

1997 Christmas Play

The main idea is to present the Christmas story from the perspective of the angels. They had, in fact, been involved in the Christmas story for many centuries, if we can imagine that they had some part in God speaking through the prophets. The hope is that we can capture a little of the excitement there must have been in Heaven that night.

The main actors will be the angels. Since they are organising the Christmas events, they will be pictured as stage managers. One benefit of this is that the main actors can legitimately have clip boards with their lines in place to help them with reasonably complex dialogues.

Introit

Song: **Tell me why do you weep**

Mime: *Poor people, sick people, sad people (i.e. younger children) miming their lives, with angels pointing them to Jesus, during the song.*

Introduction

Chief Angel: *[Appear busy, mime answering quick questions from other angels rushing around him/her. Two other angels remain on the stage.]*

[Talking to congregation] Ah, hello. Welcome to Heaven. I'm sorry, I'm quite busy, so I may not be quite as good a host as I would normally like to be. You have come on a rather special night, and we are all rushing around, but it is quite good because you will see something rather spectacular.

[Looks at watch] Oh, I have to be somewhere else now. Now where am I going? *[Looks at clipboard]*. Let my assistants explain it all to you. *[Runs off]*

Angel 2: What you are going to see tonight really started many years ago. When people decided to do things that displeased God, God needed a plan to rescue the situation. His plan is very simple. He is going to send His Son Jesus to become a man, and He will live in Israel and teach the people how they should live.

Angel 3: But that is only part of the plan. The main part is that Jesus will die for the people in place of the punishment everyone deserves. That way, God can forgive anyone who wants to follow God. Simple really, but very clever, and very bold. And tonight is when this plan starts to operate, because Jesus is going to be born.

Angel 4: Tell them, this is Heaven, and we can do *anything* here. We can take you back in time. Come on, let me show you how we used to tell the prophets about the plan. We were so excited that we used to visit the prophets and tell them little bits about what was going to happen.

Angel 5: Sometimes I think we used to tell them more than we were supposed to. Actually, we told them *everything*. Bethlehem, the virgin, riding on a donkey, 30 pieces of silver, dying for our sins, in short, *everything*. Look over there! [*Points to scene in corner of stage*] You can see an angel telling Isaiah the prophet about tonight, and that was 600 years ago.

[*The scene now moves across the stage to where an Angel and Isaiah are talking*]

Angel 6: Isaiah, I have a message for you to proclaim to the people. [*Hands Isaiah a scroll.*]

Isaiah: [*Reading prophecy*]

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given. He will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He will reign on David's throne and uphold it with justice and righteousness. Then you will say "Give thanks to the Lord, sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things."

Angel 6: I have many other messages for your, about the time in the future when God will save His people. Times of joy and not sadness, of hope and not fear. Look around, and you see evil kings, wars, fighting, people cheating in the marketplace. But the time will come when God will end all this. And it will start with the baby you have just read about.

Song: **You shall go out with joy**

[*Chief angel and Gabriel are in discussion. In two simultaneous scenes at the sides of the stage are mimes of Gabriel visiting Mary and Gabriel visiting Joseph.*]

Chief Angel: Hello again. Things really started to get hot about 9 months ago. Gabriel, tell us about it.

Angel Gabriel: First I visited Mary, and told her that she would have a baby called "Jesus", and this baby would be the Son of God. It was a bit of a shock to Mary, but she was very pleased that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus.

[*Mime angel visiting Mary*]

Angel Gabriel: Then I had to speak to Joseph. He was engaged to marry Mary, but he was so confused to learn that she was expecting a baby that he even thought about cancelling the wedding.

[*Mime angel visiting Joseph*]

Angel Gabriel: I explained to Joseph that this was a special baby, and that he should take care of Mary. Joseph is a good man, and I am glad that we chose him to be the Father of Jesus.

Angel 7: You are right – they will be very good parents. We should add that soon after Mary and Joseph had their wedding, and baby Jesus is shortly to be born.

Angel 8: But the trouble is that they can't stay in their home in Nazareth. The Romans want people to return to the towns of their ancestors to help them sort out their taxes, and so today Mary and Joseph are travelling to Bethlehem. Jesus will be born in Bethlehem, and it is our job to make sure that everything goes well.

[Phone rings. Chief Angel takes out a mobile phone and talks into it.]

Chief Angel: Okay guys. Apparently Mary and Joseph have just been spotted approaching Bethlehem.

[To audience] I'm afraid we have to go now – we're needed elsewhere.

[Just before the Angels leave the stage they each produce a pair of dark sunglasses and put them on. Chief Angel speaks to the congregation.]

Ah these. *[wobbles glasses with hands]* You wait, we are going to put on a fantastic light show on for some shepherds later tonight!

Carol: **Oh little town of Bethlehem**

At the Inn

[Innkeeper and wife are busy organising and cleaning. They look up to exchange a few words.]

Wife: We seem to be so busy that I haven't seen you all day.

Innkeeper: Yes, this taxing business is good for our business. *[Gets out and shakes moneybag]* We are full up. We are going to earn a good bonus for the end of the year.

[Innkeeper and wife return to their jobs. Mary and Joseph walk towards the stage from the back.]

Angel 9: Hello again. That is the inn that Joseph and Mary were supposed to stay at. But there has been a small hiccup – we meant to make sure that one of the rooms was left empty for them, but someone seemed to slip in when we weren't watching.

Angel 10: We should have gotten Joseph and Mary to leave earlier.

Angel 11: Well, we tried, but Mary wanted to check that the doors were locked, to check that the fire had been switched off, to check that all the lamps had been switched off etc etc etc. But, I do know that there is some space around the back. Not ideal, but it will do. And Gabriel did tell one of the prophets that

Jesus would come in humble surroundings. You can't get much more humble than the stable!

- Angel 12: [To congregation] You watch this – no-one down there can see me.
- Mime: *By this time Mary and Joseph should be at the front of the stage. Angel 12 guides Joseph and Mary to come near the inn and knock on the door of the inn.*
- Wife: Someone else is at the door. I thought you said that we are full.
- Innkeeper: We are – I will send them away. [Opens door.]
- Wife: Looks like trouble – she's expecting a baby.
- Innkeeper: Well, we have no room.
- [Angel 9 whispers into the innkeeper's ear]
- I have an idea, they can stay around the back. Not great, but it ought to be warm enough.
- Mime: *The innkeeper takes Mary and Joseph around the back and the stable scene with the baby Jesus is set up during the singing of the carol*
- Carol: **Once in royal David's city**

In the fields

- Chief Angel: Now you are in for a treat. Look over there at those shepherds, and keep an eye on what happens. [Puts his dark glasses back on again.]
- Carol: **While shepherds watched their flocks by night**
- Mime: *Shepherds appear during the carol, and position themselves watching their sheep and keeping warm.*
- Angel 13: [Appears to the shepherds, who have fall to the ground and listen stunned.]
- Don't be afraid. I have good news for you. Over in Bethlehem a baby has been born, who is Christ the Lord. He will be the saving of His people. GO quick and you will see Him.
- Angels: *Some angels shout from the back, things like "there they are", "come on", "let's be quick".*
- [Angels run from the back up the aisle towards the shepherds, and assemble as a choir, with some prompting from the Chief Angel and his assistants.]
- Songs: **Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to the King of Kings**

You are the King of Glory

The Kings

Chief Angel: *[After the singing the Chief Angel gets a phone call, and moves to the front and pointedly removes his sunglasses whilst talking on the telephone with the usual one-sided conversation.]*

[To the congregation] Okay, let me explain what's happening now. Some time ago we sent a star over from the East and some clever Kings realised that we were sending them a message about the birth of Jesus. So they set off following the star as we wanted, and the idea was that they should come to Bethlehem and worship the baby Jesus. BUT, yet another hiccup. They got LOST. LOST, can you imagine it. They only had to follow the star. And what's worse, they called in on King Herod to ask the way. KING HEROD – I ask you. That bloke is pure evil, and you can bet he won't sit still and do nothing now. So we had better act quick.

[Blows whistle and on run two other angels]

Okay guys, we have a problem.

Angel 14: Yes, we've heard. And we have a plan.

Angel 15: I am going over to Jerusalem in a minute, and will get Herod's advisers to point the Kings towards Bethlehem.

Angel 14: And once the Kings have visited Jesus, I will tell them in a dream not to go back to Jerusalem but to get out quick in the opposite direction.

Angel 15: And then I will tell Joseph to take his family off to Egypt.

Chief Angel: But don't Mary and Joseph have to take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem a few days after he has been born?

Angel 15: That's okay. There is time on our side. Herod won't have his act together by then. Remember, he won't know what he is looking for.

Chief Angel: Okay, sounds good to me. You guys think of everything!

Carol: **We three kings of Orient are**

Mime: *During the carol the Kings come in from the back and walk around the church. Towards the end of the carol the angel grabs their attention and moves them towards the stable. After the carol the Kings move forward and offer their gifts to the baby Jesus, being led by the angel. The angels then move into the stable scene.*

Song: **The Servant King**

Finale

Carol: **Hark the herald angels sing**

Angel 16: So that was what happened on the first Christmas. For a little while we will stay excited. Finally God has come into the world in the form of a human, as a little baby.

Angel 17: But later on things will get very sad and painful, and when the baby Jesus will have grown up to be a man the authorities will kill Him on the cross. But that is part of the same plan, so that God can save His people.

Angel 18: But now we have more work to do. We have to get Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus out of Bethlehem and off to Egypt safely.

Angel 19: An angel's work is never done!

[Angels step back]