

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*



A CHRISTMAS PLAY IN ONE ACT

# *The Boy Who Wouldn't Play Jesus*

by  
BERNARD KOPS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

### \*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. *A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience.* All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P.O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

### COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work.

### THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T PLAY JESUS

is fully protected by copyright. *No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.* On all programs this notice should appear: Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

©MCMLXVIII by  
BERNARD KOPS

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T PLAY JESUS)

**For Adam**

**"Food is the only form in which God would dare  
to appear to starving people."**

**--Mahatma Gandhi**

## AUTHOR'S NOTES:

The children in this play can be any age between eight and sixteen. Jesus, Mary, the Cow, the First Shepherd and Joseph are the older children.

The Three Kings should look colorful and comical and should be chosen for their varying sizes. They should seem a little like music hall comedians. When they sing they could be like a group of pop singers. They also dance as they sing, in a sort of soft shoe routine.

The Donkey may be quite young. The Shepherds should look ragged and not at all romantic.

The songs may be either chanted or sung. If they are sung, the music can be easily composed by using the simple variations of Christmas carols. It would be useful if one of the cast can play the flute, or recorder, but if this is not possible the child can mime to an offstage phonograph record.

Apart from the speaking parts there can be many more children used in the play, acting either as shepherds or animals. These children can play drums, cymbals, and tinkling bells or triangles, but not too noisily.

The animals may either wear masks or not. If they do, their speech must not be obscured. Two children should not be in the skin of one animal. One child, one animal.

The actors should be entirely unaware of the audience until otherwise stated in the script.

---

THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T PLAY JESUS

*A Christmas Play in One Act*

For Four Girls, Five Boys,  
Six Either Boys or Girls

---

CHARACTERS

STAGE MANAGER  
THREE SHEPHERDS  
COW  
SHEEP  
CAMEL  
ELEPHANT  
GIRAFFE  
DONKEY  
GOAT  
DOG  
JOSEPH  
MARY  
JOHN (JESUS)

PLACE: *A bare stage.*

TIME: *Dress rehearsal.*

---

## PROPERTIES

---

GENERAL: Painted flats--hills of Galilee. Huge picture of starving child, mounted on a flat.

STAGE MANAGER: Chair, script.

SHEPHERDS: Manger.

COW: Straw.

SHEEP: Box (crib).

CAMEL: Palm tree.

ELEPHANT: Doll.

DONKEY: Make-up (optional).

JOSEPH: Stick.

FIRST KING: Box of chocolates.

SECOND KING: Buttered bun.

THIRD KING: Hot water bottle.

---

# The Boy Who Wouldn't Play Jesus

---

A boy enters with a chair and a script. This is the STAGE MANAGER. He sits down. Three SHEPHERDS come on carrying a light wooden structure that resembles a manger. It is painted and looks theatrical and unreal. The ANIMALS come on, some run and some walk, some laugh and others are silent. They all bring on little bits of scenery. The COW brings on straw, the SHEEP brings on a decorated orange box which represents a crib. The CAMEL brings on a palm tree. The other animals needn't be fully dressed or made up; they may start completing the process now, if desired.)

SHEEP (to ELEPHANT). Do I have to get completely made up now?

COW (interfering). Of course, you silly fool. This is the dress rehearsal. Didn't anyone tell you?

SHEEP. I'm not sure. (All the others laugh.) Oh, dear. I shall be ever so scared when the audience comes in. I might forget my lines.

CAMEL. All you have to say is "Baa!" Wish I had something to say.

GIRAFFE. Donkey has got all the lines. It's not fair.

FIRST SHEPHERD (to STAGE MANAGER). Come to think of it, where is the Donkey? Anyone see Andy? (They all shake their heads.) And Jesus is late and Mary is late. Trust them. And



where's Miss Clark, by the way?

STAGE MANAGER. She's been held up for about a quarter of an hour. She told me to tell all of you----(He stands on the chair.) This means all of you. Quiet, please. Listen! Shut up! Miss Clark said we're not to fool around. We're to have a rough run-through and not waste time. And she gave orders that I'm in command.

(JOSEPH enters. He has a stick in his hand.)

COW (to JOSEPH as he enters). Oh, so you've arrived at last.

JOSEPH. Miss Clark said----

STAGE MANAGER. I know, I know--you seen John or Mary or Andy on your travels?

(At this moment the DONKEY enters. He is feeling very frisky.)

DONKEY. 'Lo, everyone. Lovely to see you. This is my big night.

JOSEPH. Come here, Andy, you stupid Donkey.

(Donkey starts to lark about and tries to wrestle with him. JOSEPH, in fun, brandishes his stick.)

DONKEY. Here, don't hit me so hard with that stick or you'll get it after the show. I'm all black and blue from rehearsals. Joseph is supposed to be a gentle fellow. (Optional: He starts to make up and paints his face rather like the way a clown would.) Don't go away, boys and girls--ladies and gentlemen--for a small consideration I will help to pass your time--don't go away. I'm not really a donkey. Some drums, please. (Drums.) I'm the most talented, undiscovered natural genius this side of nowhere. (He does somersaults

and cartwheels. Most of the cast clap and he takes several bows, but the FIRST SHEPHERD is furious and trips him up. The DONKEY falls flat on his face.) You've heard of the fall of man. Well, this is the fall of Donkey. (He stands up and pretends to slip, and falls again. Everyone laughs except COW, STAGE MANAGER and FIRST SHEPHERD.)

FIRST SHEPHERD. Stop showing off. People will be coming to see a serious show. We've got to behave religiously.

DONKEY. Don't believe in that stuff. You old stuffed shirt. The birth of Jesus meant the birth of joy.

COW. But people are coming to see a serious show.

DONKEY. Serious, my hoof. People are coming to see the story of a lovely baby with very nice parents who help him grow up so well that he makes everyone happy. I think Jesus was terrific and not an old droopy nose like you.

SHEEP. Oh, Andy. I think you're ever so clever.

DONKEY. Stop it. You're making me blush under my red paint. I'm not clever; anyone can be clever. I'm precocious. Anyway, the audience won't be paying. This will only be a dress rehearsal. So they'll get what we give them. . .

Bet I can stand on my head longer than anyone.

CAMEL (to JOSEPH). Wish he'd break his neck. Then you and Mary could ride into Bethelhem on me.

GIRAFFE. Or me.

(MARY enters.)

MARY. Oh, am I late?

COW. As usual.

MARY. Where's John?

FIRST SHEPHERD. You can say that again.

GOAT. Well, we can't start the show without Jesus.

FIRST SHEPHERD. I'm willing, even at this late moment, to take over the role.

COW. I think you'd be marvelous. My mother says you have a lot of sincerity in your voice.

SHEEP. I think he'd be terrible.

MARY (to DONKEY). Hello, Andy. How is my lovely little donkey?

DONKEY. Bearing up under the strain. Not only the strain of carrying you. What about the mental strain? I'm rethinking my part. I'm going to be a donkey and clown combined . . . Well, why can't I? Why can't I be an ass whose heart is broken because he longs for the circus?

ELEPHANT. There weren't any circuses in those days.

DONKEY. There were always circuses.

FIRST SHEPHERD. And you were always a donkey. (Everyone laughs.) Come on, let's get on with it.

MARY. I do wish John would come.

COW. Are you feeling nervous, Mary? I wish I was you. My mother said Mary's the best part. Are you ambitious?

MARY. No.

COW. Don't you long to be an actress?

MARY. Of course not.

COW. Oh, I wish I was.

MARY. You are.

COW (not hearing her). I'd love to have a star part. It's not fair. I remember your lines better than you do. All I do is moo. Mooooooooo! I even get more drama into that than you do with all your wonderful lines.

MARY. Never mind, Ann, your turn will come. Besides you are my understudy.

COW. Fat lot of good that is. You're not likely

to die of stage fright this evening.

(JOHN enters breezily.)

JOHN. Here I am. Where's everyone?

DOG. What a nerve!

GOAT. We're waiting for you.

JOSEPH. Hello, John.

MARY. Welcome to this beautiful palace, to the halls of fame and the stage of the world.

DONKEY. Hiya, Grandfather.

JOHN. Hello, one and all. (To FIRST SHEPHERD.)

Why, Terry, I couldn't wait to see you. (The FIRST SHEPHERD turns his back.) Well, what are we waiting for? Let the audience in and get it over with. Where's Miss Clark?

STAGE MANAGER. She's coming. She said not to waste time and to have a rough run-through. I'm in command.

JOHN. So what are we waiting for? Where are the Three Kings?

STAGE MANAGER. Oh! I forgot about them.

JOHN. Fancy turning up late. (They all hoot him.) Oh, dear, all my lines seem to have gone clean out of my head.

(The Three KINGS enter. One is very small, the other a little bigger, and the third a little bigger still. Their voices match their stature.)

CASPAR. Good evening! (They sing this.)

MELCHIOR. Good evening!

BALTHAZAR. Gooooood-ev-ver-ning!

DONKEY. Ah! You three kings of Orient are--late.

JOHN. Good, now we're all here except the producer.

STAGE MANAGER. She said----

MARY. We know.

FIRST SHEPHERD (to CASPAR--trying to snatch away the box he carries). What have you got in that box?

CASPAR. My gift for John--Jesus, in the play.

DOG. What is it? A box of chocolates? Give me one.

JOSEPH. But you're supposed to bring frankincense.

CASPAR. But that's so old-fashioned. Frankincense! Whoever heard of it?

FIRST SHEPHERD. You'd better stick to the script.

CASPAR. If you're not careful I'll bring Frankenstein.

FIRST SHEPHERD. But it says frankincense in the Bible.

CASPAR. I don't care what it says in the Bible.

JOHN. Good for you, Caspar. I prefer chocolates.

MELCHIOR. And I'm bringing the baby Jesus a buttered bun.

BALTHAZAR. And I'm bringing him a hot water bottle.

JOHN. Well, we'd better get started then. One extra run-through will certainly help me before the audience arrives. I'm not exactly looking forward to this.

DONKEY. Leave it all to me. If you dry up, I'll speak your lines. I'll divert the audience with a magnificent death-defying----(He is about to go into an invisible tightrope walk when the other animals pull him back. He protests.)

FIRST SHEPHERD. What's up, John? Is our precious star suffering from stage fright? . . .

JOHN. I don't feel up to this tonight.

MARY. Of course you do. It's only butterflies.

SHEEP. Let's begin.

JOHN. I don't really like playing Jesus!

GOAT. I think you'll be marvelous.

MARY. Come on, John.

JOHN. I don't feel right. I don't feel cut out for it.

FIRST SHEPHERD. Good! As your understudy, I am willing to take over the role at a moment's notice.

JOHN (ignoring him). I couldn't sleep last night.

JOSEPH. To be afraid of playing Him is a good sign.

JOHN. I don't think anyone is really cut out for playing Jesus.

MARY. Don't worry, John. We're all nervous.

DONKEY. Who is? Speak for yourself.

SHEEP. Of course we are, John, and I've got no lines to say.

COW. I think our First Shepherd will make a far better Jesus than John.

MARY. Well, I don't.

THREE KINGS. Neither do we!

JOHN. I've forgotten my lines.

FIRST SHEPHERD. I know them.

JOHN. I bet you do. You're dying to play Jesus.

Everybody wants to play Jesus. Well, I would hate to play the sort of Jesus you would like to play.

JOSEPH. Stop bickering, you two.

CASPAR. Shut up.

MELCHIOR. Shut up.

BALTHAZAR. Sh--pipe down!

STAGE MANAGER. All right, then, positions!

(All the ANIMALS take their places around the stable. The Three KINGS retreat well to the back of the stage. The SHEPHERDS stand around the stage, either looking up or pretending to work. JOHN sits on the edge of the stage, for he, in the first scenes, is to interpret the action. JOHN never looks straight out into the auditorium. JOSEPH and MARY take their positions at the

side of the stage. MARY is piggybacked by the DONKEY, who is slightly groaning under the weight.)

STAGE MANAGER. All right, then--a rough run-through.

JOHN. Rough is an understatement.

STAGE MANAGER. Let's imagine that the audience is in. Right! Ready for you, John.

JOHN. Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we bring you the story of Christ. I am playing Jesus. Over there are my mother, Mary, and my father, Joseph. They are coming toward Bethlehem on a donkey. I am about to be born. (Something should follow, but there is an awkward silence.)

STAGE MANAGER. All right, then--where's the carol?

COW. Miss Clark said to cut the carol.

STAGE MANAGER. She didn't tell me. Carry on. Belt it out.

SHEEP. Can't we sing an obscure one--instead of----

ANIMALS and SHEPHERDS. "Away in a Manger . .

" (They all sing, but trail off.)

SHEEP. I love obscure carols.

DONKEY. Let's sing "Little Donkey." It reminds me of me.

MARY. Why not "He Will Rock You"?

GOAT. Oh, not that.

STAGE MANAGER. We're singing the one we're singing. One! Two! Three!

JOHN. I really think perhaps we oughtn't to have this run-through and just wait till the dress rehearsal.

MARY. Oh, come on, misery. You're being born, not dying.

JOSEPH. Listen, John. Your modesty gives you the right to play Jesus. Be reasonable.

JOHN. Fair enough. Sorry. You're right.

FIRST SHEPHERD. Right! Positions again, please.

STAGE MANAGER. Hey! I'm the stage manager.

Let's go.

ALL. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed--  
the Little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet  
head.

(Their voices go softer and they hum instead of singing the words. The DONKEY moves forward with JOSEPH and MARY.)

JOHN. I am not yet born but a shooting star bursts through space . . . (Music is played softly. The DONKEY and the two others go to various places on the stage and are turned away.)

MARY. But no one wants us. Doors are slammed in our faces.

ANIMALS. No room at the inn! No room at the inn!  
Where shall they go? Who'll let them in?  
No room at the inn! No room at the inn!  
This is the way our Lord did begin!  
Plenty of room, if you're one of the crowd,  
if you've plenty of money--but no children  
allowed.

(MARY and JOSEPH and the DONKEY come to the stable. The SHEPHERDS open the door and bow them in. The ANIMALS take their things and welcome them.)

COW. Moo! Moo! This is my wonderful part.

All my wonderful lines--I don't think.

STAGE MANAGER. Shush!

COW. Mooooooooo! Mooooooooo!

SHEEP. Baaaaaa! Baaaaaa!

ANIMALS. A house to let--no rent to pay--  
knock on the door and run away--

(The ANIMALS run away from the immediate vicinity. The SHEPHERDS crowd around the three.)



JOSEPH. Here we are, Mary. Here we can have our child.

COW. Moo! Moo! What a stupid part. (A baby is heard crying. The SHEPHERDS adore.)

ALL (singing). The stars in the bright sky looked  
down where he lay,  
the Little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.

MARY. Bring me the doll! Bring me the doll, someone. I've forgotten the doll. (The ELEPHANT rushes off.)

(The STAGE MANAGER looks fed up, but the ELEPHANT returns, triumphant, with the doll.)

ELEPHANT. Here it is. (MARY takes doll and lays it down on hay.)

ALL (singing). The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
(Again they hum the tune from here on.)

JOHN. So there I am! Here I begin, brought into this world--and--and----

STAGE MANAGER. Of darkness!

JOHN. Into this world of darkness where I shine bright upon everyone my loving light. (The lights around the stable should come on. They do not.) My loving light!

STAGE MANAGER. Lights! Lights! (Now they come on.) What a run-through. Carry on.

MARY. Isn't he beautiful, this child of mine?

JOSEPH. The angels sing above his head. He is divine.

SHEPHERDS. We followed the star and came to this place. Oh, let us stay and just stare at his face. (All the ANIMALS make their own noises.)

JOHN. My face now smiles--and of course I bring joy and yet I'm such an ordinary boy. The animals laugh, the animals sing - for unto all - is

born a king.

COW and SHEEP (suddenly breaking the mood). The kids of today are marvelous--the kids of today are terrific----

DONKEY. The kids of today are horrible, and horrid and horrific----

STAGE MANAGER. Hold it! Hold it! What's all that?

COW. Miss Clark said we could put something in there----

SHEEP. Yes, to bring it up to date.

STAGE MANAGER. You sure?

DONKEY. Cross my heart and hope to die. (He crosses his heart and falls over and pretends to die in great agony.)

STAGE MANAGER. Well, it isn't in my script. We'll leave it out of the dress rehearsal. Right!

JOHN. The world rejoices and the universe rings, and here to pay homage come the Three Wise Kings. (The KINGS come near and dance a few steps.)

KINGS (together). We Three Kings have come from afar.

CASPAR. Caspar!

MELCHIOR. Melchior!

BALTHAZAR. And Balthazar!

KINGS (together). We've come all the way, all the way, all the way to Bethlehem. We Three Kings from over the sea----

CASPAR. Caspar.

MELCHIOR. Melchior.

BALTHAZAR. And little old me.

KINGS (together). All the way. All the way, with gifts for Baby Jesus. We have come from over the snows--we Three Kings with sand in our toes.

CASPAR. We've traveled far----

MELCHIOR. We've traveled long----

BALTHAZAR. To worship the Saviour we sing this song.

CASPAR (looking down at the crib and putting down his gift). Hello! Good-by!

MELCHIOR (doing the same). Hello! Good-by!

BALTHAZAR. Hello! So long!

JOHN. At this point we move from Bethlehem.

DOG (to GOAT, whispering, but all too audibly). I love this part.

JOSEPH. Come on, Mary, we must hide, we must flee.

JOHN. And so we hid from Herod. My mother, my father and me. (All the ANIMALS and SHEPHERDS are about to rearrange themselves.)

STAGE MANAGER. Hold it a moment. This is a really terrible run-through. You don't seem to realize we open tomorrow and the dress rehearsal starts in about ten minutes' time. We open tomorrow!

DONKEY. And close.

STAGE MANAGER. Move that scenery off. (He refers to the stable.) Hurry up! (They now take it off.) Where are the Angels?

CAMEL. They've all got the flu.

STAGE MANAGER. Why didn't someone tell me?

COW. I want to be an angel.

DOG. I do! I do!

ELEPHANT. So do I!

GIRAFFE. I want to be an angel!

DONKEY. I don't!

SECOND SHEPHERD. I could do with some more lines.

THIRD SHEPHERD. I could do with one line.

DONKEY. I'll take the Angels' lines.

SHEEP. You've got enough.

COW. Whoever heard of a common donkey having the words of angels?

DONKEY. If I'm good enough to carry Jesus----

MARY. But we need you. You're our own beautiful darling little donkey. (She cuddles him. He likes that.)

DONKEY. Well, a donkey can be an angel as well.

JOHN. That's a good idea.

FIRST SHEPHERD. I think it stinks.

STAGE MANAGER. All right, donkey, be an angel.

DONKEY (to JOSEPH in an "angel" voice). Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt. (He now changes his voice back to his normal voice.) I will take you to Egypt. My big moment. (Clears his throat.) I will take you to Egypt, so jump on my back. (MARY does.) But not so hard, or else it will crack.

STAGE MANAGER. All right. We'll skip the whole Egypt scene and go straight to Galilee. Scenery! Where is it? That girl! You! (To GIRAFFE.) Aren't you supposed to bring on the hills of Galilee? And, you, Elephant--come on, Kings! You're not there. Take up your Galilee positions. (Most of them try to, but there is some confusion.) Oh, chaos! Chaos! I can just see it. Come on, Goat! Come on, Three Shepherds. Elephant. You'll all have to shift the scenery.

ELEPHANT. Being an elephant is a task in itself. I have to concentrate on my characterization.

FIRST SHEPHERD. Anyway, how can we shift scenery if we're on stage?

ELEPHANT. It's undignified.

STAGE MANAGER. We'll make it part of the action. (Some of the ANIMALS go off for scenery.) All right, while we're waiting get on with the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus. John.

JOHN (standing on the one chair). This is the part I really love. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."