

A Christmas Lottery

A trilogy of one-acts

*By Dave Brandl and
Charles and Donna Ault*

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all the actors and actresses who have graced the stage at the Festival Playhouse.

-D.B., C.A., D.A.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Three related one-acts are woven together with scenes in a radio booth. "A Christmas Lottery" tells the story of George and Mary Williams, \$14 million lottery winners. They host "Radio Riches," a local broadcast, where they receive calls and letters from people seeking money, and share stories about the people they help.

How Can They Call It a Fixed Income When We're Always Broke? (2m/2w, 35 minutes) Herbert and Emma Swanson are retired, on fixed incomes. Into their modest home come lottery winners George and Mary Williams, carrying a gift check of \$25,000. Emma is thrilled by the prospects, but Herbert adamantly refuses to accept charity, causing Emma to question his love for her and whether he's lost his mind.

Bus Stop Baptism (1m/1w, 15 minutes) Lottery winner, George Williams meets Preachin' Pearl, a homeless woman who evangelizes to the passing masses. As she mis-spouts from her bible ("Blessed are those with pacemakers for their hearts shall be filled with power."), she honors the poor and scorns his \$100 donation as filthy lucre. But George gets to show Pearl his motives are as sincere as hers.

Just Till I'm Back On My Feet (3m/1w/3g, 25 minutes) Daniel Thorndyke, a divorced father, lives with his three daughters in a homeless shelter. Lottery winners George and Mary Williams arrive, offering their help. Daniel's oldest daughter, meanwhile, has devised her own ways to help the family get back on its feet. In the end, even Santa shows up bringing holiday treats for all.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(10 characters: 4m, 3w, 3girls, doubling possible.
In order of appearance)*

GEORGE WILLIAMS: A lottery winner.
MARY WILLIAMS: George's wife.
PHONE VOICE ONE: Voice over. *(Offstage only.)*
PHONE VOICE TWO: Another. *(Offstage only.)*
HERBERT SWANSON: Retired.
EMMA SWANSON: Herbert's wife.
PEARL: A street person.
DANIEL THORNDYKE: A single parent.
KATHRYN THORNDYKE: Daniel's 10-year-old daughter.
ELDERLY FEMALE VOICE: A nun. *(Offstage only.)*
EMILY THORNDYKE: Daniel's 5-year-old daughter.
TRACY THORNDYKE: Daniel's 15-year-old daughter.
SANTA: Himself.

TIME

All the action takes place in the present, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, except for Act I, Scene 2, and Act II, Scene 2, which are flashbacks in time.

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ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

A Christmas Lottery, by Dave Brandl and Charles and Donna Ault, premiered November 27, 1992, by The Players Guild of the Festival Playhouse, Arvada, Colorado. The director was Charles Joseph Ault. The cast was:

George Williams: C. Joseph Ault

Mary Williams: Donna Ault

Herbert Swanson: Jim Ault

Emma Swanson: Karen Johnston

Pearl: Wendy King

Daniel Thorndyke: Dave Brandl

Kathryn Thorndyke: Sarah Thorpe

Emily Thorndyke: Lissa Brandl

Tracy Thorndyke: Melissa West

How Can They Call It A Fixed Income When We're Always Broke?, by Dave Brandl, premiered December 8, 1991, by the Merry Clements Players, Lakewood, Colorado. The director was Charles Ault. The cast was:

Herbert Swanson: Charles Sparks

Emma Swanson: Hazel Brandl

Georgina Williams: Eleanore Rose

Mary Williams: Nirna Steinberg

Bus Stop Baptism, by Dave Brandl, premiered July 9, 1992, by The Changing Scene, Denver, Colorado, as part of "Summerplay, a Festival of New Works." The director was Mark A. Whalin. The cast was:

Pearl: Judy Phalen-Hill

George Williams: Dean Hubbard

ACT I
Scene 1

(The LIGHTS come up. The CURTAIN is closed. A radio station booth is set up in front and to the side of the curtain. The time is the present, between Thanksgiving and Christmas. GEORGE and MARY WILLIAMS are seated in radio booth, perhaps wearing headsets. A song is ending.)

GEORGE: There you have it, folks, a little piece of music from our generation, *(Insert song title and composer.)* You know, I never really did understand what that song meant!

MARY: I'll explain it to you after the show today, George.

GEORGE: Speaking of the show, Mary, you know, it's hard to believe we're starting our second year of broadcasting today.

MARY: That's right. "Radio Riches" with George and Mary Williams is one year old today. And what a year it's been!

GEORGE: For you new listeners to the program, Mary and I are lottery winners. Two and a half years ago, we won a lottery of over fourteen million dollars.

MARY: One ticket put us into the big drawing and, ultimately, we won the jackpot.

GEORGE: It's very difficult to imagine that much money. I mean, we'd always lived reasonably well, but even after taxes, and making sure we and our children were financially secure, there was still an incredible amount of money left over.

MARY: Money that even in our wildest dreams we would never spend.

GEORGE: So we decided to do something special with it.

MARY: You frequently hear people say things like, "He's got so much money he could pay off the national debt."

GEORGE: Or "She's got so much money she could cure the homeless problem."

MARY: It made us think. What could we do? How could we make a difference?

GEORGE: And we came up with a plan.

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MARY: We decided to give the money to people who are in need, for one reason or another.

GEORGE: The biggest problem is sorting through the people with real problems and the people looking for a free ride. That's why we started this weekly show. "Radio Riches" gives us a chance to talk to people, receive their letters, and get a feel for their needs and how they can be met.

MARY: We put some of our lottery money into a trust fund, and then draw from that to help people.

GEORGE: And when people get back on their feet and are able to, they repay the money, adding back into the fund.

MARY: Ensuring that money will always be there.

GEORGE: It's not like we just give money away. In many cases, we expect no return; but most of the time, people are willing, even eager, to repay when they're able to.

MARY: When some of these folks finally get turned around, the pride they feel is overwhelming.

GEORGE: So far, we've helped over a hundred people in the area, totaling nearly two million dollars.

MARY: At first, it was difficult to distinguish between people really in need and people running a scam. Experience seasoned us to spot the freeloaders.

GEORGE: We have a studio audience here today and they will hear the phone calls and letters first hand. People sometimes write in with little bits of humor they collect along the way, too. So, let's get on with it. Mary, do you want to read a letter?

MARY: "Dear George and Mary, I'm a divorced mother of two lovely little boys. We do real good with what we have, but there seldom is much left over. I try to be a good mother and not burden others by asking for things, but when I heard about your good fortune, well ... I would like to apply for a loan just large enough to get some reliable transportation for my family. Just once I'd like an American car (*or any car for that matter*) that I can drive my children and myself to our destination without worrying about a breakdown.

End of Freeview

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