

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

by Stephen De Cesare



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Jesus is the Reason for the Season

A choral tableau to celebrate Christmas

by Stephen De Cesare

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MOTHER

RYAN (*her son*)

MARY

JOSEPH

INNKEEPER

GABRIEL (*Off-stage voice*)

ROMAN SOLDIER

THREE ANGELS

SHEPHERDS

WISE MAN #1

WISE MAN #2

WISE MAN #3

KING HEROD

PRODUCTION NOTES

This presentation is designed to be performed as a choral tableau rather than a conventional play. The setting is symbolic as well as the appearance of the actors in costume. The focus should be on the soloists and the choir. The message is carried primarily by the musical selections.

If conditions permit, the choir should be Center Stage. The actors perform in front of the choir. If performed in a church, the actors should be on the same eye-level as the singers.

The actors (in biblical costumes) can be children, teenagers or adults, but for believability all performers should be of the same general age. It would be confusing to mix youngsters and adults in the different roles. Another practical reason to use children as actors is that there are so many walk-on roles. It might be difficult to find enough adults to play all of the parts. Because the speaking lines are few, children should have no trouble memorizing them.

The roles of the mother and Ryan, the son, however, should be performers of the same age as their portrayal. They are the narrative device so they should perform off to the side of the main playing area. If a spotlight is available it can be used to direct attention to them when they speak. They should be standing Stage Right beside a table with a small crche.

A spotlight could be used to reveal Mary at Center Stage when her part begins. The voice of Gabriel can be heard from Off-stage. He is not seen. Mary talks in the direction of the source of the voice.

When the actors finish their parts, the lights fade to permit them an exit and provide a punctuation. The lights return each time to feature the choir singing.

It is not necessary to return the spotlight back to the Mother/Narrator every time she speaks. The spotlight goes to her and her son only at the beginning and at the end of the program.

During the carols “O Little Town of Bethlehem” and “In a Manger,” the actors pantomime the action described. All action by the actors On-stage should be symbolic and minimal remembering that this is a choral presentation, not a play.

The Roman Soldier that appears need only wear a helmet to suggest his role. The scroll can be made of two dowel rods with paper attached.

When the angels enter the stage they need not be dressed in “wings.” White choir robes will do as well. Three angels should be sufficient. They should walk together except for the angel who talks to the shepherds.

The costumes of the shepherds may be simple robes. They could also wear wrapped headpieces. If available, they may carry long poles to suggest shepherd staffs.

The three Wise Men may wear choir robes with headpieces and King Herod could wear a robe of a different color with a gold paper crown.

Costumes and props are spare, just enough to suggest the identity of the character and setting, nothing more.

SONGS
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. "Silent Night"
2. "Ballad of Mary"
3. "Great Saint Joseph, Son of David"
4. "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
5. "In a Manger"
6. "Glory to God"
7. "I Heard the Christmas Bells"
8. "Three Kings Are They"
9. "Little One"
10. "Holy Child"
11. "Jesus Is the Reason for the Season"

1 **INSTRUMENTAL:** “Silent Night”

2

3 *(Spotlight to Stage Right reveals a young mother calling to*
4 *her son Off-stage.)*

5 **MOTHER:** *(Calling)* Ryan, are you almost ready? We can’t be
6 late for church. *(Six-year-old RYAN enters beside her. He’s*
7 *dressed for church. He fidgets with his tie.)*

8 **RYAN:** Aw Mom, do we have to go?

9 **MOTHER:** Yes, we most certainly do.

10 **RYAN:** I don’t see why?

11 **MOTHER:** You know what day tomorrow is?

12 **RYAN:** It’s Christmas.

13 **MOTHER:** And what’s the meaning of Christmas?

14 **RYAN:** It means I get lots of presents. And maybe, none of
15 them will be clothes.

16 **MOTHER:** Do you know why you get presents?

17 **RYAN:** *(Acting cute)* Because I’m your sweet, lovable little
18 boy?

19 **MOTHER:** *(Amused)* That and because it’s a very special
20 birthday.

21 **RYAN:** My birthday isn’t until May.

22 **MOTHER:** Not your birthday — Jesus’ birthday. He’s the
23 reason why we celebrate Christmas. *(She shows him the*
24 *manger scene on the small table beside them.)* You see, that
25 is the baby Jesus in the little manger-cradle. He was
26 born over two thousand years ago. God loved the world
27 so much that he gave us his only son so that all who
28 believe in him will have eternal life.

29 **RYAN:** He lived two thousand years ago?

30 **MOTHER:** That’s right, Ryan. It was over two thousand
31 years ago that God sent the angel Gabriel to a town in
32 Galilee named Nazareth. He had a message for a girl
33 promised in marriage to a man named Joseph. The
34 girl’s name was Mary. *(MARY enters to Center Stage.)* The
35 angel came to her and said:

1 **GABRIEL:** (*Off-stage voice*) Hail Mary, full of grace! The
 2 Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.
 3 (*MARY looks in direction of GABRIEL's voice.*)

4 **MOTHER:** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and
 5 wondered what kind of greeting this might be. Then
 6 Gabriel said to her:

7 **GABRIEL:** Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor
 8 with God. You will give birth to a son. You are to give
 9 him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called
 10 the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will make him
 11 a king as was his ancestor David. He will reign over the
 12 house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.

13 **MARY:** How will this be, since I am a virgin?

14 **GABRIEL:** The Holy Spirit will come and God's power will
 15 rest upon you. It is for this reason that the holy child
 16 will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth, your
 17 relative, will have a child in her old age. For nothing is
 18 impossible with God.

19 **MARY:** I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you
 20 have said.

21 **MOTHER:** Then the angel left her.

22

23 **CAROL:** "Ballad of Mary"

24 **WOMEN:** Sing we of the blessed Mother who received the
 25 angel's word,

26 And obedient to the summons bore in love the Infant
 27 Lord;

28 Sing we of the joys of Mary at whose breast the Child
 29 was fed.

30 Who is Son of God eternal and the everlasting Bread.

31

32 **MEN:** Sing we, too, of Mary's sorrows, of the sword that
 33 pierced her through,

34 When beneath the cross of Jesus she His weight of
 35 suffering knew,

1 Looked upon her Son and Savior reigning from the
 2 awful tree,
 3 Saw the price of our redemption, paid to set the sinner
 4 free.

5

6 **ALL:** Sing the chiefest joy of Mary when on earth her work
 7 was done,

8 And the Lord of all creation brought her to his
 9 Heav'nly

10 home:

11 Raised on high with saints and angels, in Jerusalem
 12 above.

13 She beholds her Son and Savior, reigning as the Lord
 14 of

15 love.

16

17 *(JOSEPH, in biblical costume, enters during song and walks*
 18 *to Center Stage. He carries a blanket and sits on it with*
 19 *MARY as the choir sings.)*

20 **MOTHER:** Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they
 21 were married, Mary told him she was going to have a
 22 baby by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was a man who always
 23 did what was right, so he made plans to break the
 24 engagement privately. *(MARY exits. JOSEPH lies back on*
 25 *his blanket and goes to sleep.)* While Joseph slept, an
 26 angel of the Lord appeared to him in his dream and
 27 said:

28 **GABRIEL:** *(Off-stage)* Joseph, descendant of David, do not
 29 be afraid to take Mary to be your wife, because what
 30 is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give
 31 birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, because
 32 he will save his people from their sins. *(MARY re-enters*
 33 *as JOSEPH awakes; she goes to him. JOSEPH stands and*
 34 *takes her hand. They exit the stage together.)*

35 **MOTHER:** When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of

1 the Lord had commanded him and took Mary as his
2 wife.

3

4 **CAROL:** "Great Saint Joseph, Son of David"

5 **WOMEN:** Great Saint Joseph, son of David, foster father of
6 our Lord,

7 Spouse of Mary, ever Virgin, keeping o'er them watch
8 and ward:

9 In the stable you did guard them with a father's loving
10 care;

11 You by God's command did save them from the cruel
12 Herod's snare.

13

14 **MEN:** Three long days, in grief and anguish, with that
15 Mother sweet and mild,

16 Mary Virgin, did you wander, seeking her beloved
17 Child.

18 In the temple you did find Him: O what joy then filled
19 your heart!

20 In your sorrows, in your gladness, grant us, Joseph to
21 have part.

22

23 **ALL:** Clapsed in Jesus' arms and Mary's, when death gently
24 came at last,

25 Your pure spirit, sweetly sighing, from its earthly
26 dwelling passed.

27 Dear Saint Joseph, by that passing, may our death be
28 like to thine,

29 And with Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may our souls forever
30 shine.

31

32 **MOTHER:** At that time, Emperor Augustus ordered a
33 census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (*A*
34 **ROMAN SOLDIER** enters. *He unrolls a parchment scroll and*
35 *reads.*)

1 **ROMAN SOLDIER:** Hear ye. Hear ye. To all subjects
 2 dwelling in the lands of Syria, Israel, Samaria and
 3 Judea, by command of his excellency Gaius Caesar
 4 Octavianus, ruler of the Roman Empire, shall be
 5 counted, listed and taxed. In obedience to this
 6 command, all men and women must within the next
 7 three months, return to the cities of your forebears,
 8 there to be enrolled and counted. Failure to obey will
 9 be punishable by death.

10 **MOTHER:** Obeying this command, Joseph and Mary went
 11 from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of
 12 Bethlehem to register. Mary was nearly ready for her
 13 baby to be born.

14
 15 **CAROL:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"
 16 O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
 17 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go
 18 by;
 19 Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
 20 The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee
 21 tonight.

22
 23 For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,
 24 While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of
 25 wond'ring love.

26 O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth!
 27 And praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on
 28 earth.

29
 30 How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!
 31 So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His
 32 Heav'n.
 33 No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
 34 Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ
 35 enters in.

(During the singing JOSEPH and MARY in biblical costumes enter Stage Left carrying heavy bundles. They walk to Center Stage. JOSEPH pantomimes knocking on the doors of several inns as MARY wearily stands behind him. JOSEPH mimes talking to unseen innkeepers who reject his request. He sadly lowers his head and tells MARY. They move to another part of the stage and repeat the action several times until MARY is no longer able to stand. She slumps to the ground. JOSEPH comforts her. As the music segues into the next carol, an INNKEEPER in costume, holding a lantern, enters from Stage Left. He is looking for JOSEPH and MARY.)

CAROL: "In a Manger"

In a manger, meek and mild, lies sweet Jesus, sacred Child.

**Heaven sent this holy birth, blessed gift to lowly earth.
Come adore Him shepherds all, serenade Him, infant small,**

Our almighty Savior Lord, our beloved Jesus Christ.

With a smile and carol gay we approach the crib to pray.

Little Jesus we shall see and adore on bended knee.

In His poor and humble dress He will smile and kindly bless,

Our Redeemer, Savior Lord, our beloved Jesus Christ.

(During the carol the INNKEEPER finds JOSEPH and MARY. They mime talking and the INNKEEPER gestures back toward his inn. JOSEPH and the INNKEEPER lift MARY to a standing position and assist her as they circle the playing area. After the circle is completed the INNKEEPER indicates that they have come to the place where MARY can give birth to her child. [There could be a haystack as a prop.] MARY lays back and the lights fade to darkness. After a few

1 *moments the lights come up or a dim spotlight highlights*
 2 *MARY holding the new baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.)*

3 **MOTHER:** There were shepherds spending the night in the
 4 fields, taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord
 5 appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone
 6 down over them. They were terribly afraid, but the
 7 angel said: *(Several SHEPHERDS in costumes walk to*
 8 *Center Stage. An ANGEL enters on the opposite side and*
 9 *stops.)*

10 **ANGEL:** Do not be afraid! I come with good news that will
 11 bring great joy to all people. This very day in David's
 12 town your Savior was born — Christ the Lord! Go into
 13 Nazareth. There you will find a baby wrapped in
 14 swaddling cloths lying in a manger.

15 **MOTHER:** The next moment a great host of Heaven's angels
 16 appeared with the angel, singing praises to God:
 17 *(Several more ANGELS walk On-stage and stand beside the*
 18 *first ANGEL.)*

19
 20 **CAROL:** "Glory to God"

21 *Chorus:*
 22 Glory to God! Glory to God! Glory to God in the
 23 Highest!
 24 Glory to God! Glory to God and peace to His people
 25 who
 26 dwell on the earth.

27
 28 *Verse 1:*
 29 Lord God heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
 30 We worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for
 31 Your glory.

32 *Repeat Chorus*

33
 34 *Verse 2:*
 35 Oh, Lord Jesus Christ the only Son of the Father,

1 Lord God, Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the
 2 world have mercy on us;
 3 You are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive
 4 our prayer.

5 *Repeat Chorus*

6

7 *Verse 3:*

8 For You alone are the Holy One,
 9 You alone are the Lord,
 10 You alone are the Most High,
 11 Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
 12 In the glory of God the Father.

13 *Repeat Chorus*

14

15 *Verse 4:*

16 Amen!

17

18 *(After the carol the ANGELS all leave the stage. The*
 19 *SHEPHERDS remain with MARY, JOSEPH and the*
 20 *manger.)*

21 MOTHER: When the angels left them and returned back to
 22 heaven, the shepherds said to one another:

23 SHEPHERD: Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that
 24 has happened which the Lord has told us. *(The*
 25 *SHEPHERDS mime "gathering sheep" and their belongings*
 26 *and leave the stage.)*

27 MOTHER: The shepherds gathered the sheep and their
 28 belongings and immediately set out for the town.

29

30 CAROL: "I Heard the Christmas Bells"

31 Oh, I heard the Christmas bells ring ding, ding, dong!
 32 They're saying our Savior has been born today!
 33 Merrily ringing. Joyfully singing: ding, dong, ding,
 34 dong, ding-a-ding, ding dong.

35

1 The angels in Heaven rang them ding, ding, dong!
 2 They rang them for everyone on earth to hear.
 3 Merrily ringing. Joyfully singing: ding, dong, ding,
 4 dong, ding-a-ding, ding dong.

5
 6 For shepherds had heard the ringing. Ding, ding, dong!
 7 The ringing had brought them to their Savior King.
 8 Merrily ringing. Joyfully singing: ding, dong, ding,
 9 dong, ding-a-ding, ding dong.

10
 11 The wise men who saw the star heard ding, ding, dong!
 12 The sound helped to bring them to the little King.
 13 Merrily ringing. Joyfully singing: ding, dong, ding,
 14 dong, ding-a-ding, ding, dong! Ding, dong!

15
 16 *(The SHEPHERDS re-enter and approach the manger slowly.*
 17 *When they stop before it the three WISE MEN in costume*
 18 *enter from Stage Left and walk to the manger.)*

19 **MOTHER:** Soon afterward, three men who studied the stars
 20 came from the East to Jerusalem and asked:

21 **WISE MAN #1:** Where is the baby born to be king of the
 22 Jews?

23 **WISE MAN #2:** We have seen his star when it came up in the
 24 east,

25 **WISE MAN #3:** ... and we have come to worship him.
 26 *(Spotlight on KING HEROD who appears in costume wearing*
 27 *a crown and enters at far Stage Right and stands in place.)*

28 **MOTHER:** When King Herod heard about this, he was very
 29 upset. He called the Wise Men to a secret meeting and
 30 learned from them the exact time the star had
 31 appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem with these
 32 instructions:

33 **KING HEROD:** Go and make a careful search for the child,
 34 and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may
 35 go and worship him. *(The THREE WISE MEN pantomime*

a search as they walk a circle on the stage, stopping in front
of the manger and then kneeling. On cue they pantomime the
giving of gifts.)

CAROL: "Three Kings Are They"

Three kings are they, by night, by day.
To Bethlehem's manger proceeding.
Led by the star, they come from afar.
Their journey of wonder speeding.

From Orient lands o'er wild desert sands,
Their gifts for the Christ-child bearing,
Incense and gold, and treasure untold,
Allegiance and love declaring.

There by the stall the wise men all
Offered their humble oblation.
Homage confessing, asking His blessing,
Knelt they in adoration.

Instrumental verse

There by the stall the wise men all
Offered their humble oblation.
Homage confessing, asking His blessing,
Knelt they in adoration.

MOTHER: They followed the star and it stopped over the
place where the child was. They went into the house
and when they saw the child with his mother Mary,
they knelt and worshiped him. They brought out their
gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and presented
them to him.



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