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EC504 The Christmas Story : A Pantomime

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THE CHRISTMAS STORY

A pantomime

Characters.

Mary
The Angel Gabriel
Joseph
The Three Wise Men
Shepherds
Angels
The Reader

Setting.

The manger scene is set in the center back of the stage and enclosed with dark screens. It includes a low seat for Mary and a manger filled with straw. A small sawhorse turned upside down has been used satisfactorily. An electric light or a strong flashlight placed in the straw represents the light from the infant Jesus. After the first scene Mary and Joseph stay back of the screens.

The stage may be bare, or curtains of a neutral color may form the background. The chancel of a church has been used, the angels occupying the choir loft with a gauze, star-spangled curtain before them that concealed them until strong lights placed behind the curtain were thrown on them.

The properties for each scene are placed quickly and quietly in the dark by a property man who should rehearse with the cast.

The Reader stands behind the scenes or at one side, out of the picture.

Costumes.

In the first scene Mary wears a flowing white robe with a white veil and wimple. Over this, during the other scenes, she wears a long veil of Madonna Blue.

Gabriel wears red robes over white. The other angels wear white. A halo, about 20 inches in diameter, may be made of cardboard covered with metallic paper. A hole to fit the back of the head is cut below the center of the circle. A ribbon is slipped through a hole on either side of the head hole. This goes over the forehead and ties in back of the head.

Joseph and the shepherds wear brown or gray robes. Small shepherds have been satisfactorily costumed in burlap bags.

Costumes for the three kings may be borrowed from the lodges or Masonic orders. Pictures of Bible costumes should be studied for suggestions. Colorful kimonos and coats may be adapted for use as costumes.

Music.

Singers should be placed through the congregation to take up the carols as the organist starts them. Very soft music throughout the scenes adds greatly to their effectiveness.

The Play

Congregation sings -- Oh, Come All Ye Faithful.

Scene 1.--The Annunciation

A low bench and small narrow table are on the right side of the stage.

Reader -- Reads clearly Luke I, 26 and 27.

Mary enters from the left, carrying a lighted taper. She crosses the stage, lights a low lamp of the type used in those days, and kneels in meditation.

Reader -- Luke I, 28 to 33.

Gabriel enters from the left, raises his hand, and recites or pantomimes the salutation.

Mary starts in surprise, rises slowly, turns, and stands with bowed head.

Reader -- Reads Luke I, 38.

Mary recites or pantomimes her submission.

Gabriel leaves.

Mary turns, lifts her head, and with exultation recites Luke I, 46 to 55. (If this seems too difficult, omit the latter altogether.)

Lights out.

Congregation sings -- Joy to the World.

Scene 2.--The Shepherds

The benches are removed and a small fire of sticks over an orange-covered electric light laid in a tray so that it may be easily placed is put on the left side of the stage.

Reader -- Luke II, 8.

The stage is dim. Shepherds lounge and stand around the back of the fire. One or two stand about the center as lookouts.

Reader -- Luke II, 9.

The angel enters at the right. The shepherds fall back, hide their faces, clutch each other, and in other ways show their fear and amazement. A small boy may walk forward slowly and trustingly.

Angel -- Luke II, 10 to 12.

The shepherds gather together to listen and nod.

Reader -- Luke II, 13.

The angels enter or lights go on in the choir left so that they may be seen. They chant "Glory to God" or sing the Sanctus or, if it can be done well, the Hallelujah Chorus.

Reader -- Luke II, 15.

The shepherds slowly gather themselves together, confer, and start off.

Lights out.

Congregation sings -- Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem.

Scene 3.--The Manger

A small bright star is lighted over the manger scene and the screens are removed. Mary leans over the manger while Joseph stands in back looking down at her.

Reader -- Luke II, 16

The shepherds enter. Some fall on their knees as soon as they see the light from the manger. Others come slowly forward to stand with bowed heads or to kneel. The smallest child goes slowly and reverently to Mary's knee and stands there gazing into the light. Very softly and as though far away the choir repeats its song. Then as though from a dream, the shepherds stir and leave with joy in their faces. Mary waits until almost all of the others have left and touches the little boy who looks up in surprise before hurrying away.

Reader -- Luke II, 20.

Lights out.

Congregation sings -- Hark, the Herald Angels Sing.

Reader -- Matthew II, 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. These verses are read immediately after the hymn while the stage is dark.

Scene 4.--The Three Kings.

The manger scene is lighted dimly. The star is bright. From two or three points in the back of the room, the kings come singing the first verse and chorus of We Three Kings of Orient Are. The congregation joins the chorus. If necessary they repeat the chorus until all three of the kings are on the stage. The first and third kings are on the right, the second on the left. They stand reverently for a moment then the first king walks forward singing his solo. He places his gift at the side of the manger, steps back, and kneels during the chorus. The second king comes forward singing. He may stand with bowed head while the third sings. All worship while the Reader gives Matthew II, 12. The lights go out so the kings may leave.

Congregation sings -- Holy Night.

The dim lights come on the manger scene during the singing of this carol. The screens are then replaced and there is no scene for the closing.

Reader -- Luke II, 29 to 32.

Congregation sings -- First verse of Joy to the World.

Production Notes

Since the audience is expected to sing in semidarkness, it is well to review in advance the Christmas carols that are to be used, so that they may be sung without books or song sheets.

It adds to the beauty of the program if a low bank of holly or evergreens with two or three candles in it is arranged on each side of the stage. The light from these candles should not fall on the stage, since property changes should be made in the dark if there are no curtains.

Lights dimmed with a dimmer or with gelatine slides add greatly to the effectiveness of this play, but they are not necessary, and a person of ingenuity and imagination will find it possible to get a beautiful effect with very little equipment.

The play has been given out of doors on church steps as well as indoors.

(Prepared by Ella Gardner, Recreation Specialist, U. S. D. A. and Ralph D. Copenhaver Recreation Specialist, Nebraska Agricultural Extension Service).