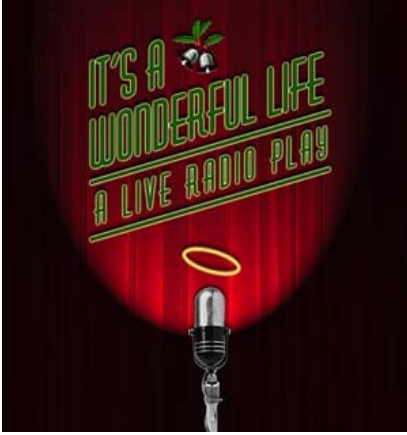


IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO SHOW

By Joe Landry



It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Show is based on the film classic "*It's a Wonderful Life*" which was based on the short story by Philip Van Doren Stern and made famous by Capra's 1946 classic film, adapted by James W. Rodgers.

The play is performed as a live on air presentation of "*It's A Wonderful*" in a radio studio in front of a live radio audience with the actors playing multiple parts and creating the Foley sounds effects which add to the background.

Synopsis

It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Show

It's Christmas Eve, 1946, and George, who has long considered himself a failure, faces financial ruin and arrest and is seriously contemplating suicide. High above Bedford Falls, two celestial voices discuss Bailey's dilemma and decide to send down eternally bumbling angel Clarence Oddbody, who after 200 years has yet to earn his wings, to help George out. But first, Clarence is given a crash course on George's life, and the

multitude of selfless acts he has performed: rescuing his younger brother from drowning, losing the hearing in his left ear in the process; enduring a beating rather than allow a grieving druggist to deliver poison by mistake to an ailing child; foregoing college and a long-planned trip to Europe to keep the Bailey Building and Loan from letting its Depression-era customers down; and, most important, preventing town despot Potter from taking over Bedford Mills and reducing its inhabitants to penury. Along the way, George has married his childhood sweetheart, who has stuck by him through thick and thin. But even the love of Mary and his children are insufficient when George, faced with an \$8000 shortage in his books, becomes a likely candidate for prison thanks to the vengeful Potter. Bitterly, George declares that he wishes that he had never been born, and Clarence, hoping to teach George a lesson, shows him how different life would have been had he in fact never been born. After a nightmarish odyssey through a George Bailey-less Bedford Falls (now a glorified slum called Potterville), wherein none of his friends or family recognize him, George is made to realize how many lives he has touched, and helped, through his existence; and, just as Clarence had planned, George awakens to the fact that, despite all its deprivations, he has truly had a wonderful life.

Scene

Time: Christmas Eve, 1946

Place: The stage and auditorium of Studio A at WBFR in Manhattan, New York.

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Characters

Character Breakdown:

The five actors play all the characters in the play. The underlined names are those of the radio performers who are performing "*It's a Wonderful Life*" on air at WBFR.

Jake Laurents, in his 20s/30s
plays George Bailey / Young George

Freddie Filmore, in his 30s-50s
plays Announcer, Joseph, Mr. Gower, Henry F. Potter, Uncle Billy Bailey, Ernie, Pete Bailey (Child), Mr. Bailey, Old Man Collins, Ed, Man, Giuseppe Martini, Nick, Bridge Keeper, Binky

Harry "Jazzbo" Heywood, in his 30s/40s
plays Harry Bailey / Young Harry, Bert The Cop, Clarence Oddbody, As-2, Sam Wainwright, Lawyer, Dr. Campbell, Randall, Tom, Man 2, Charlie, Carter, Horace the Bank Teller, Tommy Bailey (Child), Mr. Welch

Sally Applewhite, in her 20s/30s
plays Mary Hatch Bailey / Young Mary

Lana Sherwood, in her 30s/40s
plays Violet Bick / Young Violet, Matilda, Ruth Dakin Bailey, Rose Bailey, Mrs. Hatch, Passerby at Run on Bank, Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Davis, Schultz, Janie Bailey (Child), Zuzu Bailey (Child)

All five actors also provide crowd noises throughout.

Presentation of the Play "It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Show"

Playwright Joe Landry has re-imagined the movie, and set it in 1946 at fictional radio station WBFR. A cast of radio actors has gathered on Christmas Eve to give a broadcast of "Wonderful Life." If this sounds familiar, it's the same basic format

used in the popular stage play, "The 1940s Radio Hour."

Listening to a radio drama is a bit like enjoying a book on tape -- there's no visual action, but the imagination draws its own pictures. A radio *play*, however, traverses the territory between listening to a story and watching a theatrical performance with full-on sets, costumes and characters.

Wonderful dances between actors (in 1940s-era hair and attire) presenting straight into old-fashioned microphones, and those same actors are interacting with each other. There is a difference from scene to scene, a more businesslike scene, between George and Mr. Potter in Potter's office, for example, may get played more formally, with actors staring straight out, while an intimate scene between George and Mary is played closer to the mike with a lot more eye contact back and forth.

The production is set in the studios of the fictional WBFR Radio, also features sound effects executed, radio-style. The numerous sound effect cues (indicated throughout the script by "SFX") create the mood and add detail to the play. These sound effects are performed live by the actors.

Medias the story has been told

The Greatest Gift Short Story (1938)

It's A Wonderful Life Film/movie (1946)

It's A Wonderful Life, a musical with a book and lyrics by Sheldon Harnick and music by Joe Raposo (1986)

It's a Wonderful Life, The Musical, Book and Lyrics by James Rodgers, Music by John Higgins (1996)

It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Show (1996) and published in 2006

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Philip Van Doren Stern (September 10, 1900- January 29, 1894) was an author and Civil War historian whose story "The Greatest Gift," published in 1943, inspired the classic film *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946), which in turn inspired *It Happened One Christmas*.

Stern was born in Wyalusing, Pennsylvania into a family of humble means. His Pennsylvania-born father was a traveling merchant of Bavarian descent, who came to Wyalusing from West Virginia with his New Jersey-born wife. Stern grew up in Brooklyn, New York and New Jersey, and graduated from Rutgers University before becoming an author of some 40 books and editor most known for his books on the Civil War that a *New York Times* obituary called "authoritative" and "widely respected by scholars".

Inspired by a dream, Stern published a 4,000-word short story called "The Greatest Gift" in 1943 after working on it since the late 1930s but, unable to find a publisher, he sent the 200 copies he had printed to friends as Christmas cards in December 1943. One of the pamphlets came to the attention of RKO Pictures producer David Hempstead, who showed it to actor Cary Grant, who was interested in playing the lead role. RKO purchased the motion picture rights for \$10,000 in April 1944. After several screenwriters worked on adaptations, RKO sold the rights to the story in 1945 to Frank Capra's production company for the same \$10,000, which he adapted into *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The story was first published as a book in December 1944, with illustrations by Raffaello Busoni. Stern also sold it to

Reader's Scope magazine, which published the story in its December 1944 issue, and to the magazine *Good Housekeeping*, which published it under the title "The Man Who Was Never Born" in its January 1945 issue (published in December 1944).

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

The Greatest Gift inspired "It's A Wonderful Life"

www.brothersjudd.com

"It was the story I had been looking for all my life! A good man, ambitious. But so busy helping others, life seems to pass him by. Despondent. He wishes he had never been born. He gets his wish.

Through the eyes of a guardian angel he sees the world as it would have been had he not been born.

Wow! What an idea. The kind of idea that when I get old and sick and scared and ready to die -- they'll say, 'He made The Greatest Gift.' "

-Frank Capra

I'm sure your family does it too, sit around watching "It's a Wonderful Life" and speaking all of the lines moments ahead of the characters. Younger folk may not recall that in the early 80's, before Republic Pictures reclaimed the copyright to the movie, it was on literally dozens of times from Thanksgiving to New Years every year. And we all watched it, every single showing. Somehow the upbeat message about the individual's capacity to change the world for the better achieved a special resonance in those heady Reagan Era days of promise. Now it's shown on a network just once a season as an attempt at Event programming, but every red blooded

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American family owns a videotape and pops it in at least a few times over the holidays.

The story sprang full blown from Van Doren's head while he was shaving on the morning of February 12, 1938. He rewrote it several times and then in 1943 sent it to his agent to see if he could get a magazine to buy it. Unbelievably, they all turned it down. So he had a couple hundred copies made and sent them to friends in their Christmas cards. Someone showed the story to Frank Capra when he was looking for a project after the War ended and, if the quote above is to be believed; he instantly realized that he had an American classic in his hands.

The story itself is much sparer than the movie. Characters like Uncle Billy, Violet Bick, Ernie and Bert and even Mr. Potter are all missing. But the essential tale, of George Pratt contemplating suicide and a guardian angel intervening to show him the effect he has had on the lives of others, remains. This is one of those rare instances where a movie actually improves upon the written version, but the story is still quite affecting and has obvious historical interest.

Foley or Sound Effects?

<http://www.audiotheatre.com/resource.html>
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Foley is a motion picture term, named after Jack Foley, where sound effects are created by a foley artist as he or she watches the projected film. Foley sounds are primarily those created to

accompany the noisemaking movement of actors in real time.¹ Even if the item in question would or could make it's own sound during the filming, it is standard practice to replace the original sound with one created after the fact in a foley studio by a foley artist.

So what does this have to do with audio drama?

In the era of Old Time Radio (OTR), sound effects were created by sound effects men and occasionally women. One of the earliest crews was the husband and wife team of Arthur and Ora Nichols.²

The sound effects technicians collected an enormous array of objects all used in the creation of live sound effects.

While recorded effects were first used as early as 1928, most of the sounds heard were created live.

For OTR, the approach to using sound effects was one of requiring the effect to have a definite function. No sound should be included for the sake of adding sound. It is better to err on the side of using too little rather than too much.³ Sound effects were also considered to be background with a few exceptions.

Fast forward to the 70s and beyond. As the technology and equipment improved over the years, and the decline and all most death of radio drama in the USA. Modern radio drama (MAD) producers followed the lead from Hollywood and began creating sound scapes for their mind movies. Sound effects were added, beyond the minimum needed to tell the

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story, creating a film like sound track. After all the new drama was competing with film and television, but without the picture. Our audience had become far more sophisticated and expected more. The audience had also all but lost the ability to sit and listen with nothing for their eyes to fix on.

Modern Audio Drama began to use the principles and techniques of, if not actual, foley artist. The term foley slowly crept into the language of audio drama. While the purist will argue that foley is strictly a film term, in the mind movie mad creates, it is foley. Adding all of the sounds that are missing from the sterile studio recording.

Some times you will see the term table top sound effects applied, mostly in the area of live theatrical performances before an audience. The term obviously comes for most of the effects being performed on the table top.

Which ever terms you use, sound effects or foley, it is a performance art that when done right is hardly noticed and when done wrong, is all ways noticed. It is also the part of a live show (that is before a live audience) that often gets more applause than the actors do.

So go out a make some noise.

The Starr Piano Company of Richmond, Indiana began issuing sound effects records on the "Speedy-Q" label in 1928, so they were in use **very** early. At the local/syndicated level, recorded effects were in use before 1930, and were certainly in use at the network level by 1932. ⁴

<http://www.audiotheatre.com/foley.html>, 10/24/2007

¹ Sonnenschein, David. (2001). *Sound Design*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wioese Productions.

² Mott, Robert L. (1993). *Radio Sound Effects*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc.

³ Crews, Albert (1944). *Radio Production Directing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

⁴ McLeod, Elizabeth. (Nov 7, 2001) *First recorded sound effects*. E-mail to Henry Howard.

Jack Foley: Feet to the Stars



Jack Foley, Universal City, 1955.
Courtesy of Cathi Foley Clark

A Brooklynite of humble origins, Jack Foley makes for a rather odd Hollywood

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hero. His face was never seen on the silver screen, nor was his name ever up in lights. Yet Foley's legacy breathes life into every film and television program you see. It is there every time you hear a footstep, a slap, or the rustling of clothes.

In his 33 years on Stage 10 at Universal Pictures, Foley perfected a method of projecting a film and adding all these sound effects in sync with the moving picture, slamming a door when a heroine stormed out of the room, clanking swords when gladiators fought.

Despite all his years in front of the microphone, there's no recording of Jack Foley's voice; no picture of him on the sound stage. Foley passed away in 1967, but he lives on in the craft that bears his name and in the back lot lore of the colleagues who watched him work.

Special thanks to Mike Levine, Jacki Lyden, & David Isay w/ Sound Portraits Productions.

Sound Effects

Sound effects or **audio effects** are artificially created or enhanced sounds, or sound processes used to emphasize artistic or other content of movies, video games, music, or other media.

In motion picture and television production, a sound effect is a sound recorded and presented to make a specific storytelling or creative point **without** the use of dialogue or music. The term often refers to a process applied to a recording, without necessarily referring to the recording itself. In professional motion picture and television production, the segregations

between dialogue, music, and sound effects recordings are quite severe, and it is important to understand that in such contexts dialogue and music recordings are **never** referred to as sound effects, though the processes applied to them, such as reverberation or flanging, often are.

In the context of motion pictures and television, *sound effects* refers to an entire hierarchy of sound elements, whose production encompass many different disciplines, including:

- *Hard sound effects* are common sounds that appear on screen, such as door slams, weapons firing, and cars driving by.
- *Background (or BG) sound effects* are sounds that do not explicitly synchronize with the picture, but indicate setting to the audience, such as forest sounds, the buzzing of fluorescent lights, and car interiors. The sound of people talking in the background is also considered a "BG," but only if the speaker is unintelligible and the language is unrecognizable (this is known as walla). These background noises are also called *ambience* or *atmos* ("atmosphere").
- *Foley sound effects* are sounds that synchronize on screen, and require the expertise of a foley artist to record properly. Footsteps, the movement of hand props, and the rustling of cloth are common foley units.
- *Design sound effects* are sounds that do not normally occur in nature, or are impossible to record in nature. These sounds

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are used to suggest futuristic technology, or are used in a musical fashion to create an emotional mood.

Each of these sound effect categories are specialized, with sound editors known as specialists in an area of sound effects (e.g. a "Car cutter" or "Guns cutter").

The process can be separated into two steps: the recording of the effects, and the processing. Large libraries of commercial sound effects are available to content producers (such as the famous Wilhelm scream), but on large projects sound effects may be custom-recorded for the purpose.

Although effects libraries may contain every effect a producer requires, they are seldom in correct sequence and never in the required time frame. In the early days of film and radio, library effects were held on analogue discs and an expert technician could play six effects, on six turntables, in five seconds. Today, with effects held in digital format, it is easy to create any required sequence to be played in any desired timeline.

Also, if the soundtrack is processed through a foley, it can make the smallest sound look perfect on screen and the audience can never guess how much work went into the making of that specific sound.

When the required sound effect is of a small subject, such as scissors cutting, cloth ripping, or footsteps, the sound effect is best recorded in a studio, under controlled conditions. Such small sounds are often delegated to a foley artist and foley editor.

FOLEY ARTIST

The **Foley artist** on a film crew is the person who creates many of the natural, everyday sound effects in a film, which are recorded during a session with a recording engineer. Before the session, a project will be "cued", with notes kept about what sounds need to be created during the foley session. Often, the project will have a sound supervisor who will dictate what sounds need to be covered in a foley session, and what needs to be created by special (audio) effects, which is generally left to the sound designer. The roles of Foley artists, sound designers, editors, and supervisors are highly specialized and are essential to producing a professional-sounding soundtrack that is suitable for distribution and exhibition.

Sound effects and foley are added during post-production to dialog and real effects which were picked up by microphones on set. Sometimes (especially in the case of cartoons) there is no additional sound, and all the sounds need to be added by the foley artist and sound designer. The Foley artist may also accent existing sounds to make them more effective; enhancing the sounds of a fistfight may require thumping watermelons or cracking bamboo. Many Foley artists take pride in devising their own sound effects apparatus, often using simple, commonly-found materials. Some "making-of" featurettes show Foley artists at work.

The term "Foley artist" is named after Jack Foley, one of the earliest and best-known Hollywood practitioners of the art. Foley began his career in the film

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industry as a stand-in and screenwriter during the silent era, and later helped Universal make the transition from silent movies to "talkies".

Because Foley refers to a person, the term is usually capitalized. However, because it is a person's name and not the trademark of a machine or process, no ™ or ® symbol is used.

<http://www.audiotheatre.com/resource.html>
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How some effects are made

Effect	How It's Made
Galloping horses	Banging empty coconut shells together
Kissing	Kissing back of hand
Punching someone	Phone book on a cushion chair
High heels	Artist walks in high heels on wooden platform
Water sloshing	Bucket of water in basin of water
Footsteps in snow	Walk on corn flakes or cornstarch
Flipping through a pile of cash	Deck of cards with a rubber band
Trash cans knocked over	Trash can and lid
Creaky door	Rosen a dowel rod and turn it in a 2" by 4" block
Capsules falling to the floor	Jelly Beans dropped onto baking sheet

In the era of old time radio; sound effects were created by sound effects men and occasionally women. The sound effects technicians collected an enormous array of objects all used in the creation of live sound effects. While recorded effects were first used as early as 1928, most of the sounds heard were created live. The numerous sound effect cues create the mood and add detail to the play.

What is Audio Theater?

Audio Theater is the art form that was known as radio drama. Unfortunately, the delivery vehicle abandoned the art form. Radio Drama, now known as Audio Theater has survived through the efforts of many individual theater groups.

Audio Theater is a very rapidly growing form of entertainment, often replacing radio for the traveling public. Radio drama, once an industry in this country as evolved into a craft, practiced by many small groups across the country, with or without a radio station to air their work.

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AUDIO THEATRE

Audio theatre is a dramatic performance written and performed specifically for audio presentation. It had its greatest popularity on radio, before television was introduced, during the period known as the Golden Age of Radio, and as a result has often been called "Radio Theatre" or "radio drama" although as a form, it is independent of its medium.

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Audio theatre has deep roots, building on very old traditions of storytelling and stage presentation. In the 1880s, theatre performances were heard over the telephone. By the 1890s, sales of phonograph recordings were booming. For hot products, recording companies turned to well-known performers from Variety, Vaudeville, Chautauqua, Minstrel Shows, etc. Musical acts were obvious first choices, but the non-musical “sketch” acts weren’t far behind. Words were added to describe scenes, and set up sight-, now sound-gags. Sound effects and music were adapted from stage technique, and audio theatre was born – years before sound was first broadcast over the radio. Called (and thought of) as “Radio Theatre,” it became the hottest mass-entertainment art form of the ‘20s, ‘30s, and ‘40s, now called the Golden Age of Radio.

In 1962, CBS suspended its last regular weekly series of network radio drama (until the advent of the *CBS Radio Mystery Theater*), but today this Old-Time Radio (OTR) is popular again as a live Performance: where actors, sound effects performers, engineers and musicians gather and perform the script in real time, either in a sound studio or in a theatre with an audience.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama_CD
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The Golden Age of Radio

Old-Time Radio (OTR) and the **Golden Age of Radio** refer to a period of radio programming lasting from the proliferation of radio broadcasting in the early 1920s until television's replacement of radio as the dominant

home entertainment medium in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During this period, when radio was dominant and the airwaves were filled with a variety of radio formats and genres, people regularly tuned in to their favorite radio programs. In fact, according to a 1947 C. E. Hooper survey, 82 out of 100 Americans were found to be radio listeners. The end of this period coincided with music radio becoming the dominant radio form and is often marked in the United States by the final CBS broadcasts of *Suspense* and *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar* on September 30, 1962.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama_CD
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Run on the Bank

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A **bank run** (also known as a **run on the bank**) is a type of financial crisis. It is panics which occurs when a large number of customers of a bank fear it is insolvent and withdraw their deposits.

A *run on the bank* begins when the public begins to suspect that a bank may become insolvent. As a result, individuals begin to withdraw their savings. This action can destabilize the bank to the point where it may in fact become insolvent. Banks retain only a fraction of their deposits as cash (see fractional-reserve banking): the remainder is issued as loans. As a result, no bank has enough reserves on hand to cope with more than the fraction of deposits being taken out at once. As a result, the bank faces bankruptcy, and will 'call in' the loans it has offered. This

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can cause the bank's debtors to face bankruptcy themselves, if the loan is invested in a plant or other items that cannot easily be sold.

If many or most banks suffer runs at the same time, then the resulting chain of bankruptcies can cause a long economic recession.

As a bank run progresses, it generates its own momentum. As more people withdraw their deposits, the likelihood of default increases, so other individuals have more incentive to withdraw their own deposits.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bank_run 11/1/2007

Vocabulary

1. radio studio
2. apprentice
3. angel
4. telegram
5. capsules
6. Building and Loan
7. Board of Directors
8. "Run on the Bank"
9. guarantee
10. V-E Day and V-J Day
11. air raid warden
12. Congressional Medal of Honor
13. misappropriations
14. State Examiner
15. warrant
16. life insurance
17. boarding house
18. shoelaces (candy)
19. Foley effects
20. Four-F status
21. Golden Age of Radio

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how you would create two different sound effects. The effect and how it is made.
2. "Auld Lang Syne" is used to close the story of George Bailey. Read the lyrics. Why is this song appropriate for the story?
3. Clarence Oddbody is reading Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." How is the novel use in telling the story? What does it say about George, the time period and connection to the generation who sees or hears the story of George Bailey?
4. What does it mean to "never be born"? How would it affect everyone around you, if you "were never born?" How would life be different?
5. Explain "no man is a failure who has friends?"
6. Joseph, superintendent of angels says, "He's discouraged. That man will be thinking seriously of throwing away God's greatest gift." Explain what the story means "greatest gift"?
7. Explain the phrase, "Every time you hear a bell ring, it means that some angel just got his wings."
8. What does it mean to have no identity? How is this represented in the story of George Bailey?
9. How do the Foley effects make a story come alive?
10. How has television affected how we listen to the radio?

TIME LINE

- 1903Bailey Brothers Building and Loan opened in Bedford Falls, NY by Peter & Billy Bailey
- 1917.....George Bailey is born

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- 1919George Bailey 12 years old saves his baby brother, Harry from drowning.
- 1919Flu epidemic
- 1928.....Harry Bailey graduates from High School and Peter Bailey dies
- 1929.....Harry Bailey attends College instead of George
- 1929.....George Bailey marries Mary Hatch
- 1929.....Stock Market crash...”run on bank”
- 1932.....Harry Bailey graduates from College and arrives home married to Ruth Dakin
- 1933.....Bank Holiday- run on the banks in the spring
- 1945....V-E Day May 8
V-J Day Aug 15
- 1945Christmas Eve – Bank Examiner has warrant for George Bailey for misappropriations of funds

Resources online

Audio Theatre

www.audiotheatre.com

Museum of Television and Radio

www.mtr.org

Sound Ideas

<http://www.sound-ideas.com/foleymavart.html>

Wikipedia Dictionary online

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

Offline

It's a Wonderful Life: a Live Radio Play, by Joe Landry, Playscripts, Inc. 2005