

# ANGEL OF THE AMIAZON

BY EVAN MACK



Listening Companion for CD  
Synopsis of events before each musical track

## **ABOUT THE OPERA**

In 2005, Dorothy Stang, a 73-year-old Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, from Dayton, Ohio was brutally murdered in the town of Boa Esperanza, located in the Brazilian rainforest.

Paid by the owner of a logging company, two gunmen shot Dorothy six times as she read the Beatitudes.

Angel of the Amazon depicts her life's work, her devotion to her mission with Brazilian peasant farmers, and the events that sent her on a path of martyrdom.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Sr. Dorothy Stang.....ERIN GREENE  
Luíz, COMMUNITY LEADER OF THE PEASANT FARMERS.....GREG JEBAILY  
Vito, OWNER OF A LOGGING COMPANY.....DANIEL ANDERSON  
Mr. Ríco, WORKER FOR A LAND REGULATION AGENCY CALLED INCRA.....ELLIOT BROWN  
Mr. Dove, WORKER FOR A LAND REGULATION AGENCY CALLED INCRA.....MIKE YOUNG

Bishop, Gunmen, Ensemble of Brazilian Farmers,  
Luanna, Rosa, Raul, Jose, Policemen, Clergy, and Landowner

## MUSICAL TRACKS

**HAVE I NOT WEPT?**

Dorothy

**FREEDOM TO FAIL**

Luíz

**BRAZILIAN FARMER SONG**

Luíz, Dorothy, Ensemble

**TEN LONG YEARS**

Dorothy, Mr. Ríco, Mr. Dove, Bishop, Vito

**BRING ON THE RAIN**

Dorothy, Luíz, Ensemble

**SOLILOQUY**

Luíz

**THE MOUNTAINTOP**

Dorothy and Offstage Ensemble

**WILL THEY LISTEN?**

Dorothy and Offstage Ensemble

## SYNOPSIS AND LYRICS

**SR. DOROTHY STANG**, in a T-shirt and shorts, is alone on a dirt path in the town of Boa-Esperanza, meaning “good hope.” Two gunmen enter and raise their guns. Dorothy turns and realizes that her discussion with these men the day prior had no affect on what they were about to do. She reaches into her satchel and pulls out her bible. She says, “This is my only weapon. The gunmen lower their guns slowly. She continues, “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the Kingdom...Blessed are the” *Flashback*

*The year is 1969*, Sr. Dorothy’s first day in the Amazon. We see the inside of a palatial-type house, filled with lavish art, antique furniture, and a long mahogany dinner table, set with fine china and silver, with food fit for a king! On one end of the table sits a wealthy landowner and his family. On the other end is Sr. Dorothy. She is wearing her habit.

The landowner, full of propaganda, describes how “generous” he has been to the poor by giving them a piece of land to farm. In actuality, this system of sharecropping has kept these farmers one-step above slavery.

Dorothy is amenable, but somewhat suspicious, as she leaves the table and steps into the world of the peasant farmer.

Peasants—hungry faces, overworked hands, tattered clothes—rush to her, bombarding her with superstitious requests, such as, “Baptize my baby so it is no longer a beast.” Their downtrodden thinking confuses Dorothy. As the flurry of demands grow, she shouts: “Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom. The crowd quiets, curious about what she just said. Dorothy readies to begin her teachings.

Luiz, the leader of these poor farmers, interrupts her. He questions her knowledge of the poor, since her stomach is still full from the table of an oppressor. Luiz rallies the crowd to disregard Dorothy. They exit, despite Dorothy's pleas.

In her naiveté she assumed she would be immediately accepted by the poor. She realizes that being religious is not enough. An interior dialogue arises.

### HAVE I NOT WEPT? (Track 1)

Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?

The oppressed retreat from me as I come here to help them.

How can I raise the poor from the dust and lift them from the ashes

If they see me as a hand for the wicked? I tried and failed. What did I do wrong?

Have I not wept? Am I not pained enough? Have I not grieved enough?

They cried for my help. They cried out to me.

And my words, only words, could not comfort them.

I'll try again. And this time, I won't fail.

I must seek to follow Christ and give up what is mine.

In the spirit of the Lord I will sacrifice.

I cannot help the poor unless I'm one of them. Together, we'll walk the path of God.

**ONE DAY** before her murder. Dorothy and the farmers are eating a meal. A child is giving the blessing. Two gunmen enter. Dorothy tells the men to put away their guns, as she is only armed with her bible. Dorothy sees they are hungry and offers them food. Too prideful, the gunmen refuse.

Dorothy pulls out a map and shows the two men proof of her people's right to farm the land. The gunmen accuse her of lying because their boss, Vito, a logging company owner, says otherwise. Dorothy calmly points out that Vito is only hungry for power, and land. She assures the gunmen that her people will not leave their homes. She also informs the gunmen that the police, the Bishop, and INCRA, a federal land regulation agency, have been informed. Knowing she has made her point, she again offers them something to eat. *Flashback*

*It is 1972.* The government has passed a law for people to settle the Trans-Amazonian highway. Finally, these farmers have their freedom and their own land. They live in primitive mud huts and cook outside. The people have accepted Dorothy as a spiritual guide. Luiz, the community leader, still struggles with the concept of faith and hope. All he has seen and felt is a life of oppression. Even though they are liberated, he fears failure as the responsibility falls on him. The rains of the wet season are late. Any further drought will certainly spell out doom for this community.

### **FREEDOM TO FAIL (Track 2)**

For decades we have been pushed around—lower than cattle

And all we hoped for is to break free.

Free to no ones demands but our own.

But with that freedom comes the freedom to fail:

If the rain is too late this year, we may have one or two feasts and then the starvation sets in.

No one thought that with freedom comes the freedom to fail

Normally when the rains arrive, the farmers have a big feast, and then hope that more rains come to grow more food. Dorothy suggests to Luiz that they break from their pattern, taking only what they need and storing the rest. Luiz understands her point, but thinks that the people are too hungry to forgo a big feast. Dorothy believes that it is up to Luiz to convince them.

### **BRAZILIAN FARMER'S SONG (Track 3)**

**DOROTHY:** But they will follow you... convince them to live for tomorrow and not be consumed by today.

**LUIZ:** Hey Raul! What will you do when the rain comes!

**RAUL:** I don't know...take the day off!

**LUIZ:** And you, Jose?

**RAUL:** Probably come to my house!

**LUANNA:** Not if your wife has anything to say about it!

**JOSE:** I'm going to eat as much as I can.

**LUIZ:** You could save some for the rest of us!

**LUANNA AND ENSEMBLE:** Campos do verde. Pacotes da fruta. Abundância do alimento para comer. O deus, traz na chuva Agua da vida. Logo, todos deleitar-se-a em pacotes, pacotes da fruta.

*Translation: Fields of green, bundles of fruit. Plenty of food to eat. God, Bring on the Rain. Water gives life. Soon everyone will feast on bundles of fruit.*

**LUIZ:** I will take only what I will need, only enough to live, and store the rest.

**ENSEMBLE:** Campos do verde. Pacotes da fruta. Abundância do alimento para comer. O deus, traz na chuva. Agua da vida. Logo, todos deleitar-se-a em pacotes, pacotes da fruta.

**LUIZ:** Think about tomorrow by holding back today, and if the rains are plentiful, we can have it both ways.

**DOROTHY AND LUIZ:** We must live for tomorrow and sacrifice today. And if the rains are plentiful, it will provide us for more than one day.

**ENSEMBLE:** Campos do verde. Pacotes da fruta. Abundância do alimento para comer. O deus, traz na chuva. Agua da vida. Logo, todos deleitar-se-a em pacotes, pacotes da fruta.

**LUIZ, DOROTHY, LUANNA, ROSA, RAUL, AND JOSE:** I will take only what I will need, only enough to live, and store the rest. Think about tomorrow by holding back today. And if the rains are plentiful, it will provide us with more than one day. So live for tomorrow.

**ENSEMBLE:** Campos do verde. Pacotes da fruta. Abundância do alimento para comer. O deus, traz na chuva. Agua da vida. Logo, todos deleitar-se-a em pacotes, pacotes da fruta.

**DOROTHY, LUIZ, LUANNA, ROSA, RAUL, AND JOSE:** Live for tomorrow by saving today.

**TWO DAYS** before her murder: Sr. Dorothy rushes into the local police station. She asks for protection against Vito. They mock and disregard her. Dorothy tells them that men of their community are missing and homes have been burn, but the corrupt police (most are in the pay of Vito) continue to mock her. Dorothy then informs them that INCRA and the Bishop are informed of these crimes. Realizing that a higher authority is involved, the police chief tells the other officers to back off. *Flashback*

*A land commission meets in 1980.* In attendance: The Bishop, who heads the Pastoral Land Commission, Mr. Rico and Mr. Dove, two members of INCRA—a government agency that oversees the lots of land in the Amazon, Vito, an owner of a logging company, and Sr. Dorothy.

The members of INCRA just finished their report and it is Sr. Dorothy's turn to inform the committee about their progress with Sustainable Development Project—a government land grant to sustenance farmers.

### **TEN LONG YEARS (Track 4)**

**DOROTHY:** (To the committee) It's been ten long years since my work began. (To herself) Ten long years, every day was earned. How naïve I was. How naïve. I tried again. (To the committee) It took ten long years for us to respect the land. (To herself) And what a day that was, they finally understood to live for tomorrow today. It's been ten long years. (To the committee) And no one is listening, no one listens today, you don't hear the cries of the poor.

**MR. RICO:** (interrupting) Your time is up

**DOROTHY:** Only ten minutes to speak for ten years of work.

**MR. DOVE:** We will look into your claims.

**MR. RICO:** (annoyed at Mr. Dove) We don't have the time, men, or money to look into these claims.

**DOROTHY:** How much time remains, if you fail to protect our rights to farm the Amazon?

**VITO:** What about my rights? Should we only care about your people?

I won't wait for you. Farming land that's doomed.

What about my right? What about my right to make a profit?

What about my right, to farm the land we've owned for centuries? What about my right?

What else is left to give? How much more are you going to take from me?

What else is left to give? Don't you know that farming the Amazon is doomed to fail.

What about my right? What about my right to make a profit, to feed my family?

What about my right? What about my right to use the land to make some money?

What else is left to give? You're living on land that's technically mine. What else is left to give? How much more are you going to take from me?

You're living on land...that's already my land, it's my land. My land, it's my land.

**BISHOP:** We should intervene.

**VITO:** It's mine, it's mine,

**BISHOP:** We must keep both sides talking. We should intervene.

**MR. RICO:** Do not intervene.

**VITO:** It's mine, it's mine.

**MR. DOVE:** What! No! He is out of control.

**MR. RICO:** Do not intervene. Do not interrupt him.

**DOROTHY:** Look at what my people have to face.

You just witnessed what we fight every day. It's a fight to keep us alive.

You just witnessed, ten years of strife just to keep the land that we own.

Some men have been beaten, women abducted.

**MR. DOVE:** We will look into your claims.

**MR. RICO:** We don't have the money. We don't have the time.

**DOROTHY:** We're constantly threatened, fearful of what will happen to us.

**MR. DOVE:** We will look into your claims.

**BISHOP:** How can we keep you safe?

**DOROTHY:** We need more land to shield us from all these attacks. Guarantee ten more years if you give more land.

**BISHOP:** (To Dorothy) Our work is with the people. We can't control what we do with the land.

**DOROTHY:** Spare us ten more years, we need more land.

**MR. DOVE:** We can protect the people if we give them more land.

**MR. RICO:** We could make more money if we lease the land.

**BISHOP:** Our work is with the people. We can't control what they do with the land.

**DOROTHY:** Guarantee ten more years. Give us land.

**MR. DOVE:** We could sustain more land if we give it to the people.

**MR. RICO:** We could make money. We need money to regulate the land.

**BISHOP:** Our work is with the people. We can't control what they do with the land.

**DOROTHY:** Guarantee ten more years. Give us land. We need land!

**MR. DOVE:** Give it to the poor. Sustain more land.

**MR. RICO:** Money can regulate land.

**BISHOP:** Our work is with the people. We don't regulate land.

**VITO:** Don't you mean my land. It's my land. **DOROTHY:** Your not listening to me.

**VITO:** My land. It's my land. **DOROTHY:** It's not your land to give away.

**VITO:** It's mine, it's mine, it's mine. **DOROTHY:** All this land belongs to the poor.

**MR. RICO, MR. DOVE, AND BISHOP:** ENOUGH!

**BISHOP:** Both sides must compromise. Don't let these talks fall apart.  
We all have to sacrifice.

**MR. RICO:** Compromise, Vito, if you compromise, you'll get what you want.  
I can help you. More than you need.

**MR. DOVE:** If you sacrifice, you will get what you deserve. If you don't sacrifice, you  
won't get anything.

**DOROTHY:** For ten years we've compromised, talked of land. What more is there to sacrifice?

**VITO:** Why should I compromise what is already mine.

**MR. DOVE:** Sister Dorothy, your people can keep their land.

**BISHOP:** This is good we, have a process.

**MR. RICO:** Vito, continue logging.

**BISHOP:** This is good we, have a process.

**MR. RICO AND MR. DOVE:** No one shall occupy the adjacent land.

**DOROTHY:** We deserve more land, it all can't go to the rich!

**VITO:** I deserve more land, it all can't go to the poor!

**MR. RICO AND MR. DOVE:** These are the boundaries!

**MR. RICO, MR. DOVE, AND BISHOP:** Agreed?

**DOROTHY:** Agreed

**VITO:** (Disappointed) Agreed.

(Lights fade on scene, except for Vito).

**VITO:** Let them keep their land. I don't care what people say about this land. Let them fail  
at farming land that's doomed. Either way, in ten years, in ten years, this land will be my  
land. It's my land. My land, it's my land.

It's mine, it's mine, it's mine...

**THREE DAYS** before her murder. Dorothy meets with the Bishop and clergy. She warns them of imminent doom on the land project, her life, and her people. They insist that her work is with the people and that the government should worry about the land. The Bishop's faith in the regulation process is blinding him to the true work of Dorothy's mission. *Flashback*

*It has been sixteen years*, since Sr. Dorothy's first day in the Amazon, five years since the land commission meeting. Working constantly with the government, the Bishop, and the people, her mission advances. The farmers' living standards are more developed. They have limited electricity, a school building, and a fruit factory. This "failed experiment" in the eyes of the powers-that-be is working and growing, taking up viable land and profits from loggers and ranchers.

The physical presence of the farmers and the presence of their success are too threatening. Armed men storm the community, and set fire to the school and homes. Luiz, goes for his gun, but fails to stop them. Panic has set it the crowd. They turn to Luiz for guidance. His hopes crushed, he falls to his knees and cries out, "I don't know what to do."

Dorothy must fill this void of leadership even though she realizes she could die as a result of their work. On one hand you have Dorothy, who remains peaceful within this tragedy because she has faith. On the other hand you have Luiz, with a lifetime of loss, wanting to strike back, regardless of losing anything he has gained. The crowd wants to run, hide, retreat, but Dorothy stops them:

### **BRING ON THE RAIN (Track 5)**

**DOROTHY:** We must pray...we must pray for the rain. Let every drop pour on our homes Let it douse all the flames. Thank you Lord, for you let us survive. The sun may be darkened, the moon losing light. The stars will open up as the powers of heaven collide. But soon you'll see the Son of Man in all his glory.

**DOROTHY AND FARMERS:** Lord, send you're angels to gather the winds from all ends of the earth. Bring on the rain, Bring on the rain Let it douse the flames of hate.

**LUIZ:** All we hoped for was to break free. Free from living in fear, free from living a dejected life. Free to do what you can to live the life you always dreamed you would have. No more running away, no more starting over again. No more walking the path that leaves you open to things beyond your control. I trusted you Lord and you failed us once again. Now, it's up to me to put this to an end. I'll hunt them down; I'll kill them all. They'll never hurt us again.

**ENSEMBLE:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

**DOROTHY:** God, I need your guidance.

**LUIZ:** No more running away, I will stand and fight, I have to protect what's mine.

**ENSEMBLE:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lord, send your angels; with faith send your angels to gather the winds from all ends of the earth.

**DOROTHY:** I can't do this alone. Father, give these people the peace, this gift they deserve. Lord, I need you. I can't do this alone. With faith, with hope I'll lead my people to the promise land.

**LUIZ:** Every day is a fight, a fight to survive, a fight to hold on, hold onto a battered dream. I trusted you Lord. I had faith in you, and you failed us once again. You failed me for the last time. I am the only one who can save us. No more relying on others. No more waiting for failure to kill the dream. Relying on God has killed my dream.

**DOROTHY AND ENSEMBLE:** Bring on the rain, Bring on the rain.

**LUIZ:** I'm on my own. I control how this will end.

**ENSEMBLE:** Let the waters of God douse the fires of hate.

**DOROTHY:** God, our fate rests in you. **LUIZ:** It's up to me.

**FOUR DAYS** before her murder. Three men approach Luiz, two in plain clothes, the other in uniform. They ask Luiz if he has reconsidered Vito's offer. Wanting Luiz to go through with the deal, they threaten to hurt his family. They rough him up as he tries to fight them. As Vito's men leave, they notice two poor men (who will become the two gunmen) witnessing this whole event. They ask them, "How would you two like to make 24,000 dollars?" *Flashback*

*Five years since the fire.* The early 90s are a period of new growth. There is evidence of rebuilding from the tragedy five years prior. The people are cultivating the land. Dorothy is leading and teaching them how to live off of the land. Luiz enters, haggard, militant. Empowered by the rifle, he holds onto the absurd notion that his patrols have prevented any further attacks. In reality, Luiz is still good. He has not killed anyone, he has not abandoned his people; in fact, he has not lost faith, but he teeters on the brink. Dorothy warns that his actions will bring violence to him, his family, and the community. She questions Luiz's purity of heart, then exits. Luiz is alone to reflect.

### **SOLILOQUY (Track 6)**

**LUIZ:** What does it take to live the life that you wanted? A life you craved the moment you dreamed. Everything gets in the way. The dream is a lie.

I've had to fight for all my needs. Fight for my food, fight for my home, fight just to live.  
The dream had to die

Is it too much for you to help us, Lord? So much pain that you've caused.

So much hate you've allowed. Why should I waste another moment on prayer.

I have seen what you've done to your only son—what then will you do to my dream?

I've done nothing wrong, nothing to deserve this.

I've only done right by the words you command

And worst of all, you send a servant down here to question my heart!

What gives her the right? How dare she question me? Has she given her blood,

Sacrificing her only dream? It's not up to her, It's only up to me

My control, my beliefs, my life, my choice, my DREAM!

Tell me Lord, do you fear that you're powerless over me?

I could just LET HER DIE?

Would you still question my heart? What am I saying?

How could I even think that?

I only want to protect what little I have. What little we BOTH have.

She gave up her food, gave up her home, gave up her life.

She believes in us. She believes in me.

She believes in the dream. (Offstage singing from chorus and Dorothy singing farmer's song)

And I believe in her. Oh, Lord not you, Oh, Lord not me, but I believe in her!

**FIVE DAYS** before her murder. We hear clips of Sr. Dorothy's address to the assembly from the day prior. Vito, angered by the fact that Sr. Dorothy named him as a violator of the land agreement and the cause of violence in the region, expresses frustration to Mr. Rico. We see for the first time that Mr. Rico has been working with Vito the entire time. The corruption of money lies deep. But despite their efforts, Dorothy is still progressing and is too powerful. Luiz is brought into Vito's office. Vito offers Luiz a chance to never go hungry again if he puts an end to her and the mission. *Flashback*

*It is 2004.* Sr. Dorothy is meeting with Mr. Rico and Mr. Dove. Throughout their conversation, Dorothy realizes that the reasons for the lack of oversight by INCRA and the years of delays to define the proper land boundaries all have been the result of the corruption of Mr. Rico. This realization leads Dorothy to reflect that her work may be coming to an end.

### **THE MOUNTAINTOP (Track 7)**

**MR. RICO:** Don't over react! I think Vito can still be trusted. I met with him many times and he still seems to be within his right. (Lights fade onto Dorothy)

**DOROTHY:** I don't know what will happen now. We've come so far, but it's not quite over yet. And my role in this is almost over now. And I know.

But I've been to the mountaintop

I have seen the promise land. I have been to the mountaintop, so I don't mind.

I lived a full life and the journey's been long. I may not get there.

I may not see the end. But I know, it will happen.

We will go to the mountaintop. We will see the promise land. We will reach the mountaintop

**CHOIR OFFSTAGE:** Bring on the rain. Bring on the rain. (Repeated throughout next stanza)

I could die. I could lose my life for the struggle.

I am scared, but won't be afraid. I fear no evil, as you are with me Lord.

I have so much more to gain if I die, then let me die!

**CHOIR OFFSTAGE:** Reach the mountaintop.

Then we'll reach the mountaintop. We will reach the promise land.

We will reach the mountaintop. (Lights come back up to full as if time has not passed).

**MR. RICO:** Don't over react! I think Vito can still be trusted. I met with him many times and he still seems to be within his right...

**DOROTHY:** In six months time, I'm going to the capital to name names.

She tells them that she is going to the capital to tell to the assembly the persons behind all of the corruption, violence, and land dispute. She leaves. Mr. Rico picks up the phone and says, "We have a problem."

**SIX DAYS** before her murder. It is moments before her speech to the national assembly and the press. Will anyone who has seen her struggle do something about it?

**WILL THEY LISTEN? (Track 8)**

**DOROTHY:** Will they listen? Will they listen today?  
Will they hear the cries of the poor?  
I hope they listen. I hope they listen to me. So many years, no one has heard.  
O God, O God, let them hear. Make them hear the cries of the poor.  
Make them listen. Make them listen to me to guarantee a life for tomorrow.

**OFFSTAGE CHOIR:** Hear us. Listen to us. Hear us today.  
Think of tomorrow and all we can achieve.  
O God, O God, this dream may die today,  
If they don't see what all these years of struggle mean to me,  
And someone shows us mercy and restores my people's dignity.  
O God, give me strength, as I am their VOICE!  
I'll make them listen. I'll make them listen to me to guarantee this dream can SURVIVE!

As the music swells, she begins her speech:

*My fellow Brazilians: I come to you as a citizen of the Amazon. For forty years, I have worked to help the poor settle the Amazon. Every step of the way we have faced adversity. Our adversity was not the poor soil or drought, crickets or locust. Our adversity was another infestation--the loggers who illegally steal our land. In broad daylight and full view they stole the land, then raped it of all its worth...*

The speech continues to be heard, as the audience sees the last **SIX DAYS** of her life in the correct order. After a sudden eruption of music, speech, and cheers from the assembly, all becomes silent.

We see the moment before her murder, just the way the opera began. Sister Dorothy begins to sing the second beatitude, and at mid sentence, the gunmen shoot her six times. She falls to the ground, and there is silence. We hear a few drops of rain gradually turn into a downpour which cleanses her body.

**END**

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