

HOLY STABLE™
Celebrate the Miracle
Nativity Play Script

Written by

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Staged by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

Angel Child (singing part)

(could also be in the Angel Ensemble and/or be the Narrator)

Narrator (speaking part)

(could also be Angel Child or divide this part up among the Angel Ensemble)

Angel Gabriel (speaking part)

(could also be the Innkeeper, unless you want to bring the Innkeeper and his wife in with the shepherds at the end)

Mary (speaking part)

(leave her playing Mary through the entire piece)

Joseph (singing and speaking part)

(leave him playing Joseph through the entire piece)

Donkey (pantomime part)

Tip: Teenagers make great donkeys! A teen that otherwise may balk at participating is the perfect actor for the donkey. A full attitude helps.*

Innkeeper (pantomime part)

(could be played by a Wise Man or Angel Gabriel)

Innkeeper's Wife (pantomime part)

(could be played by a female from the Angel Ensemble)

Inn Guests (pantomime part)

Angel Ensemble (singing parts)

(could take turns narrating and others could help with the singing, from offstage.)

Shepherds (pantomime part) *Tip: Toddlers in lamb costumes are darling!*

(could double as inn guests and/or could take turns narrating)

Three Wise Men (pantomime part) *(could double as inn guests also)*

Tip: One actor can play multiple parts, depending on the size of your cast! I've blocked it as though you have a full cast, but if you don't have a full cast, get creative! It's your show now! The ideas for double casting in parenthesis are just that – ideas! Write the name of the actor playing the character next to the parts. Many of the characters are optional. Please see the suggestions given at the end for both larger and smaller groups. It's helpful to read them all.

*Tip: Use a highlighter to mark the speaking parts for each participant. Cross out the parts that don't apply to your group, with a blue or black marker. You may make the needed copies for your participants, provided that you are the purchaser or have received *Celebrate the Miracle* as an honestly purchased gift and that your play is not in any way for paid or commercial use.**

THE SOUND

MUSIC TRACKS 1- 8 or 9-10 or 11-18 or 21-28 may be used. All four sets of tracks comprise the same pageant with these following variations:

1-8 Vocal Tracks: provide full instrumentation, narration, and singing. You may simply act out the play using the complete sound provided. Expect the speaking parts in the script to vary from the Vocal Tracks just a little bit.

Listening Tracks 9-10 may also be used, but they lack the harp interludes that provide time for all of the scripted actions. . . . Great for children at play.

11-18 Minus Tracks: These have full instrumentation, but the voices are removed for anyone preferring to act out the play using their performers' own voices! (If choosing to use your own voices, you still may find convenience in practicing to the vocal tracks at first.) This script is altered with the adaptations for using your own speaking and singing actors.

19-20 Practice Tracks: Use these to save characters time in learning the song.

21-28 Minus Tracks with Cues: To help with timing the entrance for the Narrator. It will be helpful with timing to listen to the vocal tracks also.

Tip: Choose your sound after reading through the script, suggestions and tips and deciding what kind of production you want to do. Or begin with Vocals Tracks 1-8.

THE SET

(...at least the set we have in mind for these stage directions... You're welcome to do your own thing!)

STAGE LEFT

A platform on Up Stage Left. This will be where Angel Gabriel will speak from and part of the Angel Ensemble will enter through. A set of stairs leading up from the audience to Down Stage Left would provide an effective entrance from the audience for the Wise Men when they come to see the Christ Child at the end.

STAGE RIGHT

A platform on Up Stage Right - not as high as Stage Left's platform (this is the "earthly" platform versus Stage Left's "heavenly" platform). This will be the inn, as well as a place for another part of the Angel Ensemble to enter through.

Tip: You can use pallets covered with a piece of plywood sturdily placed for the inn platform. You may then cover it with an area rug or heavy fabric to get the desired effect. Just be sure it is not a tripping hazard.

Tip: If you want a more elaborate inn you may use large wooden boxes (2x2 square) stacking about three on each side of the "door" as pillars to frame the entrance of the inn. If you have access to a wood or metal arbor arch, you can sandwich that between the boxes in front of the pallet and drape fabric over or around it to create an entrance effect. Place unlit candlesticks on top of each of the boxes for effect.

CENTER STAGE

Center Stage will be where Mary listens to the Angel Gabriel from, as well as where the Stable will be located later.

Tip: See Section One in back for crash course on basic stage directions.

LIGHTING

GENERAL LIGHTING

General Lighting is like the overhead lighting in a room - it can light the whole stage from one control switch or slider. Use it when the whole stage is filled with action.

SPECIAL LIGHTING

Special Lighting (the individual lights will be referred to from here on as “Special[s]”) is more like a lamp (but the light hangs from higher up) - it lights one particular area of the stage and helps focus the audience members’ attention on the area of the stage it is lighting. You could also use spotlights for Specials if you wanted. I’ve given you this blocking with Specials, but if you don’t have them, use General Lighting and you’ll be just fine.

You could use four Specials to light specific areas of the stage:

Special #1 On Down Stage Right, where Narrator will stand,
Special #2 On Up Stage Left’s Platform, where Gabriel speaks from,
Special #3 On Center Stage, where Mary is often located and
Special #4 On Up Stage Right’s Platform, where we find Joseph and the Inn.

FADING

If you have access to a lighting board with a sliding switch, fading up and down looks smoother and makes nicer transitions than simply turning the lights on and off.

HOLY STABLE™
CELEBRATE THE MIRACLE

Pageant starts with stage in dark.

MUSIC TRACK 1, 11 or 21

We hear the flute in the dark. (During the Angel Child's song, we will create a tableau [a picture created with the people on the stage holding very still] of what is described in the lyric of the song.) Toward the end of the flute solo Special #1 comes up on Angel Child holding Narrator's hand (if appropriate) in Narrator's spot Down Stage Right. Angel Child smiles at Narrator, then at the audience, and then begins to sing...

ANGEL CHILD (Singing)

An Angel told Mary...

As Angel Child sings, we see the tableau begin to appear with the other specials fading up, one at a time, as Angel Child describes the scene.

The order is;

Special #2 Angel Gabriel on Upstage Left platform in the attitude of speaking to...

Special #3 ...Mary, who is Center Stage, kneeling and facing Gabriel, listening to him.

ANGEL CHILD (Singing)

She would bear God's Son...

At the next lyric, fade up Special #4 on Joseph, Upstage Right Platform, lying on his side leaning up on an elbow as if just awakened and listening to Gabriel.

ANGEL CHILD (Singing)

Then spoke next to Joseph of the Holy One.

Specials #2, #3, & #4 fade down on Gabriel, Mary and Joseph.
(Leave Special #1 up on the Narrator and Angel Child.)

MUSIC TRACK 2, 12 or 22

*NOTE: THE SCRIPTING HAS SOME SMALL CHANGES FROM THE VOCAL TRACKS. THOSE ACTORS' PARTS WILL BE MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK.

*NARRATOR

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth...

Specials #2 & #3 fade up simultaneously on the Angel Gabriel, who is standing on the Up Stage Left platform and Mary, who is kneeling Center Stage. At this point we are into the action of the play, so they no longer hold still, but can move as the story requires.

*NARRATOR

And the angel came in unto her and said,

ANGEL GABRIEL

Hail! Thou that art highly favored! The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women! Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest!

Specials #2 & #3 dim on Mary and Gabriel, who exit.
Special #1 also dims on Narrator and Angel Child, but they remain in place.

MUSIC TRACK 3, 13 or 23 (Scene Change Music)

During the Scene Change Music, Mary (off stage) will add whatever you have for her costume, to help her look as if she is "great with child." It could be a pregnancy pouch, a belt and pillow, or a doll to be Baby Jesus later. Whatever it is, it needs to look as real as possible, be fastened securely and be able to be removed quickly!

Guests of the inn take their places in the dark. They may lay semi-reclined, stand or sit close together on the platform (because there is not a lot of room in the Inn, after all!). While in the dark they should be frozen in position. When their lights come on, they become animated. They PANTOMIME eating and talking to each other with great enthusiasm.

Special #1 fades up on Angel Child and Narrator. You could leave Special #1 on from now throughout the duration of the pageant so that we can always see the Narrator.

ANGEL CHILD (Singing)

**They journeyed to be taxed, to Bethlehem came,
Found only a stable, yet worshipped His name.**

Angel Child exits stage.

As narration starts, General Lights come up.

Joseph enters down stage left crossing up to the inn, leading the optional Donkey with Mary walking beside it (versus “on” it - we are not responsible for any donkey actors with back injuries!) The donkey can be either someone in a donkey costume or a real donkey. (If you can come up with and manage a real donkey more power to ya! However, be forewarned that working with animals on stage is always pretty risky for all kinds of reasons... not to mention smelly...which could add to the ambiance, actually (. . . hmmm)

(Track 23- Cue 1) NARRATOR
**Joseph pulls the donkey,
Mary trusts the way,
His gentle hands lead
To a safe inn, to stay.**

Joseph, Mary and Donkey go to the entrance of the inn. Joseph and Mary enter the in and see that there will be no privacy in which to have the baby. The Innkeeper gestures toward the other guests and shrugs as

if to say, “Sorry, but this is what you get . . .” The Innkeeper’s Wife sees the problem and takes over the situation.

This can be a fun moment with the Innkeeper’s Wife orchestrating the inn’s guests in putting together the stable Center Stage. Pantomime with full body and talking animation, but no actual verbal sound.

She seats Mary and Joseph and then waves to get the guests attention, gestures at Mary, pantomiming rocking a baby indicating there’s a real need for help here and then assigns jobs. The jobs will include setting straw* (or some foam with a blanket over it, to support Mary & Joseph so they can semi-recline later) directly center stage, putting folded blankets on the straw*as a bed for Mary, setting the manger slightly Down Stage Left of Mary’s straw* bed, putting straw* in the manger and perhaps laying out a small blanket on it. When the stable is set, the Inn Guests exit either side of the stage.

Special #3 fades up on the stable Center Stage.
(General Light stays on.)

Innkeeper’s Wife starts helping Mary (who has been waiting at the inn) over to the stable as the Innkeeper engages Joseph (who is leading Donkey) in conversation walking behind the women. A concerned look from Mary lets Joseph know that she would rather he be with her. He pardons himself from the Innkeeper, hurries to Mary’s side and gently assists her the rest of the way to the stable. Innkeeper, Innkeeper’s Wife, Mary, Joseph and optional Donkey enter the stable. Donkey lands far enough Up Stage Left of Mary’s bed to not interfere with the Angel Ensemble’s “blocking” (meaning the placing of characters) later.

General Lights fade down on the rest of the stage (other than Special #1 on the narrator who is now always lit, and Special #3, which is still on the stable) at this point.

The Innkeeper shrugs apologetically as if to say he’s sorry he didn’t try harder to find them a place, His wife gives him a playful nudge. They

hand Joseph one more blanket. Joseph and Mary thank the Innkeepers. The Innkeeper and Innkeeper's Wife leave.

If MUSIC TRACK 3 (or 13 or 23) still has music going (since we gave you a lot of music to cover all of this action) fade it out and prepare for MUSIC TRACK 4 (or 14 or 24.)

MUSIC TRACK 4, 14 or 24 (Harp interlude begins directly after Narrator begins speaking.)

(Track 23-24 Transition-Cue 2) NARRATOR

**Mary ponders the blessing
Of bearing God's Son;**

Mary takes both of Joseph's hands in hers and smiles into his eyes with gratitude and love.

NARRATOR

**And her pure desire
To, with Joseph, be one.**

They look around the stable with an, "It's not what we expected, but..." look and then smile to each other.

NARRATOR

**Thru bustling streets, Joseph
Sought better than this;
But a stable for shelter
Is all that there is.**

During the next narration Joseph helps Mary down as they kneel. Holding hands, they bow their heads in thankful prayer.

MUSIC TRACK 5,15 or 25 (This is a safety music cue so that if you need it you can make sure you are where you need to be on the CD. If you're already there just let it play on through.)

(Track 25-Cue 3)

NARRATOR

**At last in still cavern,
Meekly they kneel;
Weary of travel,
His Holiness they feel.**

During the next narration, while Mary watches, Joseph spreads one blanket on the straw as a bed for her.

NARRATOR

**Here, in humble refuge,
Upon the blanket worn,
A lull of peace awaits
God's Son to be born.**

Joseph returns to her to embrace Mary.

NARRATOR

**Now Joseph holds Mary,
Skin moist with shared tears,
For their coming Savior,
God's promise of years.**

As he starts to help her up to get her to the bed, Mary gasps as she feels her first serious labor pain. Joseph panics and starts to leave to go get help, but Mary shakes her head and pulls him back down to get him to stay. Mary helps calm Joseph down (this is a first birth for him after all!).

He helps Mary move to the blanket and straw, and helps her lie with her back against the straw for support. He then tucks the second blanket around her.

MUSIC TRACK 6,16 or 26

(Track 26-Cue 4)

NARRATOR

**Aside from crowded city
And unholy eyes,
In a lowly stable (continues below)**

Near Joseph, Mary lies.

Joseph leans against the straw beside Mary and tries to make sure she is comfortable by supporting her as they rest together. She leans her head on his shoulder. He strokes her hair gently, watching her anxiously. She gives a soft sigh of relief.

NARRATOR

**His shoulder her pillow,
Mere straw for a bed,
Joseph, watching thru night
Asks, caressing her head...**

* NOTE: BEGINNING HERE THERE ARE SOME MORE SCRIPTING CHANGES FROM THE VOCAL (NARRATED) TRACKS 1-8! THEY WILL AGAIN BE MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK. THE CHANGES IN WHO SPEAKS THE PARTS WILL APPLY TO YOU IF YOU ARE USING YOUR OWN VOCALS, USING TRACKS 11-18 OR 21-28!

*JOSEPH

Mary, may I comfort thee?

NARRATOR

Comes her labored reply...

*MARY

**Please, a song! I long for
Thy voice to be nigh!**

During the next narration Joseph looks at her thoughtfully, gently stands and walks Down Stage Left to gather his thoughts and silently pray for guidance.

NARRATOR

**Joseph struggles for words
Of his love so profound,
To lift Mary's care,
Give sweet solace, of sound.**

MUSIC TRACK 7, 17 or 27

* NOTE: THE SCRIPTING HERE IS AGAIN A SLIGHT CHANGE FROM THE VOCAL (NARRATED) TRACKS 1-8! THIS WILL APPLY TO YOU IF YOU ARE USING YOUR OWN VOCALS, USING TRACKS 11-18 OR 21-28!

Where the Narrator says:

“O Savior, come safely.
Bring Heaven’s sweet cry
Babe Holy, come forth to
Love’s low lullaby...”

Joseph will instead speak his prayer over the first two lines of the melody. The Angel Ensemble will also replace the Narrator, singing the next two lines. As follows:

(Track 27-Cue 5) *JOSEPH (Speaking)
O Savior, come safely! Bring Heaven’s sweet cry!

 *ANGEL ENSEMBLE (Singing from offstage)
(Angels need to practice these words and sing them to the same tune used for
 “Pure Mary Dear Mother will cradle you nigh!”)
**Babe Holy, Come forth to,
Love’s low lullaby!**

Joseph hears the Angel Ensemble and is inspired by their words. The actor playing Joseph doesn’t need to give a physical manifestation of hearing them – he simply listens. It is a sacred moment as his prayer is answered. He now knows how to comfort and encourage Mary. He turns back and, crossing to her, kneels, touches her face tenderly and sings the lullaby “Heaven’s Sweet Cry”

 JOSEPH (Singing)
**O Savior, come safely, bring Heaven’s sweet cry!
Pure Mary, dear mother, will cradle you nigh.**

Chorus:

Oh come safely, Baby Jesus, Son of God, Holy Babe!
Oh come safely, now to Mary, Baby Jesus, Son of God!

While Joseph is singing the chorus of the first verse, Angel Ensemble starts entering (QUIETLY!) from both sides of Up Stage onto the platforms so they will be ready to join in for verse two. If you have a lot of angels, let them come in groups of twos and threes at a time rather than all at once. (If the platforms are too loud, try putting blankets under them to dampen the sound – or have the Angel Ensemble enter just down stage of the platforms. If you are using an indoor venue with a safe floor, bare feet, stocking feet or soft dance shoes help. You don't want clomping angels to kill this tender moment!)

JOSEPH (Singing)

O Savior, come safely, bring Heaven's sweet cry,
And Joseph will guard thee, God's Son from on high!

ANGEL ENSEMBLE
 (Singing as back-up to Joseph, an audible but soft...)

“Ooh”

Tip: Using the Practice tracks 19 and 20, ahead of time, will help your angels easily practice the lullaby and descant “Oohs.” The descant “Oohs” can be heard in the second and third verses. The lyrics of the lullaby may also be listened to in Listening Tracks 9-10 or in Vocal Tracks 1-8 first.

If so inspired, Joseph may reverently touch Mary's stomach as if speaking to the baby, because in reality he is addressing both Mary and the baby.)

When they start singing the next lyric, the Angel Ensemble comes down to form a crescent frame, facing front, upstage of Mary and Joseph. The angels on the tips of the crescent kneel with the ones next

to them kneeling up on one knee, the angels in the middle standing, etc. The idea is to form a lovely picture frame for Mary and Joseph.

JOSEPH AND ANGEL ENSEMBLE (Singing)

Oh come safely, Baby Jesus, Son of God, Holy Babe!
Oh come safely, now to Mary, Baby Jesus, Son of God!

JOSEPH (Singing Words)

ANGEL ENSEMBLE (Singing "Oohs"):

O Savior, come safely, bring Heaven's sweet cry!
Come bless a lent shelter, God's love bring us nigh!

JOSEPH AND ANGEL ENSEMBLE (Singing)

Oh come safely, Baby Jesus, Son of God, Holy Babe!
Oh come safely now to bless us, Holy Jesus, Son of God!

While singing this last chorus, the Angel Ensemble (facing the audience), starting at the tips of the crescent with the others following, comes around to the front of Mary and Joseph, crossing in front of them, covering them. Behind the wall of Angels, Mary needs to discreetly lose the pregnant pouch. She can produce Baby Jesus, either from under her costume; or a doll could have been hidden in the straw or under the nearby platform; or if you want, one of the angels could bring a real baby to her.

On the last harp chord of the music, the wall of angels separate to either side of the stable to reveal Mary and Joseph with the Baby Jesus, who is wrapped in swaddling clothes. Everyone on stage focuses on them.

During the next narration, Mary holds the swaddled baby in her arms. She snuggles him against her cheek and kisses his eye gently. Joseph is kneeling beside Mary with one arm around her and the other helping hold the baby.

TRACK 8, 18 or 28 (Also a safety track)

(Track 28-Cue 6)

NARRATOR

Now her grateful hand
Tender, cradling bare hip;
Tiny eye, closed to cheek
Beneath Mary's soft lips.

No fine robe, but wrapped
Swaddling, warming babe's limbs,
The world n'er a King
Left forsaken as Him.

Mary hands the baby to Joseph, who gently lays him in the manger.

On the violin music in the Track, as the Narrator begins the next narration with "Star of joy! . . .":

Special #2 comes up as Angel Child runs in onto Stage Left platform holding the star up as high as she/he can, as if the star is the coolest thing ever! (A real "kid moment!") Then Angle Gabriel comes in behind Angel Child and hefts her/him up onto his shoulder (a very "father-child (or big brother) moment!") so the star can get even higher in the sky! (They are in the same place Gabriel was at the beginning of the pageant. Angel Child and Gabriel stay there for remainder of play.)

(Track 28-Cue7) *ANGEL CHILD or NARRATOR

(Having the Angel Child say it is the most fun, if they are able to.)

Star of joy!

NARRATOR

The known sign!
All doubts to defy;
The wonder of angels'
Voiced choruses on high!

Angels reform their crescent upstage of and around the Holy Family.

Shepherds, Innkeeper and Innkeeper's Wife enter from Down Stage Right and form a group Down Stage Right of the stable, but slightly Up Stage of Narrator, gazing at the star and the angels.

NARRATOR

**Heard by meek shepherds,
Tending lambs near;**

Wise Men have started from behind the audience coming toward the Down Stage Left Stairs, following the star. Time it so they are at the stairs at this point. They will cross to Down Stage Left of the manger, reaching out with their presents toward the Christ Child.

NARRATOR

**Come Wise Men, with gifts,
Held in wait thru the years!**

Shepherds see the Holy Family.

NARRATOR

All bowing to witness...

(Shepherds kneel and freeze)

Heaven's gift from above;

(Wise Men kneel and freeze)

Cradled safe in lent manger,

(Angels kneel and freeze)

Son of God bringing love!

(Narrator kneels as Mary and Joseph look above the back of the audiences as if they can see heaven there.)

All lights but Special #3 (which is on Joseph, Mary and Jesus, who freeze,) fade slowly during the last music. Just before the music ends, Angel Gabriel begins his last line, which he finishes over silence...

(Don't forget to stop the CD when the sound finishes so it doesn't move on into the next version, interrupting Angel Gabriel!)

*ANGEL GABRIEL (Luke 2:10-11)

For behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Special #3 fades to black.

The End

NOTE: Angel Gabriel's final speech is also a change from the Listening Tracks 9&10 and from the vocals provided version Tracks 1-8

Tip: You may also have all of your characters remain in frozen state and bring all of the lights back up. That will allow more time to see the Wise Men and for anyone who wishes, to take pictures of the scene.

Who is capable of performing Holy Stable™ ?

Anyone! We'll help you! Read both sections and the tips. That information will spark your own ideas and help you decide which *Celebrate the Miracle* pageant or play is best for you! *Tip: Call it whichever of those you prefer, too.*

Is singing or reading ability needed?

Nope! You can use tracks 1-8 and all of your vocals will be provided. So simple even young children can act it out! Tracks 9-10 are even shorter and simpler than those.

But, more involvement is fun!

Great! Tracks 11-18 or 21-28 are provided to allow the option for bringing in your own voices. This gives you the ability to expand if desired, and to include as much talent or as many people as you wish. Practicing will still be a cinch.

Do you need stage experience?

Nope! A few easy directions in Section One and you're on your way!

What do you need?

Willing (*Or half-willing/briable*) people (*Oops, I know some of you shun bribery. "Giving positive incentives" may be a better way to look at it . . .*) with the desire to act out the story of Jesus' birth! A few costumes and props would be fun, too!

What if I don't play any instruments?

Fabulous! This pageant CD system was created especially for you! You get amazing sound without hauling any instruments around.

You want to act it out in your living room?

Great! We have suggestions if you want them, in section two!

SECTION ONE: SUGGESTIONS FOR DIRECTING A GROUP AND FOR GETTING ORGANIZED!

Accommodating a group - If you are planning to put on the play with a larger crowd of people that are part of a community, school, home-school or church group, you may increase the number of people participating by easily adding more shepherds, angels, inn guests, or animals. Determine a budget in advance and find out who is willing to contribute.

Calendaring - It is ideal to begin a month or more in advance to allow for meeting peoples' schedules and having sufficient practices if you are bringing in your own vocal talent. But you can pull it off with only a few practices too.

Organize Volunteers - Pass around a sign-up sheet, send text messages, emails, or use social media or "old school" phone calls asking for volunteers for each of the categories below and ask them to volunteer for whatever they may be willing or able to do. (Or delegate someone to do this step for you.) (Include the date of the event and if possible a tentative practice schedule—You may want to be flexible on this to accommodate the needs of your potential helpers.) Ask for additional contact information you may need, such as cell phone numbers and ask your volunteers what they feel they are willing to do.

Actors and Actresses for the characters

Costumes / Fabric Donations for Costumes /Sewing ability (minimal)

Props

Music Practice (No talent required, just put in the CD)

Stage lighting

Stage set-up

Sound set-up (for guidance see "SOUND" at the beginning)

The Director, (but I'm guessing that is you!)

It's also a great help to have a Co-Director or two

Programs /Refreshments ("optional?" . . . probably not, on the treats. ☺)

Making it Memorable /Remember to get the camera or assign someone to!

Financial Contributions (also greatly appreciated)

**Once You Have Obtained Your List of Willing Volunteers . . .
THERE ARE THREE CRUCIAL THINGS THAT WILL HELP THINGS
GO SMOOTHLY:**

Communication- It is highly important to have clear communication. As soon as you have lined people up for each of the categories, it is important to promptly communicate what you need them to accomplish. Choose a leader or co-director to periodically ask for reports from everyone to make sure things are coming together and to offer needed support. Let everyone know up-front that you plan to have a friendly reporting system. Arrange for practice and rehearsal times. You don't need to have every volunteer at every practice. It works best to have the singers and vocal participants practice and memorize their parts in advance of group rehearsals.

Delegation- Some will want more guidance than others. Remain open to individual ideas; yet, don't be afraid to be a bit choosy about who you delegate to each task. If you have a few people signed up for each category, you may sub-divide each one. For example "Costumes" could be divided into "Angel Costumes," "Shepherd Costumes" etc... If you don't have enough people, ask those you have if they will please handle more than one category.

Individualization- Time to give your helpers the freedom to contribute creatively! They will come up with some things you don't expect. There will be pleasant surprises and maybe a few boo boos. It will all be a memorable part of the experience.

Make sure to share the tips and suggestions given for each of the individual categories in Section Two below, with your group leaders along with any of your own ideas and then . . . put on your favorite holiday sweater and smile!

. . . More Tips

Tip: A teen that otherwise may balk at participating is the perfect actor for the donkey. I know this from personal experience. My teen now tells me ahead of time that he (or she) is playing the donkey! You may just throw a piece of fur or a blanket over their back and add some ears. A full attitude helps.

Tip: Read through all of Section Two for some great costume and prop suggestions.

Tip: The people doing the singing may practice on their own without tying up the whole group, but you will still want to have a couple of practice sessions with all of the participants if possible.

Tip: If you are setting up sound for a gymnasium or another fairly large venue, it may be best to download the sound to a computer or an MP3. I would suggest you talk to a couple of “techie” family members or friends and seek some advice on this, because it will depend quite a bit on your venue. Good sound will help the actors hear their parts and will make for better video recording of your memories.

Tip: Renting or borrowing is an option for costumes as well as for sound equipment and stage props. Check with local theatre companies or DJs.

Tip: There is a sound cushion provided in the harp interludes. They are timed to last longer than is needed to perform the script actions. If the actors are “caught up,” the music may be faded down and then moved to the next track. Just be sure the narrators and other performers are aware of the possibility of that happening.

Tip: Take pictures or videotape your play and send it to us. We will post our favorites on the site. Also we would love receiving YOUR suggestions for any improvements we could make!

CRASH COURSE ON BASIC STAGE DIRECTIONS

UP STAGE & DOWN STAGE

Imagine you're the actor and you're facing the audience from the back of a stage. Now imagine the back of the stage is like the top of a hill, and the front is sloping down towards the audience. That puts you "Up Stage" when you are at the back. Moving towards the audience is moving "Down Stage". Pretty simple, eh?

STAGE RIGHT & STAGE LEFT

Imagine you're the actor and you're facing the audience. To your right is "Stage Right" and to your left is "Stage Left". Stage Right is always Stage Right and Stage Left is always Stage Left from then on, regardless of what direction your body might be facing after that. Ah, ha! Not so difficult!

CENTER STAGE

Imagine you're the actor and you're in the very center of the stage. That's "Center Stage". Ta da!

COMBINATIONS

So now you're the actor and you need to cross (walk, run, roll, whatever, but get to) "Down Stage Left". You will go stage left and toward the audience, where "Up Stage Right" would be to the stage's right and away from the audience, etc.

MOST ESSENTIAL... KEEP IT SIMPLE and HAVE FUN!!!!

SECTION TWO

IDEAS FOR A FAMILY OR FRIENDS GET-TOGETHER

For those of you who just want to do the “Family-and-friends-get-together-and-have-a-cosy-evening-with-the-pageant-followed-by-warm-wassail-and-Christmas-bread” version, try these ideas, or let them inspire you to some of your own!

You can perform Holy Stable in your living room, cottage, a barn, a park... think through your resources. If you have an outside location you can use live animals and real straw.

Tip: If using straw indoors please obtain fire restriction information. Raffia will make a nice substitute if straw is not allowed. You don't need a lot. Cover some blankets or a folded foam pad with a brown or tan blanket. Sprinkle on some raffia. A large painting tarp works great to place under straw. Be aware that straw is very fun but it requires quite some clean-up. Placing a large tarp under it so you can fold the corners and sides up when you are finished makes it the easiest to manage. Straw will stick to a canvas tarp so vinyl is better to use.

Actors and Actresses for the Characters

Your cast can include children, adults, relatives, stuffed animals, real animals, chairs with bathrobes disguising them as shepherds, or rocking horses as donkeys! Even pictures of characters may be used. It's fun to invite neighbors and friends or parents of your children's friends to join with you.

Look through the script. If any of the ideas work for you, highlight them. Also highlight the parts for each of the actors on a separate script for ease in practicing.

Simplify the stage directions down to the level of your performers. If you're performing it with little children – let them act out all the parts. Stop the CD when you need to so they can change into the next whatever. Help them understand the story they are telling. Help them understand that Mary and Joseph really loved each other and expected that Jesus was bringing even more love to a loving family and that the heavens rejoiced at His birth.

For young children who want to dress up and use the CD for their own play, you may use the shortened Listening Tracks 9-10.

Costumes

Costumes need not be elaborate. Simple costumes can be made from rectangular pieces of fabric: measure from the base of the back of the actor's neck to the floor and times that measurement by two, to determine total fabric length. Fold fabric in half with fold at shoulder and cut a slit out of the center of the folded edge to fit over the head. Wrap with a tie around the waist to hold in place.

For headdresses: use squares of fabric, scarves, towels or even pillowcases. For animals: blankets or pieces of fur may be placed on participants backs. Ears sewn or glued to a simple headband also work for an animal costume.

Sheep, cows or other farm animal costumes can be recycled for (or from) Halloween.

Tip: It makes it more fun for children, to let them choose their own colors and make their own accessories, even if they are less "authentic."

You get the "Wise Man" effect with rich colors, metallic trimmings and layers. Crowns for the wise men may be made by painting the give-away crowns from a well-known hamburger drive in, with spray paint and adding a tube of fabric stuffed with batting or any purchased trim or craft store "jewels." Upside-down rounded style baskets may also be painted with gold paint and decorated. Children have fun decorating their own. You can make it a special Christmas craft day! An old baseball cap with the brim cut off is the perfect liner for odd shaped containers that won't stay on easily by themselves. Don't forget the "Wise Men's" gifts.

For angel costumes there are many possibilities: White, cream or pastel t-shirts and skirts; nightgowns; dresses or tunics; Mom's old blouse with a sash tied around the waist may even work. A really cute idea, if you want your angels to have wings, is to tie a big bow of bridal veil fabric (tulle) and attach it. Any of these may be trimmed with gold, silver or whatever thing speaks to you. You

can make angel halos by taking the wired holiday craft trim, the kind with the loose pieces of silver or gold paper foil, and wrapping it loosely in a circle overlapping it three or four times. Secure it with a bobby pin.

For shepherds, bathrobes work great. Or choose fabrics that are neutral colored and not too scratchy. Tan and brown work well. Bright headdresses in different colors are fun for young children.

Props

Angel Gabriel will look official if he is reading a “parchment scroll.” If you are feeling ambitious you may make one using a couple of wooden dowels or sticks fastened to each end of a rolled piece of paper. This also makes a great “cheat sheet” from which Gabriel may read his part.

Props that make it fun: Shepherds’ canes or sticks; A shiny star from a party store or a handmade one taped onto a stick; Swaddling clothes wrapped onto your “Baby Jesus” doll; A manger (can also be a wagon, basket or anything else, perhaps covered with a blanket;) Blankets; A safe rope for pulling the donkey; Adhesive beards for the wise men, if you wish (also available at party stores;) An eyebrow pencil can also make an inexpensive and very fast beard; Floor pillows, a serving tray and goblets for the Inn Guests, etc., add to the effect.

If you have access to a carpenter eager to use his skills, but waiting for your guidance, you may want to suggest that he can look online to find manger designs. He would also be a great person for building platforms. These are not necessary though! There all kinds of objects that can serve the purpose without going to all that time and expense.

Music Practice – See also “THE SOUND” at the beginning

When practicing with children the most important thing is to build confidence. The first thing they need is to become familiar with the song. You may go directly to the song on Track 10, so that you can replay it without going through the entire play. Once the children can sing along comfortably with the melody and chorus, they are ready to practice with the practice

tracks, (accompaniment for the chorus and descant - Tracks 19 and 20.) The descant's "oohs," are most easily learned from Track 20.

To get their best sound, encourage them to open their mouths as they sing. This is especially important on the "Oh" and when singing the word "God." Please encourage the children to honor their Heavenly Father, by showing reverence when speaking and singing his name.

A great incentive for proper singing is to give children a Tootsie Pop™ or other large sphere shaped sucker. They open their mouths wide enough to put the sucker in and then pull it out keeping their mouths open. If they do a good job on the singing they get to keep the suckers. If they don't...well...I say let them keep them for later, anyway.

There are different opinions about the best way to pronounce the end of the word "Savior." I believe it depends on the song and the setting of the song. The setting of this lullaby from Joseph and the Angels to Mary was one of a tender intimacy. So we chose to record the more "ur" sounding ending, rather than a more formal "ior" sound. You may choose to copy our style or use your own. The important thing is to have all of your singers pronounce it the same.

The "Ss" at the end of words are always a little difficult to get right. Take notice and try to get everyone to cut them off at the same time. If you have a lot of children singing together, a trick you may want to use is to have only about a third of the children be your designated "s" singers. The rest will simply sing the vowel. This works depending on the age of the children and their ability to implement it.

These tricks will make it sound better if you are trying to polish your play, but they aren't the most important thing at all.

Joseph may also learn his singing part from Tracks 10 and then practice with the accompaniment on Track 19. Even if he is capable of practicing alone, it is important for your "Joseph" to get together with the "Angels," for their sakes.

You can memorize the full play (make sure to note there are some minor script variations if using your own voices for all of the parts,) with either the The Performance Vocal Tracks 1-8 or The Listening Tracks 9-10.

When using your own vocal actors you will also need to have the Angel Children learn to sing the words, “Babe Holy come forth to, Love’s low lullaby,” sung to the same tune heard for “Pure Mary Dear Mother will cradle you nigh.” Have them practice coming in with their part right after Joseph speaks his introductory part (O Savior, come safely! Bring heaven’s sweet cry!) to the lullaby.

You may also spontaneously act and let The Listening Tracks 9-10 do the talking for you.

Stage Lighting – See also “LIGHTING” at the beginning

You could use flashlights for the specials and overhead lights for the general lights. The children participating can light up the other characters as they play their parts. Cheap low-power flashlights work best for that, so no one feels like they are getting blinded. An adult should test the lights first. If you are doing the pageant in a darker setting or room, you may also want an extra flashlight or a booklight for the narrator to view their script.

Stage Set-Up – See also “THE SET” at the beginning

A sofa, a fireplace hearth, table, chair, or even a bale of straw can be a platform. (Just make sure to test whatever you have in mind, for sturdiness.)

Sound set-up – See “THE SOUND” at the beginning

The Director – You’ve got the fun job! You get to watch it all come together and feel the satisfaction of doing so. Have all of the singers and speakers practice ahead of time.

When you get everyone together to practice keep in mind that the Shepherds don’t have whole lot to do. They will get tempted to use their canes for entertainment if they are given to them too far ahead of time.

Wise Men make their entrance at the last and though their timing is important, they have little else to do. You don't want to keep them waiting. It is really smart to arrange for them to come later on in the practice so they don't spend unneeded time waiting.

The Angel Children will have an easier time understanding how to form a "crescent" (half circle) if you have them form a circle holding outstretched hands and then have one half of the circle drop their hands and go fill in the spaces between the others still in the circle.

When The Angel Children move in front of Joseph and Mary, while the baby is being born, you may want to direct them to either hold hands or hold their own hands together, either in front or behind their backs.

The thing that will help the practice flow the most smoothly is if you as "The Director" have listened to the tracks and gone through them with the script in hand a few times. You will want to listen to the Pageant Vocal Version 1-8 first. Get comfortable with what is happening and make some notes to yourself. You will also want to write all of the names of your characters on your script and have your Co-Director do the same. At the first group practice tell the story and maybe even discuss some of the words found in the glossary of the book.

When you have your final practice or dress rehearsal, ask a few parents to be there to help with dressing their children. This is when a Co-Director can be very helpful. While you are working with one group of people they can be coordinating another group, such as the Inn People.

Ah, the "Inn People," . . . what about the "Inn People?" Choose creative children or adults, who won't be too intimidated to do a little pantomiming.

Teenagers do make great "Angel Gabriels" and Donkeys. You could even plan for more than one donkey. They wouldn't both have to be boys.

Since Mary and Joseph are the "Stars!" If you've got a Mary that knows how to love Joseph and a Joseph that knows how to sing to Mary, you've got it made!!

Programs /Refreshments

Programs are fun to save as scrapbook reminders of who played what part. Celebrate the Miracle Nativity play makes a nice accompaniment to a church dinner or potluck supper. If you're directing and taking care of treats, we advise you to get some outside help with them or to keep it simple.

Making it Memorable (and don't forget to get the camera ready)

If you have children involved, we encourage them to be as much a part of the creative process as possible. Many will love to help come up with their own costumes. It's a great chance to help them understand the events of that holy night and they will come up with amazing ways of telling it, if you set the creative mood. We encourage you to make it a memorable and loving tradition that draws you closer to each other and to the Savior.

Keep your perspective and focus on bonding and sharing an event with each other. In spite of the fact that we've given you many tips; this is about building relationships not about producing a Broadway quality play!

While there's nothing wrong with making this your annual Christmas Eve Event, it also makes a fantastic "Day-After-Thanksgiving-Day- Tradition!" Why not resist boxing everything up immediately afterward? Children especially enjoy having regular access to their costumes so they may act it out again!

We salute your wonderful efforts to remember Jesus, create memories and build love!

Blessings,

Heidi and Kathryn

P.S. Share your pictures, videos, stories and feedback with us. Go to www.HolyStable.com We're excited to see and hear about your experiences and post our favorites!

Directors Notes: