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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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Christmas Plays for
Young Audiences

CHRISTMAS PLAYS

For Young Audiences

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I Mean Christmas Pg. 25
By Maggie Lawrence
- The Angels' Greatest Message Pg. 41
By Sandra R. Pound

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I.E. CLARK

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(CHRISTMAS PLAYS)

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**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)

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

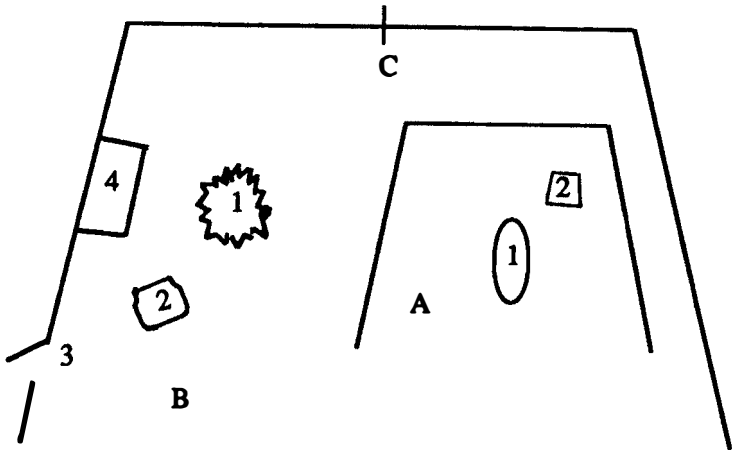
If possible, the stage lighting should be arranged so that each side of the acting area can be illuminated separately; that is, the living room lights are controlled separately from the Nativity scene lights. Also, a separate spotlight should illuminate the front center stage and an area in front of 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)]

The poem that most of us know as “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” was originally titled “A Visit from Saint Nicholas.” It was written in 1822 by Clement Clarke Moore for his six children. Published in 1823, it quickly became America’s most popular Christmas poem.

'T WAS THE NIGHT
BEFORE COLUMBUS
DAY . . . I MEAN
CHRISTMAS

By

MAGGIE LAWRENCE

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MAGGIE LAWRENCE

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('T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE COLUMBUS DAY ...
I MEAN CHRISTMAS)

The author dedicates this play, with love, to
Angela Camilla

and to the original cast of Culpeper County High School,
Culpeper, Va., who didn't let me down.

Original Cast

*Stage Manager Chris Clayton
*Narrator Dale Long
*Sister Sara Curtis
*Brother Chris Titchenell
Sugar Plum #1 Rachel Diamond
Sugar Plum #2 Amy Hanrahan
Father Todd Doyal
Mother Catherine Mothershead
Santa Claus Rob Spidle

* May be male or female

For a larger cast more Sugar Plums may be added.

Time: Now

Place: Your auditorium or theatre

ABOUT THE PLAY

Here is the funniest recitation of the famous poem you've ever seen or heard. A nerdy character, whose arm is probably bruised from patting himself on the back, enters the stage to recite the poem from memory. But he can't remember the words—to the enormous delight of the children in the audience, who prompt him.

The video tape, available from the publisher, shows two different ways of presenting the play. In the first performance, the audience is given freedom in prompting the Narrator and correcting him, and laughing at him. This spontaneous reaction results in the loss of some lines, but since everybody knows the poem anyway, it doesn't seem to matter—the audience had the time of their lives. In the second performance the Stage Manager tells the audience to be quiet until he signals them, the Narrator says, "Don't tell me," and teachers in the audience help keep them quiet. This made for a smoother performance, and the audience enjoyed it—but maybe not quite as much as the first audience did. Each producer will have to decide which approach to take.

The play is flexible in casting and staging. The Stage Manager, the Narrator, and the children may be played by males or females. The cast size may be increased by adding more Sugar Plums (no limit). The first video performance takes place on the floor of a large room (the young audience sits on the floor). The second video is on a stage.

As the video shows, the cast and the audience had fun.

TIME: 15 to 20 minutes

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Large notebook, pencil—Stage Manager

Legal-size note pad, pen—Narrator

2 Christmas stockings—Sister, Brother

Pocket handkerchief—Narrator

Pack of toys (including paddle ball, mints, lollipops, etc.)—Santa Claus

Cup of milk, plate of cookies—on mantel

Costumes

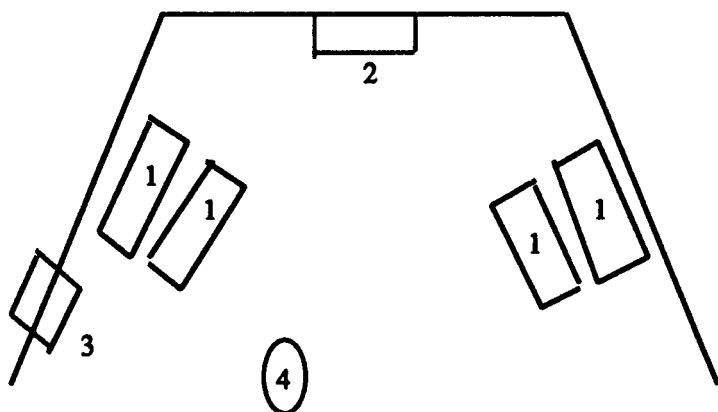
Stage Manager is dressed casually in backstage working garb. Narrator may wear a suit and bow tie, or sport clothes. Boy and Girl (Brother and Sister) wear night clothes. To give an old-fashioned flavor to the scene in keeping with the poem, Sister may wear an old-fashioned nightie and night-cap and Brother may wear a night gown or long-johns. Man and Woman (Father and Mother) may be costumed similarly. Other night clothes may be worn, as the video shows. As described on page 5, Mother wears a pantyhose on her head because she couldn't find a kerchief. The Sugar Plums would be appropriately attired in colorful (purple?) blouses or tutus and ballet slippers. Head pieces resembling sugarplums or gum drops would add a “tasteful” touch. Santa Claus should wear a standard Santa costume (well stuffed if the actor isn't naturally fat).

Sound

The only required sound effect is the clatter of pots and pans falling off stage.

The Set

The acting area needs four small beds or cots, a fireplace, straight chair. Here is a suggested arrangement:



1—Beds

2—Fireplace

3—Window (may be mimed)

4—Chair

Trim props, a Christmas tree, additional furniture, etc., may be added if desired.

Stage Manager, Narrator, and Sugar Plums may enter through openings in the stage curtains or doors in the set. Santa enters the fireplace from the rear.

'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE COLUMBUS DAY . . . I MEAN CHRISTMAS

[When the play begins, MOTHER and FATHER are in beds at Stage Right and BROTHER and SISTER are in beds at Stage Left. STAGE MANAGER enters Stage Left carrying a notebook, pencil behind one ear. He comes to Stage Center and addresses the audience]

STAGE MANAGER. Hi. I'm the stage manager for this show and we're all glad you could be here for our special production of "The Night Before Christmas." Before we start I just wanted to let you in on a little secret. The narrator . . . *[he looks to Stage Left and lowers his voice]* the narrator is a pretty nice guy, but let me warn you—he is NOT ready for this show. And the trouble is, he thinks he's got it just perfect. So what I'm saying is, maybe you could help him out once in a while. When he forgets a word or a line—look over to the side *[he points to Stage Left]*, and when I count to three, give him the right word. Occasionally we'll let him figure it out for himself, but when I give the signal, let him have it. Okay? And one other thing to remember, the last line is: "Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night." Got that? Let's try it together. And . . . HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT! That's great! We'll get through this yet. And here he comes—the star of our show—Mr. Narrator! *[Leads applause. STAGE MANAGER crosses to Stage Left, where he can be seen slightly behind the curtain]*

[NARRATOR walks in, Stage Right, self-consciously proud. He carries a legal pad and pen. He bows slightly to the audience, then sits down on the chair in a formal manner]

NARRATOR. Good morning *[or afternoon]* . . . thanks for being with us today. As our stage manager may have told you, this play is more than just a simple production of "The Night Before Christmas." This play is intended to serve as a demonstration of my remarkable powers of memory. Just yesterday I heard—for the very first time, mind you—a recital of that lovely poem by Clement Moore, "The Night Before Christmas." And now, twenty-four hours later, I'm going to recite it for you as I write it down

for the first time. All the while our actors will act out the parts. Now isn't that incredible? My mother always said I had a mind like a steel trap. Well, I hate to brag, but you know what they say—"Let your little light shine." So if you're ready, here we go. Ready, actors? [ACTORS in beds holler out, "Ready!"] Okay . . . [Clears his throat, moves around to get comfortable] I think I'm ready now . . . okay . . . here I go . . . [squints in concentration] "'Twas the night before . . . before" . . . wait a minute, I've got it . . . "'Twas the night before" . . . don't tell me . . .

STAGE MANAGER. [Hisses] Starts with a "C." It starts with a "C"!

NARRATOR. Of course! "'Twas the night before Columbus Day and all through . . ."

STAGE MANAGER. No! No!—[Scribbles on large sheet of paper, then holds it up. It reads "Christmas." Motions to audience and whispers, "One, two, three." Audience hollers: "Christmas!"]

NARRATOR. [With polite laugh at himself] Of course, I remember now, how silly of me. "'Twas the night before Christmas." [He scribbles it down] I must have let my mind wander. That's what happens when you let your mind wander, even for a second—even a great mind like I have . . . let that be a lesson to us all. Why I'll bet even Albert Einstein . . .

GIRL. [Rises from twin bed, dressed in old-fashioned nightie and cap] Could we get on with it please? We have to be back at the school sometime this week.

NARRATOR. [Slightly flustered] Surely! Of course! Here we go. [Clears his throat] "'Twas the night before Christmas and alllllll through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a . . . a . . . [starts to panic] not even a RHINOCER-OUS!"

[STAGE MANAGER writes "mouse" on paper, holds it up and gestures to audience, then to narrator, inviting them to tell him the right word. Audience should holler "Mouse!"]

NARRATOR. [Leaps from his seat in sudden panic] Mouse! Where?! [Jumps up on top of chair, gets down on knees and leans over back of chair to see under it, gets up and shakes his pant legs all the while exclaiming] Did it run up here? Where did it go? [STAGE MANAGER hurries out on stage to calm him down, explaining quietly with whispers and gestures that the word was "mouse" and it rhymes with "house." NARRATOR, flustered gets slowly back into seat, tries to re-assume dignity]

[The two CHILDREN get out of bed, each holding a Christmas stocking and posing in front of the chimney ready to hang them]

NARRATOR. *[Takes out pocket handkerchief and wipes his face]* Now where was I . . . heh heh . . . not a creature . . . stirring . . . not even a mouse . . . here we are . . . “The Easter baskets were hung by the . . .” *[Both CHILDREN together turn in astonishment and interrupt him]*

CHILDREN. Hold it! What do you mean “Easter baskets”? What do these look like? *[They hold up stockings; NARRATOR looks with bewilderment from them to what he has written and back again]*

BOY. Wrong holiday!

NARRATOR. Did I say “Easter baskets”?

BOY. Sure did.

NARRATOR. And those are stockings, aren’t they? *[KIDS nod. NARRATOR turns to audience and points a finger]* Now you see what I mean about letting your mind wander. It can happen at any time to anybody . . . *[BOY whistles for his attention: NARRATOR turns, BOY gestures to show action of hanging stockings by the chimney]* Oh! Right! Well, here we go. “The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that Saint . . . Saint Christopher soon would be there.”

STAGE MANAGER. *[Holds his head violently shaking]* NO!

NARRATOR. It’s not Saint Christopher? But he’s the traveling saint, isn’t he . . . well, what? Saint Augustine? *[STAGE MANAGER continues to shake his head “no” vigorously]* Saint Gregory? Theodore? Sebastian? Valentine? *[NARRATOR gets more and more indignant]* Well it has to be one of those—I know it has three syllables!

STAGE MANAGER. *[Assuming hopeless posture, he holds up sign reading “Nicholas”]* Tell ’em, kids.

AUDIENCE. Nicholas!

NARRATOR. *[With look of revelation]* Nicholas! Well, I’ll be darned—forgot all about him—better write that down before I forget. *[He sits down and scribbles on his pad. Sits back happily]* Now, where were we? Stockings were hung . . . okay, now I remember . . . *[touches fingertips to head in deep concentration]* “The children were nestled all snug in their beds . . .” *[CHILDREN are climbing into beds and getting comfortable]* “while visions of . . . of . . .” *[two ACTRESSES wearing candy-type costumes and ballet shoes leap lightly onto the stage and begin dancing around, on, and over the beds. NARRATOR turns, sees them, watches for a moment]* “while visions of FRUITCAKES dance on their beds.” *[DANCING stops]*

1st SUGARPLUM. What did you call us?

2nd SUGARPLUM. Yeah—we didn't put on these silly costumes and come dancing around out here just to get insulted, y'know.

1st SUGARPLUM. He oughta have more respect.

2nd SUGARPLUM. I'll say he should! ANYBODY can be a fruitcake. It takes REAL TALENT to be a sugarplum! *[They give each other a "high 5"]*

1st SUGARPLUM. You know what I have a good mind to do? I have a good mind to just walk off this stage right now! *[NARRATOR is making small imploring gestures of innocence, interjecting ad lib, "But girls, listen, I didn't mean, we have to . . ."]*

2nd SUGARPLUM. Me, too! *[She jumps down from bed: they both start to leave in a huff. 2nd SUGARPLUM stops, says to 1st] Wait a minute! We haven't danced in their heads yet! It says "visions of sugarplums danced in their heads."*

1st SUGARPLUM. *[Ignoring the narrator's attempts at interruption] But what about him? I'm not going to waste my art on somebody who can't tell a fruitcake from a sugarplum.*

2nd SUGARPLUM. Oh, he's harmless I guess. Let's just finish the job and get out of here. Whose head are you going to dance in?

1st SUGARPLUM. Hers, I guess.

2nd SUGARPLUM. Okay, I'll take the guy. *[They both start to jump up on the beds and begin dancing. Both CHILDREN sit bolt upright in alarm]*

BOY. Hey! Nobody dances in MY head!

GIRL. I'd like to live to see Christmas, if you don't mind—go on, beat it! *[She bats at the Sugarplum with the covers, finally gets out of bed and stalks off Stage Left; BOY follows, interspersing ad lib comments] This job wasn't supposed to be dangerous! Can't you just see it? Knocked out by a dancing sugarplum! Let's get out of here. [BOY and GIRL go off, Stage Left; SUGARPLUMS both standing on a bed, openmouthed, watch them go. NARRATOR is watching in horror, hands to his face. Pause]*

1st SUGARPLUM. *[Incredulously] Well paint me green and call me Sam!*

2nd SUGARPLUM. Can you beat that? Well, there's one sugarplum around here who knows when she's not wanted. C'mon. *[They start to leave. She stops, turns suddenly, bumping into 1st Sugarplum] I've got a friend who's got a cousin who knows this agent, and all we need's one audition and hello Hollywood!*

The Angels' Greatest Message

by
Sandra R. Pound

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(THE ANGELS' GREATEST MESSAGE)

ABOUT THE PLAY

“The Angels’ Greatest Message” is a simple play, easy to stage. With humor, emotion, and a dramatically symbolic ending, it presents the Christmas story in a refreshing new way.

The cast is flexible, with a minimum of eight characters and, with the addition of more angels and shepherds, virtually no maximum. Most parts may be played by men or women.

The few props and absence of scenery make the play easy to tour. It may be played on any available space—a stage, the chancel of a church, a classroom or playroom, a lawn . . .

Its message will live in the hearts of your audiences.

Playing time about 15 minutes.

THE ANGELS' GREATEST MESSAGE

Cast of Characters

MATHIAS—a little angel

LEGARE
DANIUS
IONS
CUSH

} Angels

GABRIEL—God's private secretary

CHORUS ANGEL 1
CHORUS ANGEL 2
CHORUS ANGEL 3
CHORUS ANGEL 4

} May be double cast with above angels,
or more angels may be added

SHEPHERDS, two—or as many as desired

Most of the characters may be male or female

Place: Heaven and Earth

Time: 2000 Earth years ago

THE ANGELS’ GREATEST MESSAGE

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Small desk cluttered with papers; desk chair—brought on by Mathias (and helpers if necessary) during 5-second blackout between Scenes 1 and 2. Desk is removed during blackout between Scenes 2 and 3.

Several sheep, including a small lamb—brought on by shepherds during blackout between Scenes 2 and 3. Sheep may be real, toys, or cardboard cutouts covered with wool.

Shepherd’s crooks or staffs—carried by one or two (or more) shepherds
Manger—placed on Stage Right while Mathias is playing with the lamb

Costumes

Angels may be costumed simply, in white robes, or imaginatively in ethereal rainbow-colored gauzy cloth. There are other possibilities, of course. Gabriel’s costume may be a bit more formal. Shepherds may wear typical costumes as pictured in illustrated Bibles.

Music

Soft background music, if desired, can enhance the action, emotion, and humor of the play. There are many sacred songs, Christmas songs, and angelic tunes that would be appropriate.

Lights and Special Effects

The only necessary lighting effects are the blackouts called for in the script. If blackouts are impossible (for example, if the play is presented outdoors in daylight), Mathias’s desk may be brought on and struck during a pause in the action. In either case the break between scenes must be very brief; nothing can destroy the rhythm and mood of a play more than a long dead spot.

More elaborate lighting effects may be used, of course; perhaps a very bright stage for heaven, a slightly dimmer stage for earth, a stage bathed in blue (rather than a blackout) for the descent of the angels to earth (Mathias’s final speech in Scene 2) and the ascent of the angels to heaven

at the end of the play. Mathias's scene with the lamb and the shepherds at the manger may be played in pools of light rather than full stage lights.

Imaginative special effects can add interest: clouds hugging the stage (made with a fog or smoke machine, or dry ice dropped in water) in Scene 1; a fire (made with flickering lights, *not* a real fire) for the shepherds.

The Set

The play is designed for a bare stage, the chancel area of a church, almost any large room, or an open space outdoors. The few set props may be brought on by the actors, as noted under "properties."

THE ANGELS' GREATEST MESSAGE

Scene 1

[ANGELS are lounging comfortably in Heaven. MATHIAS enters excitedly]

MATHIAS. Hey, have you guys noticed anything strange around here lately?

CUSH. Lately? Do you mean lately as of the past ten centuries? Or lately as of the last ten thousand years?

LEGARE. Mathias, "lately" is too ambiguous a word for this place. Please, be more precise.

MATHIAS. All right, for Heaven's sake!

[At this remark all the ANGELS turn and stare at Mathias]

MATHIAS. Hey, wait a minute! It slipped out! I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that. *[He wipes his forehead]*

IONS. After all these millions of years, it seems you could remember.

LEGARE. You've picked up a human habit, Mathias. You wouldn't want the Boss to think you'd ever want to BE human.

MATHIAS. *[Hangs his head shamefully]* I have a confession to make . . . sometimes . . . sometimes . . . I do want to be human.

[The other ANGELS gasp and look horrified]

MATHIAS. I would. I really would. I'd like to go to Earth and watch TV and have a VCR and . . .

CUSH. Hold it! Those things haven't been invented yet on Earth. They're hundreds of years away yet.

MATHIAS. Well, I'd still like to be human sometimes. I'd like to walk on land instead of these golden streets. And—and I'd like to play with the animals. I'd like to hold a puppy or a tiny kitten. How I'd love to hold a baby lamb in my arms for just once.

LEGARE. I must admit that I dreamed of being human once, but then I thought of the darkness. I actually believe I would dissipate without the Light of Heaven.

IONS. And what about all that human pain and suffering?

CUSH. Not to mention [*lowering his voice*] you-know-what.

LEGARE. Oh, yes, sin. I shutter to think of it. Human sin. Why, it would tarnish you for the remainder of eternity.

CUSH. And who knows how much longer that will be.

IONS. Surely you haven't considered the consequences, Mathias.

MATHIAS. Yes, I have. And I know I would be miserable without the Light of Heaven for He is sweeter than words can say. I feel guilty about it, but still I would like to live on earth for just a heavenly moment. [*Excitedly*] That's why I've been noticing something peculiar going on.

LEGARE. What peculiar things are you referring to, Mathias?

MATHIAS. I'm talking about Gabriel. He's on a trip to Earth now, as we speak. And you know that he's the private secretary to the Chief. So, something is going down, er, something important is underway between Earth and Heaven.

DANIUS. We've heard about the Great Plan for thousands of years, but we've never been given a time schedule. No one except the Chief himself knows when the Great Plan might actually be put into effect.

CUSH. The Great Plan?

IONS. The Great Plan of Heaven. The Chief, the Almighty Himself, will send the Light of Heaven, that is, His Only Son Jesus, into the world to save mankind by taking their sin upon himself.

CUSH. Oh, sure, now I remember. I used to get so excited about it, but I've waited so long, and, to put it mildly, man has sunken so low in you-know-what I thought maybe God had decided NOT to risk His Precious Son Jesus on such a worthless bunch.

MATHIAS. Cush, you've got a bad attitude.

IONS. You know how God loves man. We've heard it time after time after time.

DANIUS. It is his pleasure to give mankind this kingdom.

CUSH. But they make such a mess of things. And to think, you, Mathias, would really want to live among them.

[*GABRIEL enters*]

GABRIEL. Attention! Please, brethren, lend me your attention. [*All ANGELS gather around Gabriel*]

MATHIAS. What'd I tell ya, huh?