THE LIVING CRÈCHE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

THE CHRISTMAS STORY IN SCRIPTURE, LEGEND, AND SONG

FOR UNISON VOICES, SOLOISTS, AND NARRATORS, WITH OPTIONAL CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Written and Arranged by Anna Laura Page and Jean Anne Shafferman

PERFORMANCE TIME: APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES



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> Cover illustration: Christine Finn Cover design: Shannon Cleary Karen

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The Christmas Story in Scripture, Legend, and Song



^{*} STILLE NACHT (Silent Night! Holy Night!). Melody by Franz Gruber (1787-1863).



^{*} VENI EMMANUEL (O Come, O Come, Emmanuel). Traditional 12th c. Latin.

I. THE ADVENT OF CHRIST

1. O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM



^{*} ST. LOUIS (O Little Town of Bethlehem). Melody by Lewis H. Redner (1831-1908); Words by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893). 11498





* O BETHLEHEM. Traditional Basque carol.



NARRATOR: O little town of Bethlehem, though you are little among the thousands of cities of Judah,



out of you will come the Savior of ancient prophecy. And his greatness will be known throughout the world. And He will bring peace.



THE WORD OF THE LORD: Luke 1: 26-32 — The Annunciation of Mary

(Gabriel enters, moves to center for dialogue, then to position in crèche.)





^{*} GABRIEL'S MESSAGE (The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came). Traditional Basque carol.

NARRATOR: The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a virgin named Mary.



Mary was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of the house of David. And the angel said to Mary:



GABRIEL: Rejoice, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!

NARRATOR: But Mary was afraid, so the angel said to her:

GABRIEL: Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

You will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you will call Him Jesus. (Music starts)

2. TO A VIRGIN MEEK AND MILD

GABRIEL: He will be great and will be called the Son of God.





^{*} THE ANNUNCIATION (To a Virgin Meek and Mild). Traditional Spanish carol; Words by Vigleik E. Boe (1872-1953) and Oscar Overby (1892-1964). Text copyright © Augsburg Publishing House. Reprinted by permission of Augsburg Fortress.



CEREMONY: The Hanging of the Greens

(As the Storyteller begins, a family or small group of people enters. They hang a spray of evergreen and holly in a prominent place. Next, they light each of the four Advent candles, leaving the Christ Candle unlit. Then they position themselves downstage, where they remain for the duration of the pageant.)

The Legend of the Evergreens

STORYTELLER: The Christ Child comes! Hail the triumph of Light over Darkness!

In preparation for His coming, we hang these evergreen boughs, symbols since ancient times of victory over winter's darkness. We offer these holly branches, with their thorny leaves and blood-red berries, as symbols of Christ's crown of thorns,

solemn reminders of the sacrifice of the Child yet born. (Music starts)









^{*} THE HOLLY AND THE IVY. Traditional English carol and words.

11498





II. THE EVE OF CHRISTMAS

4. SILENT NIGHT



^{*} STILLE NACHT (Silent Night! Holy Night!). Melody by Franz Gruber (1787-1863); Words by Joseph Mohr (1792-1848); Translated by John F. Young (1820-1885).



^{*} CAROL (It Came Upon the Midnight Clear). Melody by Richard S. Willis (1819-1900).

THE WORD OF THE LORD: Isaiah 9: 2, 6-7 — The Light of Nations

NARRATOR: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. For unto us a Child is born,



unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.





^{*}STILL, STILL, STILL. Traditional German carol.

The Legend of the First Christmas Tree

(As Storyteller begins, Martin Luther enters and slowly processes to the Christmas tree, which he "lights" at the beginning of "O Christmas Tree." Then he takes his position in crèche.)

STORYTELLER: Hear the ancient story.

One Christmas Eve, centuries ago,

a famous German preacher strolled under the clear night sky,

pondering the wonder of the birth of Christ.

Suddenly he stopped and gazed in wonder

at a sky lit by millions of stars.

"The heavens are radiant with the light

of God's salvation!" he exclaimed.

He hurried to his home, uprooted a fir tree, and placed lighted candles on its branches,

reminders to his children of the starlit skies

from which Christ comes to save us all.

So began with Martin Luther,

a famous German preacher centuries ago,

the ritual of decorating the Christmas tree.

(Music starts)

5. O CHRISTMAS TREE

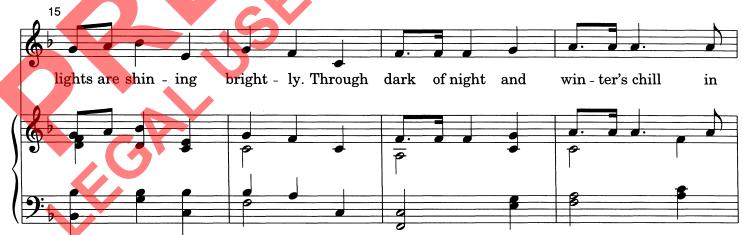
 $(Martin\ Luther\ lights\ Christmas\ tree.)$



STORYTELLER: As Christ is the Tree of life, so we remember His birth in lighting the Christmas tree.







^{*} O TANNENBAUM (O Christmas Tree). Traditional carol; words by Jean Anne Shafferman.

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III. THE FRIENDLY BEASTS THE WORD OF THE LORD: Luke 2: 1-7 — Christ Is Born

(As Narrator begins, Joseph and Mary, carrying the Christ Child, slowly process to center stage. Joseph lights the Christ Candle, Mary places the baby into the crib, and they move to their positions in crèche.)



^{*} W ZLOBIE LEZY (Infant Holy, Infant Lowly). Traditional Polish carol.

NARRATOR: The Emperor Augustus decreed that all the



world should be registered. So Joseph left Nazareth and journeyed to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be registered with Mary, who was expecting a child.



NARRATOR:

(After music stops) And while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Legend of the Friendly Beasts

STORYTELLER: It was a night of tranquillity for all of God's creatures. According to ancient legend, on the night of Jesus' birth, the deer of the forests went down on their knees, the slumbering bees awakened and hummed a hymn of praise, and the trees along the banks of the Jordan River bowed in reverence. And in the stable that night, God, people, and the friendly beasts were joined in peace and joy. The animals were granted the gift of speech, and they, in turn, worshipped God with gifts of their own.

6. THE FRIENDLY BEASTS

(Donkey, Cow, and Sheep enter and slowly process, taking center stage by m. 29.)



^{*}Acciaccatura: play both notes simultaneously, releasing the grace note immediately.



* THE FRIENDLY BEASTS. Traditional English carol and words. 11498





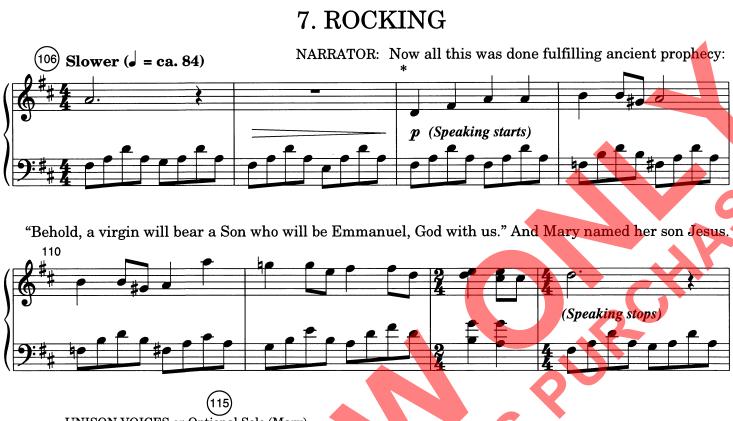




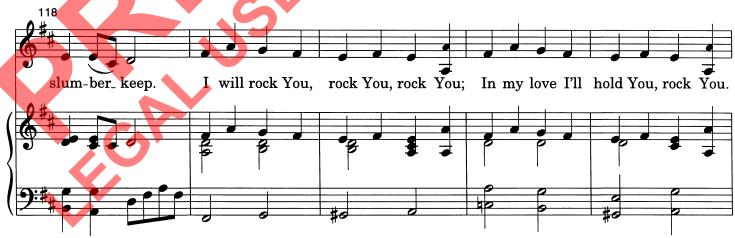


IV. THE CHILDREN

THE WORD OF THE LORD: Matthew 1: 22-23, 25 — Emmanuel, God with Us







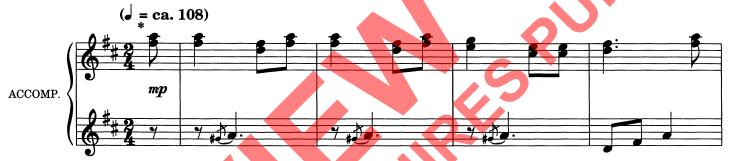
^{*} HAJEJ, NYNEJ (Rocking). Traditional Czech carol; Words by Jean Anne Shafferman. 11498



8. O COME, LITTLE CHILDREN

The Legend of Saint Nicholas

(St. Nicholas begins a procession of small children, each of whom carries a gift. They lay the gifts before the crib, then take positions in crèche by m. 63.)



STORYTELLER: Christmas is a special time for children. The patron saint of children is St. Nicholas,



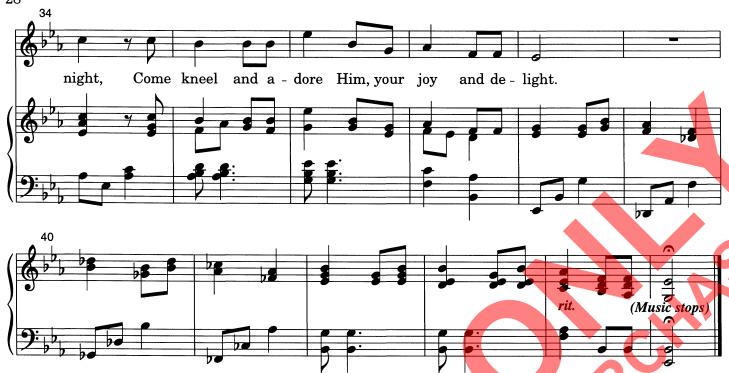
a kind and humble fourth century bishop who wandered the earth rewarding the good children and punishing the bad!



^{*} O COME, LITTLE CHILDREN. Melody by J.P.A. Schultz (1840); Words by Jean Anne Shafferman. 11498

STORYTELLER: (Music stops) St. Nicholas speaks to the spirit of the child in all of us, calling us to remember the Christ Child. (Music starts)





V. THE SHEPHERDS

THE WORD OF THE LORD: Luke 2: 8-14 — The Shepherds and the Angels

(Shepherds enter slowly as the Narrator begins, stopping in fear when they hear the angel's voice.)

NARRATOR:

Now there were in the same country shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. (Angel appears) And suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and the glory of the Lord shone all around, and the shepherds were terrified. Then the angel said to them:

ANGEL:

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign: You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

(Music starts; Angel moves to position in crèche)

9. ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

NARRATOR:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying:



^{*} LES ANGES DANS NOS CAMPAGNES (Angels from the Realms of Glory). Traditional French carol; Words by James Montgomery (1771-1854).







THE WORD OF THE LORD: Luke 2: 15-18 — The Shepherds at the Manger

NARRATOR:

When the angels had gone away into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe, lying in a manger. (Shepherds move to positions in crèche.)

10. THE FIRST NOWELL

The Legend of the Shepherds' Gifts



to see Jesus were the shepherds! Humble, rough, simple men, yet they were the FIRST. An ancient tale says that the shepherds presented Jesus with humble gifts, such as they had: a little oil, goat cheese,



lamb's wool for a blanket. They were common folk, but the Bible says that they were the FIRST!



^{*} QUITTEZ, PASTEURS (O Leave Your Sheep). Traditional French carol. 11498



 $[\]boldsymbol{*}$ THE FIRST NOWELL. Traditional English carol.



THE WORD OF THE LORD: Matthew 2: 1-2 — The Wise Men See the Star

VI. THE WISE MEN

NARRATOR:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star and have come to worship Him." When they did not find Him there, the star reappeared, guiding them to Bethlehem. The wise men rejoiced greatly and entered the house where the star had stopped. There they worshipped Jesus, giving Him treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Music starts)

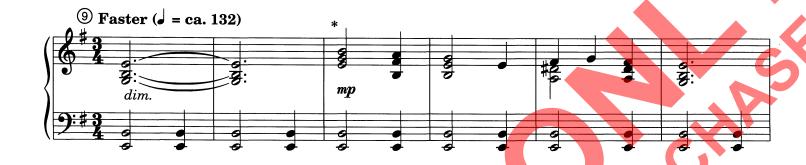
11. WE THREE KINGS The Legend of the Three Wise Men

(Procession of the wise men begins; wise men should move to center stage by m. 90.)



^{*} MARCH OF THE KINGS. Traditional French carol. 11498





(15) STORYTELLER: Scripture tells us of wise men from the East. But it does not tell us their



names, their countries, or even how many there were. Gradually through the ages, the wise men



acquired names, countries, and lives of their own. Melchior, an old man, brought gold, celebrating



^{*} THREE KINGS OF ORIENT. Melody and words by John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820-1891).

the love of Christ. Gaspar, a middle-aged man, brought frankincense, a very sweet spice,



symbolizing Christ as King of heaven. Balthazar, a young man, brought myrrh, a bitter fragrance, a solemn reminder of Christ's approaching sacrifice.



Legend made them kings, whose coming we celebrate at Epiphany. King or wise man, each humbled himself before Jesus, who is King of us all.















VII. SPREAD THE NEWS: JESUS CHRIST IS BORN!

THE WORD OF THE LORD: Matthew 2: 12 and Luke 2: 20 — Spreading the News

NARRATOR:

After they had worshipped the Christ Child, the wise men returned to their countries, and the shepherds returned to their fields, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had seen and heard. (Music starts)

12. HE IS BORN, GLORIA!



^{*} IL EST NÉ (He Is Born). Traditional French carol and words.







^{*} LES ANGES DANS NOS CAMPAGNES (Angels from the Realms of Glory). Traditional French carol; words by James Montgomery (1771-1854).