

SYNOPSIS OF *SOUL ON VINYL*

Book and Lyrics by Fengar Gael

Music Composed by Dennis McCarthy

CHARACTERS: an minimal ensemble cast of 4 men and 4 women play multiple roles

MUSICIANS: a pianist, bass player, guitarist, synthesizer player, and drummer

TIME: 1999 and the present

PLACE: A recording studio in the fictitious town of Swampwater, Texas; interstate highways; vintage record shops; and various locations in New York City.

THE STORY: At Global Gospel Records Studio in the town of Swampwater, Texas, the Reverend Roger Billy Starks and his backup singers, the Angelicals, are recording songs for their latest album. During the session, Roger Billy sneezes, collapses into a coma, and is institutionalized for decades. When he recovers, he's convinced that when he sneezed, his soul escaped, slipped through the wiring, then during mass production fell into the groove of a single record. Without his soul, Roger Billy is deaf to God's voice, so he arranges a reunion with the Angelicals who join his countrywide search, exploring vintage record shops. Their journey takes them to New York City where Roger Billy starts spinning like a whirling dervish. Convinced that his soul is revolving on a nearby turntable, he attempts to find the record's owner, but on his way is robbed, then arrested, and jailed. After his release, Roger Billy befriends a melancholy street vendor, is waylaid by transit strikers, then hikes to Wall Street where he discovers his investments have vanished. Dismayed and needing sustenance, Roger Billy stops at The Melting Pot Diner where he's beaten, booted out, then chased by department store mannequins. Seeking refuge on the streets, he becomes smitten with a homeless drug addict whose brother, a combat veteran, collects vinyl albums. One of his albums contains Roger Billy's soul, and when they're finally reunited, he realizes that despite enduring many indignities, his journey has led to genuine feelings of inclusive universal reverence.

THE THEMES: *Soul on Vinyl* explores themes of alienation and identity. During the decades that Roger Billy was institutionalized, has his country lived up to the ideals that inspired his songs? Has the United States remained a model for concepts of religious and political liberty as well as racial and ethnic pluralism? Has the nation, with all the blessings of modern science and technology, become a genuine refuge for the oppressed: for immigrants and dreamers, for champions of civil, gender, economic, and environmental rights? Modern consciousness is often symbolized by the global cybersphere, and although *Soul on Vinyl* tells a personal tale of spiritual loss and redemption, it also attempts to reflect the diversity, intensity, and velocity of today's techno-society.

