sam, I'm hunting for a parking space!

SAM #2: But you're not driving a camel!

SAM #1: Well, I was. It's in the parking place I'm looking for!  
(Horn honk.)

(EVERYONE looks to ARTHUR who grabs the clipboard from  
KATIE and starts rummaging through the pages.)

ARTHUR: OK, OK, enough! It's a good thing we were NOT on  
the air, as that was pathetic! All right, let's review. (*Refers  
to clipboard.*) Singers! You were so-so, but please, give me  
some more energy and umph! Soldiers! You guys need to  
really sell the patriotic stuff, you know? We're trying to sell  
war bonds here (*Quieter.*) and air time (*Louder.*) so give your  
numbers that extra, er, uh—

KATIE: (*Aside to HIM.*) Umph.

ARTHUR: Umph! Right. A-hem. Come on now. This is our  
Christmas show, and not some vaudeville act, got it?!

SAM & SAM: Hey!

ARTHUR: Ohhh, you know what I mean! (*Tries to be more  
positive.*) Look, everyone, we have only two more days until  
Christmas Eve and show time. This is a huge chance to put  
our little community, and our little radio station, on the map.  
I know we can do it! We've got all the elements of success.  
There's you soldier boys to give it all that good old American  
patriotic spirit. We've got these, er, lovely orphans Pastor  
Shirley has brought in, raising money for their orphanage.  
And this giving away three books of gas-rationing coupons to  
get sponsors is, if I do say so myself, a stroke of genius!  
(EVERYONE just stares at HIM.) Come on, everyone, liven  
up! (*Still nothing.*) And don't forget we've definitely got the  
Andrews Sisters coming. (EVERYONE now applauds.)  
Now, I KNOW we can get this thing together, right?

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