

THE LITTLEST DONKEY

by Rhonda Wray



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The Littlest Donkey

A Children's Easter Tale

by RHONDA WRAY

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

Speaking Roles:

NARRATOR

MOUSE

CAT

DOG

DUSTY

ROOSTER

Nonspeaking Roles:

BARTHOLOMEW

NATHANIEL

ANIMAL EXTRAS

(unlimited dogs, cats, roosters, mice)

PRAISING CHILDREN

(unlimited number)

PRODUCTION NOTES

The charm and effectiveness of this playlet will best be served with simple production techniques. Scenery is optional and the costuming need only be suggestive to achieve believability.

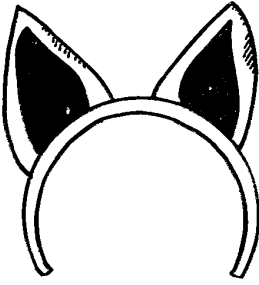
SCENERY: One side of the stage may be the "stable" area. You may construct a simple "stall" out of cardboard or plywood. The easiest solution is to take a large box and cut out the top, the bottom, and one of the sides. With markers, draw the wood grain and lines to represent individual boards. Angle the sides out so that the children are not hidden inside. The other side of the stage may be "Jerusalem." Set some potted palms or other large plants in a corner for the "deep ravine" in which the animals hide.

COSTUMES: Dress the "praising children" in white robes and give each a palm branch to wave. The animals need only wear a few items suggestive of the animals they represent. For example, the cats, dogs, mice and donkeys may wear appropriate ears. These may be made of construction paper and fastened to headbands. The rooster may wear wattles and comb, a beak (providing it doesn't interfere with his/her speaking ability), and tail feathers, all made from construction paper. Face make-up will also help in suggesting the character of each "stablemate." Make whiskers for the mouse and cat, a black nose for the dog, etc. Let your imagination take over. The costuming and make-up will be as much fun as putting on the play itself.

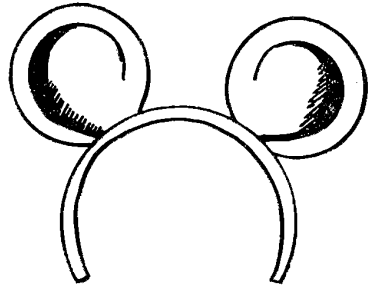
The hymns suggested are all well known and the music is available from almost all church hymnals or any church music library.

It will not be necessary for the children who enact the roles of the animals to overplay the animal's characteristics. The script, with the minimal costuming, will keep the identities clear. The charm will be found in the audience's "willing suspension of disbelief" as they watch the children perform.

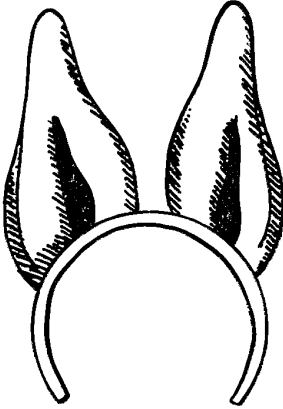
This script can accommodate large numbers of children as extras. They may be additional "stablemates" or palm-waving "praising children" for the "Triumphal Entry" scene. The script may be greatly enhanced if the children pantomime along with the narration when possible. Encourage them to be expressive!



CAT



MOUSE



DONKEY



DOG

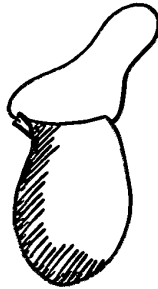
Plastic headbands are available at any discount, drug or department store. Ears may be taped on.



Rooster's "comb"

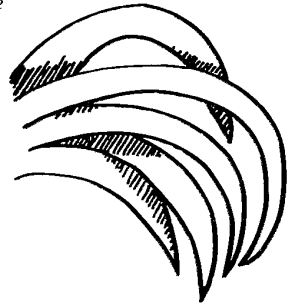
Red construction paper

Put a folded piece of paper on either side so the comb will stand up straight. Pin the sides to the child's head.



Rooster's "wattles"

Red construction paper and elastic (child may wear it like a beard.)



Rooster's tail feathers

Brown construction paper cut in strips. Ends may be curled slightly by gently pulling paper between your thumb and a scissor blade. Tape strips together and pin on.

1 (*NARRATOR stands off to one side at a lectern. All ANIMALS*
 2 *except the CAT sit by the "stable." DUSTY is in the middle.*)

3 **NARRATOR:** Long ago, in the time when miracles happened
 4 from the touch of one man's hand, there was a donkey — a
 5 very little donkey called Dusty. This scruffy young colt
 6 wanted, above all things in the world, to become as
 7 triumphant as his grandfather. His grandfather, you see,
 8 was the donkey that had carried Mary on her journey
 9 with Joseph from Nazareth to the innkeeper's stable in
 10 Bethlehem. It was his grandfather that was guided by
 11 the starbeam that shone on the stable with the manger,
 12 where cattle fed. That manger was to be the first cradle
 13 for the King of Kings.

14 **MOUSE:** Tell us, again, Dusty, about the angels that sang in
 15 the sky.

16 **CAT:** Yes, tell us about the shepherds that came from the
 17 fields . . .

18 **DOG:** And the animals that saw the baby Jesus right after he
 19 was born.

20 **DUSTY:** You've heard it over and over!

21 **ROOSTER:** But we'd like to hear it again. Was there a rooster
 22 in the stable?

23 **NARRATOR:** At dusk every evening, the animals of the field
 24 and hedge came to talk among themselves in the stable.
 25 They loved to hear golden stories of wonder, for each
 26 tale seemed to illuminate a circle of warm light about
 27 them. Most of all they liked to hear about the miracles
 28 of the Master who was once the baby Jesus. They were
 29 so very proud that one of their stable had seen the holy
 30 child — that one had served the family of the Master. So
 31 it was that little Dusty had to tell again and again the
 32 story that his grandfather told him about that wondrous
 33 night some thirty years ago. And always there were new
 34 questions. The rooster asked:

35 **ROOSTER:** The heavenly host. Were they dressed in robes as

1 **bright as my tail feathers?**

2 **NARRATOR:** And the cat asked:

3 **CAT:** Did the light of the star give the night as soft a sheen as
4 my black fur?

5 **DOG:** And the shepherd's dogs — were they as strong and
6 obedient as I?

7 **NARRATOR:** Of course Dusty gave each of his animal
8 friends the answer they wanted to hear. Their reply was
9 always the same: "Your grandfather was a very great
10 animal to have seen such sights. How large and strong
11 he must have been . . ."

12 **DUSTY:** (*Sadly*) And so unlike me . . .

13 **NARRATOR:** . . . thought Dusty, the littlest donkey in the
14 stable. He felt so ashamed that he had not grown larger
15 and stronger. He never stopped trying. He ate everything
16 without complaint. He exercised. He stretched his legs,
17 his whole body — day after day. He ran. He jumped. But
18 he did not seem to grow. No wonder the other donkeys
19 called him "squirt" and "short stuff" and "Junior." Only
20 his closest friend, the dog, believed in him.

21 **DOG:** Dusty, you need to have faith.

22 **DUSTY:** What can I ever do to serve the Master? I am so small.

23 **DOG:** You are larger than I am.

24 **DUSTY:** But I am a donkey and you are a dog. I should be as
25 tall as a donkey and as strong as my grandfather.

26 **DOG:** Take heart, Dusty. You must know that you are worthy
27 because you want so much to serve him.

28 **DUSTY:** Oh, if only Jesus knew . . .

29 (*All ANIMALS sing the following words to the tune of*
30 *"Greensleeves"/"What Child Is This?". ANIMALS should fold*
31 *their hands and look upward, as if praying.*)

32 **The lit'lest donkey in the stall,**

33 **He wants to serve you most of all.**

34 **Though he's not big or strong just yet**

35 **He'll be there if you call.**

1 He'll stay at your side,
 2 Or, if you like, he'll give you a ride.
 3 Please, give our friend a chance
 4 He wants to serve you so.

5 **NARRATOR:** Dusty loved to hear his friends sing. He most
 6 especially loved their songs about the Master and Jesus'
 7 love for animals and children. The Master seemed to be
 8 the kind that would know what was important to
 9 animals — even donkeys. Dusty was sure that he knew
 10 how good it was to taste fresh grass, and how good new
 11 clover smelled, and how wonderfully warm the rising
 12 sun felt as it reached down from the sky to touch one's
 13 back in the chill of early morning. If the Master knew all
 14 of this, he certainly would know how a little donkey could
 15 serve him.

16 **DUSTY:** Oh, if only I could talk to Jesus.

17 **CAT:** *(Running in).* Hey everybody! Guess what?! Jesus, the
 18 Messiah, is going to Jerusalem tomorrow. I heard it
 19 myself.

20 **ROOSTER:** You did?

21 **CAT:** Yes! I walked among the Master and his disciples as
 22 they stopped to eat. I listened to them talk.

23 **DOG:** What did they say?

24 **CAT:** They said that they would take this road to the Holy
 25 City.

26 **MOUSE:** He will pass our way.

27 **ROOSTER:** We will see him!

28 **ALL:** Yea!

29 **CAT:** But something even better! I heard Jesus say that he
 30 will need an animal to carry him through the gates of
 31 the city.

32 **DOG:** Of course. That will be as prophecy has said. *(DOG*
 33 *lifts his hand and looks up.)* "See, your king comes to you,
 34 righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a
 35 donkey . . ." *(Zechariah 9:9, NIV)*

1 **ALL:** A donkey?!

2 **NARRATOR:** A donkey! Dusty's heart leapt inside his chest.
 3 His brown eyes sparkled with excitement. But as he
 4 looked around the stable, his joy turned to gloom. All the
 5 other donkeys . . . oh, how big they were!
 6 (*BARTHOLOMEW, NATHANIEL and any DONKEY*
 7 *EXTRAS pantomime along.*) They lifted their heads and
 8 swelled their chests. Dusty lowered his head. At that
 9 moment, he looked even smaller than he was. He was
 10 very, very sad. But then he realized that he had no right
 11 to be downcast. He should be proud that the Master might
 12 choose a donkey from his stable to carry him into the
 13 city of God.

14 **ALL:** (*Ad-lib*) The Master will be here tomorrow! We will see
 15 him! The Messiah! The baby Jesus grown into a man!

16 **NARRATOR:** Dusty was terribly excited, but he was afraid to
 17 hope. Maybe he could be the one to carry Jesus into
 18 Jerusalem. Maybe, just maybe, he would be the one
 19 selected. But why would they choose him — the littlest
 20 donkey in the stable? That could not be. But now he must
 21 rest, they all must rest, for tomorrow would be a very
 22 momentous day. (*All of the ANIMALS of the stable lie down*
 23 *as if to sleep. And the last among them to put down his head is*
 24 *DUSTY.*)

25 Morning dawned clear and pink. Dusty opened his
 26 eyes slowly. He stood up and stretched. (*DUSTY and the*
 27 *rest of the ANIMALS do so.*) Would Jesus come to their
 28 stable to choose a donkey to carry him into the Holy City?
 29 Dusty wanted to be big and strong. (*DUSTY puts hands up*
 30 *to his mouth as if eating.*) He searched his stall for all of the
 31 oats he could eat. He drank all of the water that he could
 32 hold. (*Acts as if he's drinking.*) He would be as large as he
 33 could be! At that moment he heard the voice of the
 34 stablemaster talking with a stranger. He asked the cat:

35 **DUSTY:** Is that Jesus with the stablemaster?

1 CAT: No, but it is one of his disciples. I remember his face.

2 NARRATOR: Both listened intently as the disciple said: "I
3 am looking for a very special donkey to carry the Master
4 into the city. I need him today." The stablemaster said
5 that he was sure he had a donkey that would be
6 satisfactory. They came into the stable. The stablemaster
7 led the disciple to the donkey Bartholomew's stall.
8 (*BARTHOLOMEW acts out "big and strong."*) "Here is my
9 biggest and strongest donkey," he said. The disciple
10 studied Bartholomew. "A fine animal," he said, "but he
11 will not do." Dusty could hardly breathe, he was so
12 excited. "Here then," said the stablemaster, leading the
13 disciple to the stall of Nathaniel. "This is another fine
14 donkey. A bit younger, but he bears a heavy load with
15 ease." Nathaniel stood tall and proud. (*He does so.*) The
16 disciple patted his head as he looked at the donkey's
17 shoulders, back and bushy tail. He said again, "Another
18 fine animal, but he will not do." "But I have no other
19 suitable donkey," protested the stablemaster politely.
20 Dusty wanted to shout for attention, but all that came
21 out was a squeaky whinny. He kicked his stall in
22 frustration. The disciple turned and looked at him. "What
23 about this one?" he asked. "He is just a colt — not yet
24 fully grown. He's the littlest donkey I have, and he has
25 never been ridden," replied the stablemaster. Dusty
26 trembled as the disciple ran his hand along his scruffy
27 back. "Brush him down well. His coat is even in color — he
28 has a clear eye. He will serve the Master well. That he has
29 never been ridden is of no concern." Dusty knew that he
30 would never forget those words in all of his lifetime: "He
31 will serve the Master well." How beautiful they were.

32 The stablemaster and the disciple left the stable as
33 the arrangements were agreed upon. Dusty was to be
34 taken to a place along the main road to Jerusalem and
35 tied to a tree awaiting the arrival of the Master and his

1 followers. He then would be left at the gate of the city to
 2 be retrieved by the stablemaster. Some hours later, Dusty
 3 was brushed so carefully that his coat had the sheen of
 4 moonlight rippling on water. Dusty was given a hempen
 5 bridle and a white saddle blanket. He felt, and the others
 6 agreed, that he was as handsome as the stallion of a
 7 prince. He was led to the appointed place. If only the
 8 stablemaster had turned as he walked, he would have
 9 seen that the cat, the dog, the rooster and several other
 10 of Dusty's stablemates were following. (*ANIMALS cross to*
 11 *the "Jerusalem" side of the playing area.*)

12 **ROOSTER:** (*To the audience*) We want to see Jesus.

13 **DOG:** I want to see Dusty be as triumphant as his grandfather.

14 **CAT:** I want to see what happens so I can tell this story
 15 forevermore. (*PRAISING CHILDREN enter, waving palm*
 16 *branches.*)

17 **NARRATOR:** And so it came to pass that Jesus came and sat
 18 upon a donkey as the prophets had said he would. And
 19 the donkey was Dusty, the littlest donkey of the stable,
 20 that was to carry the Master along the road leading into
 21 the city gate of Jerusalem. The animals watched as the
 22 people sang praises and waved palm branches in
 23 anticipation of his coming.

24 **ROOSTER:** Never before have I seen so many happy people!

25 **DOG:** It's as if joy is raining from the heavens on the heads of
 26 all these men, women and little children. (*Some of the*
 27 *PRAISING CHILDREN lay their palm branches on the floor.*)

28 **CAT:** Oh, look! They're making a carpet for Dusty to walk on
 29 when he carries the Master.

30 (*PRAISING CHILDREN stand in a line and sing verse one of*
 31 *the hymn "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna." Those still holding palm*
 32 *branches may wave them during the song. As they sing, DUSTY*
 33 *walks slowly by, stooped over as if someone is riding on his back.*)

34 **Hosanna, loud hosanna, the little children sang.**

35 **Through pillared court and temple, the lovely**

1 anthem rang.
 2 To Jesus, who had blessed them, close folded to his
 3 breast.
 4 The children sang their praises, the simplest and the
 5 best.

6 *(PRAISING CHILDREN exit.)*

7 **NARRATOR:** Dusty felt no weariness as he led the
 8 procession through the city gate. The weight of the
 9 Master was as a burden of love itself, lifted on the breeze
 10 as a feathery seed pod finding new life. Once in the city,
 11 the Master went about his mission to bring the word of
 12 salvation to all who would listen. Dusty was tied to a post
 13 near the city gate. *(All ANIMAL EXTRAS exit.)* His loyal
 14 friends, the dog, the cat, the mouse and the rooster,
 15 stayed with him, praising him for his most triumphal
 16 entrance with the Messiah. As the excitement in the city
 17 mounted, they all yearned to witness it firsthand. At
 18 length, their curiosity overcame their obedience and
 19 Dusty's restraining rein was loosened by the clever cat.
 20 *(CAT pantomimes untying DUSTY, then exits.)* He was freed
 21 from the halter post so that they might all together follow
 22 the crowds that walked with Jesus. But this became more
 23 difficult each day, and suddenly the Master disappeared
 24 from view. Jerusalem grew chaotic and dark and the
 25 animals were afraid. The rooster even heard one of Jesus'
 26 disciples deny knowing him, and he crowed mournfully.
 27 *(ROOSTER crows. CAT enters.)* Meanwhile, the clever cat
 28 had found Jesus and his closest disciples.

29 **CAT:** I found them in a garden where the Master prayed in
 30 the darkness. Later that evening, soldiers came and took
 31 him away.

32 **NARRATOR:** It was almost noon of the following day when
 33 the Roman governor, Pilate, asked the assembled crowd,
 34 "What shall be done with this man in whom I find no
 35 fault?" "Crucify him!" shouted the people. "Crucify him!"



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