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Family Plays

CHRISTMAS PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES



How Santa Claus Discovered Christmas

Drama by

MARTIN L. PETERSON

'Twas the Night Before Columbus Day ... I Mean Christmas

Drama by

MAGGIE LAWRENCE

The Angels' Greatest Message

Drama by

SANDRA POUND

CHRISTMAS PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

Drama. By Maggie Lawrence, Sandra Pond and Martin L. Peterson. Three completely different short plays: *'Twas the Night Before Columbus Day I Mean Christmas* (9 m. or w.) by Maggie Lawrence presents the funniest recitation of the famous poem you've ever heard. A nerdy character who brags about his infallible memory enters the stage to recite the poem and messes up every line ... to the enormous delight of children in the audience, who prompt him. *Most of the 9 cast members may be men or women. Approximate running time: 20 minutes.* *The Angels' Greatest Message* (6+ m. or w.) by Sandra Pond presents the Christmas story in a refreshing new way, from the point of view of the angels who are chosen to announce the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. The Littlest Angel, who has dreamed of going to earth to pet a little lamb, begs to go along. *Approximate running time: 15 to 20 minutes.* *How Santa Claus Discovered Christmas* (12+ m. or w.) by Martin L. Peterson tells about the Christmas Eve when Santa Claus sprained his ankle and was confined to a wheelchair. Just as he is giving up hopes of delivering toys to all the little children in the world, a young boy shows up and offers to help him—and does. When Santa thinks they have finished the job, the little boy tells him there is one child left, and leads Santa to Bethlehem and the manger, where Santa sees the Wise Men delivering the world's first Christmas presents. *Flexible. A children's choir may be added if desired. Approximate running time: 30 to 40 minutes.* All three plays together make a full evening's entertainment. *Approximate running time: 65 to 80 minutes. Code: CL5.*

Family Plays

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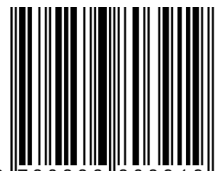
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www.FamilyPlays.com

ISBN-13 978-0-88680-391-9

ISBN-10 0-88680-391-8



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Christmas Plays for
Young Audiences

**HOW SANTA CLAUS DISCOVERED
CHRISTMAS**

By
Martin L. Peterson

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MARTIN L. PETERSON

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(HOW SANTA CLAUS DISCOVERED CHRISTMAS)

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“Produced by special arrangement with
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ABOUT THE PLAY

The author designed this play for production in a church, but it can just as easily be mounted on a proscenium stage, in an arena theatre, or any other performing space. The chancel, a platform, or the main stage of a theatre serves as the area for most of the action, but some entrances and some scenes occur in an aisle of the church or auditorium.

The children’s choir suggested in the “Cast of Characters” is a good place to put smaller children and others who are not in the main cast. The choir may sing offstage or in an area away from the main stage.

The theme of the play is the close relation between Santa Claus and Jesus, whose birthday is the reason for Christmas. It is common knowledge that the name Santa Claus derived with carelessness in speech from Saint Nicholas: “Saint Nicholas”>“Sant’-Ni-c’las”>“Santa Claus.” The real Saint Nicholas lived in the Middle East in the third century after Christ. He was known for his generosity and love of Jesus and his fellow man. For groups that would like to include information about Saint Nicholas in their performances, an alternate opening for the play is given on page 20. These lines may also be used as an epilogue, or as program notes.

In today’s world when so many people are trying to remove Christ from Christmas, the editors hope that this play will help restore Christmas as the holiest of holidays.

Playing time: 30-40 minutes.

HOW SANTA CLAUS DISCOVERED CHRISTMAS*Cast of Characters***Young Child****Father****Mother****Son—About 9 years old****Daughter(Susan)—About 12 years old****Santa Claus****Little Boy—About 10-12 years old****Joseph****Mary****Shepherds****Three Wise Men****Angels****Children's Choir (optional)—to accompany cast during songs****Place:** In a family living room. And in a stable in Bethlehem**Time:** Now and 2000 years ago

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Christmas tree ornament—Father

Plate with 2 or 3 cookies—Daughter

Book—Father

Large sack, apparently full of Christmas presents—Santa Claus

Two large Christmas-wrapped gifts (electric train and large, expensive doll)—in Santa's sack

Other Christmas gifts—under tree

Gold—1st Wise Man

Frankincense—2nd Wise Man

Myrrh—3rd Wise Man

Shepherd's staffs—Shepherds

1 or 2 baby lambs—Shepherds

Wheelchair—Santa

Costumes and Make-Up

Traditional Santa Claus suit, wig, and beard for **Santa Claus**. Biblical costumes for **Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, and Angels**. Modern clothing for **Little Child, Mother, Father, Son, Daughter, and Little Boy**. **Mother and Father** wear bathrobes in their final scene; **Son and Daughter** may also wear robes or pajamas. **Santa** has a bandage on one ankle.

Lights, Special Effects

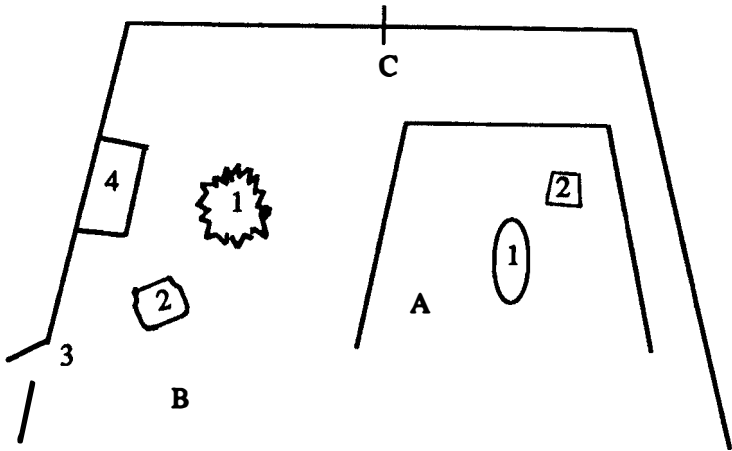
If possible, the stage lighting should be arranged so that each side of the acting area can be illuminated separately; that is, the living room lights are controlled separately from the Nativity scene lights. Also, a separate spotlight should illuminate the front center stage and an area in front of the stage. A light in the manger is desirable for the final scene. The Christmas tree lights should also be controlled separately from the other stage lights if possible.

If this lighting is not possible, the actors should be instructed to stand still and quiet while the action is going on in another part of the stage.

Music

Traditional Christmas music and songs are suggested. The songs may be sung a cappella or with instrumental accompaniment. Other songs may be substituted for those given in the text. Note that the family sings secular Christmas songs (with no mention of God or Jesus). The Nativity group sings Christian Christmas carols about God and Jesus.

The Set



A—The Nativity scene, as traditional as possible

1—The manger

2—A chair

Bales of hay and cardboard or wood cutouts of animals would be appropriate

B—The living room

1—Decorated Christmas tree with wrapped gifts beneath

2—Rocking chair

3—Door

4—Fireplace with an opening in the rear through which the Little Boy may enter and exit as though he were using the chimney

C—Opening in backdrop (or arch, if flats are used)

HOW SANTA CLAUS DISCOVERED CHRISTMAS

Scene One

[The acting area is divided into three parts: At Stage Left is a traditional Nativity scene—a manger and other decorations that would indicate a stable. At Stage Right is a family living room—perhaps a rocking chair, a decorated Christmas tree with wrapped packages under it, and a fireplace. Stage Center is used for transitional scenes (action from the Right and Left areas can overflow into this area). If possible, lights in each of the three areas should be controlled separately. If not, the actors in the “blacked out” area can tableau when focus shifts to another area.]

To begin the play, full STAGE LIGHTS come up, showing both the Nativity scene and the living room scene. FATHER, MOTHER, SON, and DAUGHTER are in the final stages of decorating their Christmas tree. JOSEPH and MARY are kneeling beside the manger. All ACTORS freeze in tableau as the YOUNG CHILD enters from Up Center and crosses to Stage Center, looking first at Stage Left and then at Stage Right]

YOUNG CHILD. *[In sheer delight] Hooray! It’s Christmas! [S/he again looks right and then left—in confusion] But what is Christmas? My parents and the commercials on TV say it’s Santa Claus. My Sunday School teacher says it’s the birth of Baby Jesus. [The YOUNG CHILD looks out to the audience] I wish somebody would tell me . . . [YOUNG CHILD exits Up Center in perplexity] [See appendix pages 16 & 17, for an alternate opening]*

[LIGHTS dim on the NATIVITY scene and JOSEPH and MARY exit in the darkness (or freeze in tableau if the area cannot be blacked out). The FAMILY around the Christmas tree come to life and begin their scene]

FATHER. *[Placing a final ornament and then backing away to admire the tree] That about does it, don’t you think?*

MOTHER. *[Re-arranging a piece of tinsel, then stepping back to admire the tree, clasping her hands]* Oh, yes, I think it's beautiful.

SON. Can I plug in the lights, Daddy?

DAUGHTER. No, I want to do it.

SON. I asked first.

DAUGHTER. Yeah, but you did it last year.

SON. Did not.

DAUGHTER. Did, too.

SON. Did not.

DAUGHTER. Did, too.

SON. Did not.

DAUGHTER. Did, too.

SON and DAUGHTER. *[At same time]* Daddy!

FATHER. *[Holds up both hands to silence them]* Mom, would you like to plug in the Christmas lights, please?

MOTHER. Yes, dear. I would love to. *[She steps over and plugs in lights. The CHILDREN cheer as the TREE LIGHTS up]* Susan, would you go in the kitchen and get the milk and cookies for Santa? He will probably be hungry when he gets here.

DAUGHTER. Yes, Mom. *[She hurries off stage]*

SON. *[To Father]* Can I stay up and see Santa?

FATHER. Sorry, son. You can't. If you stay up, Santa won't come.

SON. How will he know?

FATHER. He just knows.

SON. How does he know if I've been good this year, Daddy?

FATHER. He knows everything.

SON. I thought God knew everything.

FATHER. *[Stumbling to answer]* Well, . . . so does Santa.

SON. Doesn't that make him sort of like God, too?

FATHER. Uh, well, no, not exactly.

MOTHER. But he's a good friend of God's.

SON. Is he going to bring me the train set I asked him for?

FATHER. Probably not, son. It's very expensive . . . and . . .

SON. Aw . . .

[SON's complaint is interrupted by DAUGHTER's return to the stage. She is carrying a small tray with a plate of cookies (two or three) and a glass of milk]

MOTHER. Oh, good. Set those down by the fireplace so Santa will find them. *[DAUGHTER sets tray next to fireplace]*

SON. Can we sing a Christmas song, Daddy?

FATHER. Sure. How about Jingle Bells?

SON and DAUGHTER. Yeah!

[FATHER, MOTHER, SON, and DAUGHTER stand around and look at Christmas tree. FATHER and MOTHER hold hands]

ALL. *[Sing]* Jingle bells, jingle bells,

Jingle all the way.

Oh, what fun it is to ride

In a one-horse open sleigh.

Jingle bells, jingle bells,

Jingle all the way.

Oh, what fun it is to ride

In a one-horse open sleigh.

SON. That was fun. Can we sing another one?

FATHER. No, it's time for bed now.

SON. How about reading us a story first?

DAUGHTER. Yeah, a Christmas story. Please, Daddy?

FATHER. Oh, all right. One story, then it's off to bed. *[FATHER sits down in rocking chair and takes a book from beside the chair, starts reading as the CHILDREN sit on the floor beside him]* “’Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse—”

DAUGHTER. *[Interrupting]* Daddy, I want a real Christmas story, one about Baby Jesus and shepherds and angels.

FATHER. But I want to read this one.

DAUGHTER. But why can't we have a real Christmas story about Jesus?

FATHER. That's just a story, Susan. This is a fun poem, and it's about Santa.

MOTHER. Why can't the children have a story about Jesus, dear?

FATHER. Because I don't want to read about Jesus, okay? *[MOTHER and DAUGHTER sulk a bit, but settle in to listen to the story. MOTHER stands beside him as he reads:]* “’Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The

stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there . . . ”

[LIGHTS dim slowly as FATHER's reading trails off. LIGHTS go dark. Characters remain on stage, tableau]

Scene Two

[LIGHTS come up immediately on stable and manger. JOSEPH and a very pregnant MARY come walking up an aisle and onto the stage. They stop in front of the stable]

JOSEPH. Well, this is it, Mary. This is the only place in Bethlehem that's available. I wish we could find a room, but everything is full.

MARY. It's all right, Joseph. The Lord will take care of us.

JOSEPH. Oh, I know that. Ever since the angel came to me and told me about our baby, God's baby, I have known that He will take care of us. Come, Mary. Sit down. It's been a long journey. You need to rest.

MARY. Thank you. *[She sits on small chair in the stable]* Tonight is the night, Joseph. The Son of God will be born tonight.

JOSEPH. In a stable?

MARY. This is where God led us, and I am happy about that.

[JOSEPH kneels on one knee beside Mary and the manger. LIGHTS dim. JOSEPH and MARY remain on stage, tableau. While the lights are out, MARY pulls the Christ child (a doll in a worn white baby blanket or slightly ragged diaper) out from under the manger and places it inside the manger]

Scene Three

[LIGHTS come up on an area in front of the stage. SANTA enters from the back of the church or auditorium in a wheelchair, holding his bag of presents on his lap. The bag should be bulging with presents. SANTA wheels up the aisle as he speaks:]

SANTA. *[Lamenting]* Oh, what am I going to do? Here it is, Christmas Eve, and me with a sprained ankle. The doctor said I have to stay off it for two weeks and keep it all bandaged up. *[Raises bandaged leg to show audience]* Look at that. Millions of children waiting for me to deliver these presents and me in a wheelchair. I’m ruined. No one will ever believe in Santa Claus again. I’ve failed them this year. All those disappointed children all over the world. What am I going to do?

[SANTA hangs his head. He puts his head in his hands and shakes it. LITTLE BOY walks quietly up the aisle and stands in front of SANTA]

LITTLE BOY. What’s the matter, sir?

SANTA. *[Looking up at boy]* I’m ruined, that’s what’s the matter. Christmas will never be the same again. I have failed all the people that believe in me.

LITTLE BOY. Can I help?

SANTA. I don’t know how *you* can help me. I need a miracle. I have to deliver millions of Christmas presents all over the world tonight and I sprained my ankle. I can’t even get out of this wheelchair, much less slide down a chimney. Hah! Can you see me trying to jump back up a chimney with this ankle? *[Holds up bandaged foot again]*

LITTLE BOY. *[Somewhat timid]* I could help you deliver the presents.

SANTA. Hah! You don’t even know where they go.

LITTLE BOY. You will have to go with me so you can show me. We will do it together.

SANTA. It will never work. I’m ruined.

LITTLE BOY. Please let me help you. I’m sure that we can do it if we work together.

SANTA. *[With a new hope, ponders the offer]* Okay, we might as well try. It’s better than sitting here. Maybe we can get some of them delivered.

[LITTLE BOY gets behind Santa and pushes him back up the aisle. They exit together. LIGHTS dim. (While offstage, SANTA removes all but two packages from his sack)]