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*Dramatic Publishing*

A Christmas Play in One Act

by

ANNE COULTER MARTENS

# Song of Glory



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(SONG OF GLORY)

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# Song of Glory

*A Christmas Play in One Act*

FOR SIX MEN, SIX WOMEN, AND EXTRAS

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## CHARACTERS

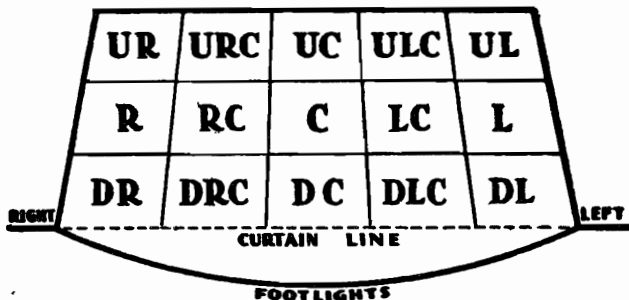
ANNOUNCER	.....	<i>who opens the play</i>
ALISON DREW	.....	<i>from the radio station</i>
BILL	.....	<i>her assistant</i>
MURIEL	.....	<i>a thoughtless girl</i>
MITCH	.....	<i>an easy-going boy</i>
CADDIE	.....	<i>a giddy girl</i>
DICK	.....	<i>a boy with a tree</i>
MR. QUINN	.....	<i>a Santa Claus</i>
MRS. ROYCE	.....	<i>a young mother</i>
STEVIE	.....	<i>a little boy</i>
MRS. ROGERS	.....	<i>a busy woman</i>
AN ANGEL	.....	<i>from the heavenly host</i>
JIM	}	..... <i>extras</i>
DORIS		
EDNA		

**PLACE:** *A corner of Tracy Park in the city of Bridgton.*

**TIME:** *The present. Christmas Eve.*

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## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

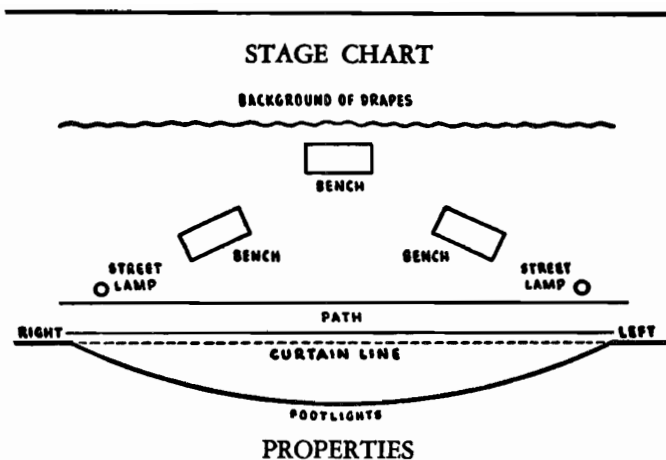


## STAGE POSITIONS

*Upstage* means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

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**NOTE:** Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.



**GENERAL:** Three benches, several evergreens, two street lamps, draperies.

**DORIS and EDNA:** Packages.

**ALISON:** Watch, brief case with papers, script.

**BILL:** Microphone with long wires attached, watch.

**MITCH:** Striped headdress, shepherd's crook, script.

**JIM:** Holly wreaths.

**MURIEL:** Script, armload of packages, small package.

**CADDIE:** Script.

**DICK:** Christmas tree.

**MRS. ROYCE:** Packages.

**MRS. ROGERS:** Packages.

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# Song of Glory

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**SCENE:** *A corner of Tracy Park in the city of Bridgton. The setting is very simple. A background of draperies, with a few small evergreens placed about the stage, will create the scene. There are three plain benches, one U C, another at L C, and the third at R C. It is evening, and the park is lit by two street lamps placed at D R and D L stage. Presumably, a path runs from D R to D L stage.]*

**BEFORE RISE OF CURTAIN:** *The house lights are lowered as the ANNOUNCER comes on stage and stands well D R. As he speaks, the sound of a choir is heard, singing softly in the background. Any well-known Christmas hymn can be used.]*

**ANNOUNCER.** Nearly two thousand years ago, an angel appeared to certain shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, and proclaimed good tidings of great joy. And the angel was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host, singing a song of glory. Now it came to pass that every year thereafter, as the hour of the holy birth drew near, the angels sang again in the earthly sky in memory of that first Christmas. And some there were in the cities of men who looked up, hearing music, and listened, believing in their hearts. But as the years passed, many went unheeding about their way, and few there were who heard the song of the angels. Now, there was among the heavenly host a certain angel who wondered in her heart why this should be.

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** *The park is revealed. It is bathed in a soft blue light, except for the white glow of the street lamps. The choir continues in the background.]*

ANNOUNCER [*continuing without a break*]. And she took leave for a while from the heavenly host and came to walk the streets of earth, seeking to discover if perhaps people had forgotten the reason for that first song of glory. And in her seeking, she came to a quiet place, a little park in the heart of a city, where every day people hurried along on their way home or to and from their work.

[*The choir gradually fades out. DORIS and EDNA, two young girls, come in D R. They are warmly dressed and their arms are filled with packages. They cross the park, chatting gayly in pantomime, and go out D L.*]

ANNOUNCER [*as girls leave*]. Now it happened that in this same city of Bridgton, a certain radio station planned a Christmas Eve broadcast from that little park. Miss Alison Drew, who had a large listening audience in that city, was sent there on Christmas Eve to interview some of the people who passed by.

[*ALISON and BILL come in D L. ALISON is in her twenties, charming and capable, but with a rather cynical manner. She wears a fur coat and a hat. BILL is a little older, a good-natured young man who takes life as it comes. He wears a business suit and a topcoat. They pause D L, looking around.*]

BILL. About here, would you say? [*Indicates a spot at L C.*]

ALISON. I guess so. Anywhere, just so you can set up the mike without too much trouble.

BILL. This is your broadcast. It's up to you to say where X marks the spot.

ALISON. That'll be all right, Bill. [*Crosses to C.*]

BILL. Okay. I'll bring in the mike. [*Looks around.*] Nice little park, isn't it?

ALISON [*indifferently*]. Yes. Dawson has everything under control in the sound truck?

BILL. Sure. [*Goes D L.*] Want to wait here?



ALISON. I do not want to wait. [*Crosses D L.*] I'm in no mood to be alone.

BILL. Who is, on Christmas Eve? Come on, then. [*He and ALISON go out D L.*]

ANNOUNCER. And the angel, who had taken leave for a while from the heavenly host, came into that park, wondering . . .

[*The ANGEL comes in from U L. She is a slim young girl in a simple white robe. She walks slowly around the park, looking at the benches, touching the evergreens.*]

BILL [*offstage D L*]. Watch out for the wires!

ALISON [*offstage D L*]. You're sure you have them set up right? [*The ANGEL stands well in the background U R, near an evergreen watching quietly. The ANNOUNCER leaves the stage.*]

[*ALISON and BILL come in D L. BILL carries a microphone which has long wires leading offstage.*]

BILL. Trying to tell me how to run my end of the business?  
[*Sets microphone up at L C, and adjusts it.*]

ALISON. Excuse, please.

BILL. Anything the matter?

ALISON. Why do you ask? [*Sits on bench L C.*]

BILL. Because tomorrow's Merry Christmas and you're far from merry. [*Indicates mike.*] Try this for size.

ALISON [*standing in front of mike*]. About right. [*A trifle grimly.*] You know the question I'm going to ask people tonight, don't you?

BILL. Sure. "What does Christmas mean to you?"

ALISON. I'm certainly glad I don't have to express *my* opinion on the air. The dear listening audience would curl up and die.

BILL. Oh, come on, smile! [*Pinches her cheek.*]

ALISON [*pulling away from him, crossing to R C*]. I'll smile very properly when the time comes. I'll be sweetness and light, charm and graciousness. But just for a few minutes,

let me be myself, will you? [*The ANGEL moves quietly off U R.*]

BILL. You *are* in a mood.

ALISON. If you really want to know, I'm just tired. [*Sits on bench R C.*] Tired of all the rush, and all the fuss, and all the noisy clatter of Christmas. I'll be glad when it's over.

BILL [*crossing toward her*]. Come off it, Alison.

ALISON. "What does Christmas mean to you?" I'm going to ask people. But if they were to ask *me*—

BILL. Okay—get it off your chest. [*Sits beside her.*]

ALISON. If I told the truth I'd have to say—it has ceased to mean anything at all.

[*MRS. ROGERS comes in D L. She is a cheerful, bustling woman, and well dressed.*]

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, here you are! [*Crosses to C.*] I saw your sound truck. How long before the broadcast starts?

BILL [*rising, looking at his watch*]. About fifteen minutes.

[*JIM, a teen-ager, comes in D R, whistling a Christmas tune and carrying a couple of holly wreaths.*]

JIM [*cheerfully*]. Merry Christmas!

MRS. ROGERS. Same to you! [*JIM goes out D L.*] Now, don't you worry about a thing, Miss Drew. Three of my young people who are in the church pageant tonight have promised they'll be here in plenty of time.

ALISON [*rising*]. Good.

MRS. ROGERS. And for the second half of your program they have their scripts and will read selections from the pageant. That's what you wanted?

ALISON. Thanks, Mrs. Rogers.

MRS. ROGERS. Muriel will be the reader, and Caddie has a response as Mary. Mitch will read the lines of the shepherd.

ALISON. How about the angel?

MRS. ROGERS. The girl who was to be our pageant angel dropped out. But I called Joan Robertson, and she said she'd

be glad to read the angel's part. She works late. I hope she makes it.

ALISON. I do, too.

MRS. ROGERS. But if she shouldn't be able to get here, you can read her lines, can't you?

ALISON. Why, yes, I guess so.

MRS. ROGERS. Have to run along and do some last-minute shopping. If I'm not back before you start, good luck!

ALISON. Thank you. [MRS. ROGERS goes out D R. ALISON is annoyed.] So now I'll have to make like an angel!

BILL. Is that so hard? Anyway, the weather's good. We might have had a blizzard.

ALISON [*shortly*]. No such luck. [*Sits on bench R C again.*]

BILL. You really are feeling low, aren't you?

ALISON. Maybe you might say that all of a sudden I'm disillusioned about Christmas.

BILL. Hey, that's no way to talk! [*Crosses and stands near bench R C, one foot resting on bench.*]

ALISON [*seriously*]. I used to like it, yes. You know how bright and shining tinsel is when you first put it on a tree? But as the years go by, it tarnishes and you throw it away.

BILL. You're not trying to tell me that Christmas is tarnished?

ALISON [*a trifle bitterly*]. It's become a gigantic buying and selling carnival, with hawkers crying their wares from the first of October till midnight tonight. "Give this, give that!" "Big Sale!" "Special Bargains!" "Five more shopping hours till Christmas!"

BILL. Oh, well—that.

ALISON. Is Christmas something that can be bought and sold in the stores?

BILL [*uneasily*]. Trouble with you is, you think too much.

ALISON. Carols blaring from records in every five and ten, so long ahead of time that when Christmas comes you're tired of hearing them. Seedy Santa Clauses in every store. What can even the children believe?

BILL. You do have a point there.

ALISON. Bigger and better buying sprees every year. "Give,

give, give!" "Get, get, get!" I just don't seem to *like* Christmas any more.

BILL. You'll feel better when this broadcast is over.

ALISON. Think so? [*Glances at her watch.*] I'd better get my brief case from the sound truck. [*Rises.*]

BILL. Let me.

ALISON. No.

[MR. QUINN, a plump man of indeterminate age, dressed as Santa Claus, enters D R.]

MR. QUINN. Merry Christmas!

ALISON. Aren't you the Santa Claus I've seen in front of the five and ten?

MR. QUINN. Yep. Same one. Quinn's the name.

BILL [*joining them*]. Through for the night?

MR. QUINN. All through till next year. On my way now for a cup of good hot coffee.

ALISON. I'm Miss Drew, from the radio station, and this is Mr. Anderson. We're having a little broadcast here, and I wonder if I could interview you?

MR. QUINN. Me—speak on the radio?

ALISON. All you'd have to do is tell me what you think of Christmas. Just a few words.

MR. QUINN [*edging away*]. Well, now, I don't know. Speaking's not much in my line.

ALISON. Oh, please, Mr. Quinn!

MR. QUINN [*eyeing mike suspiciously*]. Now?

ALISON. In a few minutes. You could get your coffee and come back.

BILL. Nothing to it at all.

MR. QUINN [*doubtfully*]. Well—— [*Suddenly cheerful.*] All right, sir, I'll do it!

ALISON. Fine! Hurry back.

MR. QUINN. Me, on the radio. Well, sir, how do you like that! [*Gives them a cocky wave and goes out D L.*]

BILL [*patting her on back*]. Nice going.

[MITCH comes in D L. He is an easy-going boy in his teens, wearing a warm sports jacket. He has a headdress of striped material over his arm and carries a tall shepherd's crook and a script.]

MITCH. Hi! [*Crosses to them.*]

ALISON. Hello, Mitch. You're in good time.

MITCH. Muriel's supposed to meet me here when she gets through her last-minute shopping.

BILL. You know how women are, always keep you waiting.  
[*Grins.*]

[MURIEL comes in D R on this line. She is a pert-looking girl in her teens, happy and excited about Christmas. She wears gay winter wraps and carries a script and an armful of packages.]

MURIEL. Is that nice? [*Laughs and joins them.*] Hi!

ALISON. You *have* been shopping!

MURIEL. More fun! I simply had to push my way through the crowds. [*Sits on bench R C, letting out a sigh of relief.*]  
And I couldn't even get *near* the perfume counter!

MITCH. That's okay—I didn't want perfume, anyway.

MURIEL. Oh, you! And a woman grabbed a scarf right out of my hand. [*Laughs.*] I grabbed it right back!

ALISON [*to BILL*]. You see what I mean? [*Goes out D L.*]

BILL [*crossing D L*]. Alison, I said I'd get your brief case.  
[*Goes out D L.*]

MITCH [*crossing to her*]. What'd you buy?

MURIEL. What didn't I buy? Just loads of things. I see you finally made your shepherd's crook.

MITCH. How do you like my headdress? [*Holds it up.*]

MURIEL. Not bad. [*Gets up to see it, forgetting packages on her lap, and they fall to ground.*] Now, see what I've done!

MITCH. Nothing breakable, I hope? [*Picks them up, putting them on bench. He rattles one small package.*]

MURIEL. Don't rattle that one. It's a secret.

MITCH. Ah, for me? [*Shakes package.*] A fountain pen, I hope, I hope.

MURIEL. Put it down! [*MITCH puts package carefully on bench, patting it tenderly.*] Oh, where's the real little one?

MITCH [*looking around*]. What little one?

MURIEL [*upset*]. A small box wrapped in holly paper. It's for a girl in my club.

MITCH. I didn't see it.

MURIEL [*looking around*]. We drew names, and we're supposed to exchange dollar gifts, but she only spent sixty-nine cents last year, so that's all I spent on her, but I certainly don't want to lose it.

MITCH. Slow down a minute. Maybe you dropped it on your way over here.

MURIEL. Oh, I hope nobody has picked it up! [*Starts D R.*]

MITCH. You'll never find it now.

MURIEL. You stay right there and guard my packages! [*Hurries out D R. MITCH shrugs and sits beside packages.*]

[*BILL comes in D L.*]

BILL. Where'd your girl friend disappear to? [*Crosses to C.*]

MITCH. She lost a Christmas package.

BILL [*with a sigh*]. My girl seems to have lost Christmas. That's a lot more serious. [*Sits on bench L C.*]

MITCH [*rising*]. You're kidding. Nobody could lose Christmas. [*Crosses and sits beside BILL.*]

BILL. She has. Now me, I'm a fellow who doesn't question life. Just take it as it comes.

MITCH. Same here.

BILL. But Alison, she notices things, and weighs them in her mind, and decides they're not right. What would you do about a girl like that?

MITCH. I'll be darned if I know.

BILL [*rising, crossing to mike*]. Same here. [*Speaks into mike.*] Alison—testing. Testing, Alison.