Journey to Bethlehem A Christmas Program in 5 Suites

by Anna Laura Page and Jean Anne Shafferman Orchestrations by Alan Billingsley

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Cover Illustration by Kurt Nagahori

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JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM A Christmas Program in 5 Suites

Traditional Songs and Customs, New Lyrics and Narration for Unison or 2-Part Voices

Written and Arranged by ANNA LAURA PAGE and JEAN ANNE SHAFFERMAN Recording Orchestrated and Produced by ALAN BILLINGSLEY

I. Hanging the Greens

Our journey to Bethlehem begins with preparation and longing for the coming Savior. Hanging the evergreen branches and displaying boughs of holly, we remember God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 22:18): "From your seed will all nations of the earth be blessed, for you have obeyed My voice."

II. Lighting the Candles

Candles light our pathway, recalling the messianic prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 9: 2): "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of darkness and death's shadow, upon them has light shined."

III. Gathering at the Manger

A crèche, or manger scene, signals our arrival in Bethlehem, where the King of kings sleeps humbly in a cattle stall (Luke 2: 7): "And she gave birth to her Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

IV. Lighting the Tree

A star crowns the sparkling Christmas tree, symbolic of the light that announced the Savior's birth to the shepherds and guided the wise men from the east (Luke 2: 9-11): "Then an angel of the Lord appeared, and the glory of the Lord shone all around, and the angel said, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy. Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is the Messiah, Christ the Lord!"

V. Presenting the Gifts

The wise men arrived bearing precious gifts for God's Son, Who is our greatest Treasure (Matthew 2: 10-11): "When they saw the star shine over the Child, they were filled with great joy. Going into the house, they bowed down and worshipped the Christ Child, giving Him gold, frankincense and myrrh." In presenting our own gifts, we return a measure of our gratitude and proclaim the good news: "Christ is born to save us all."

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FOREWORD

Journey to Bethlehem may be presented in its entirety as a 20-minute Christmas program, or as 5 individual suites throughout the season. It is ideal for incorporation into worship, as a special program of lessons and carols, or for concerts in churches or Christian schools. Intended for performance by unison (opt. 2-part) choirs of all ages, it may be performed by a single choir or by different groups of singers representing various classes or age groups.

Page 2 provides an instructive and inspiring "roadmap for our journey." It may be reprinted for use as a program guide or for incorporation into the performances as additional narrative, spoken at the beginning of each suite. *Reproducible Singers' Pages* appear on pages 30-40 and may serve to encourage audience or congregational participation. An optional fully-orchestrated accompaniment/performance compact disc (CD) recording is available separately.

The composers highly recommend incorporating traditional customs into performances of **Journey to Bethlehem:** the hanging of the greens, the lighting of Advent or Christmas candles and a Christmas tree, the displaying of a manger scene and the gathering of gifts for charitable distribution. Although costuming and staging are not required, they may easily be added.

Anna Laura Page is Handbell Editor for Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., and a widely celebrated composer, children's choir conductor and handbell clinician. Jean Anne Shafferman is Director of Church Choral Publications for Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., and has presented choral clinics throughout the United States and Canada. Both are graduates of the University of Kentucky. Journey to Bethlehem was recorded in Manhattan Beach, California, Alan Billingsley, Instrumental Arranger, Conductor and Producer.

I. HANGING THE GREENS

NARRATION #1

NARRATOR:	Leaves of green, evergreen, always seem to say
	Christ will come, God's true Son, born on Christmas day.
SPEAKER #1:	The Child so fair, without a care, crowned in radiant glory,
SPEAKER #2:	The Promise of Eternal Life in ancient prophet's story,
SPEAKER #3:	One day will wear a crown of thorns and die for our salvation,
SPEAKER #4:	Then live again and rule with God in triumph o'er all nations.
NARRATOR:	So, join us as we hang these greens. They always seem to say:
ALL:	Christ will come, God's true Son, born on Christmas day.

*



* Traditional English carol; words adapted by JEAN ANNE SHAFFERMAN.





* Words and music by JOHN F. WADE (ca. 1711-1786); words adapted by JEAN ANNE SHAFFERMAN.



II. LIGHTING THE CANDLES

NARRATION #2

NARRATOR:

Stumbling in darkness, alone in the night, the people of God said, "Send down Your light!" The stars in the heavens, the moon in the sky, did little to help them. They cried, "God on high, send us a symbol, send us a sign, a beacon, a spotlight. Let Your light shine!"

(PAUSE — then in a loud whisper) But all was DARKNESS!

(PAUSE — then Speaker #1 begins quietly over the keyboard introduction, followed in turn by the other Speakers.)

2. CANDLELIGHT CAROL (Patapan/Joy to the World)

nase







* Traditional French carol; new words by JEAN ANNE SHAFFERMAN.







* Music by GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759), adapted by LOWELL MASON (1792-1872); words paraphrased from Psalm 98 by ISAAC WATTS (1674-1748).

III. GATHERING AT THE MANGER

NARRATION #3

(adapted from the traditional carol, The Friendly Beasts)

NARRATOR:	A decree went out across the land, that all should journey to Bethlehem.
	And there, in a manger humble and crude,
	a Baby was born — the Savior — it's true!
	a baby was boint — the savior — it's true:
	A Wine colors on a had of how
	A King — asleep on a bed of hay,
	A Prince — born on Christmas Day,
	A Friend — to creatures great and small,
	beside Him there in the cattle stall.
SPEAKER #1:	Rest sweetly, dear donkey, shaggy and brown.
	You carried the Savior to Bethlehem town.
SPEAKER #2:	Move gently, sweet cow, all white and red.
	You gave Him your manger for His bed.
SPEAKER #3:	Speak softly, kind sheep with curly horn.
DI LINER NOV	You gave Him your wool for His blanket warm.
	Tou guto thin your woot for the orainet warm.
SPEAKER #4:	Coo sweetly, white dove in rafters high.
JI LARLER # 11	You sang Him to sleep with your lullaby.
	Tou sang thin to sloop with your fundoy.
NARRATOR:	The friendly beasts, by some good spell,
MARKATOR.	in a stable dark were glad to tell
	of the gifts they gave Emmanuel
	when God came from heav'n on earth to dwell.
	when God came from heav h on earth to dwell.



* Traditional spiritual. Mm. 5-13 may be sung by unison voices.





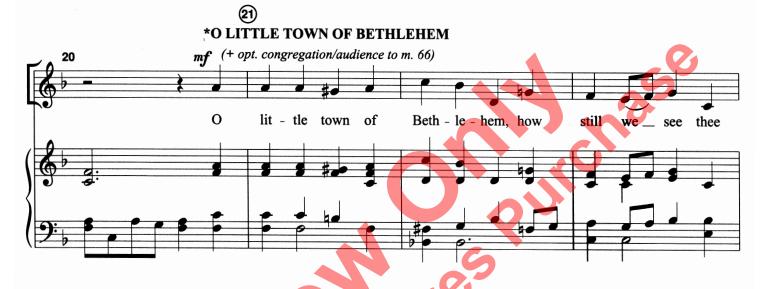
IV. LIGHTING THE TREE

NARRATION #4

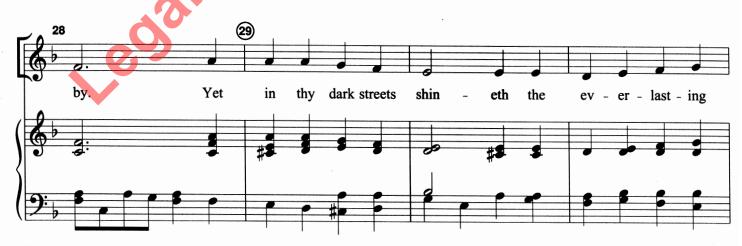
NARRATOR:	Star light, star bright, high above the tree tonight, tell us how you came to be; help us solve the mystery.
Speaker #1:	I shine throughout the long, cold night to guide the travellers by my light. The inn is full, no room to spare. Do you know the holy pair?
Speaker #2:	I shine throughout the long, cold night to guide the travellers by my light. Their flocks are safe, the lambs and ewes. Do you know the chosen few?
Speaker #3:	I shine throughout the long, cold night to guide the travellers by my light. Their camels journey from the east. Do you know the sages three?
NARRATOR:	Star light led the holy pair, Mary and Joseph, to stable bare. Star light led the shepherds, too, led them to Jesus, the Babe so new. Star light led the wise men three. To Bethlehem they came to see the Promise of prophets long ago. Why did they come? How did they know? Star light, star bright, high above the tree tonight, shine for all and spread the news:
ALL:	Christ, the Babe, is born for you!











* Music by LEWIS H. REDNER (1831-1908); words by PHILLIPS BROOKS (1835-1893).



* Music by FRANZ GRUBER (1787-1863); words by JOSEPH MOHR (1792-1848).







V. PRESENTING THE GIFTS

NARRATION #5

(adapted from Christina Rossetti, 1830-1894)

NARRATOR:	Christ came down at Christmas, joy from heaven, love divine. Christ was born at Christmas; stars and angels gave the sign.
	Wise men journeyed from afar, guided by a shining star, bearing gifts of myrrh and gold, precious, wondrous to behold.
SPEAKER #1:	What can I give Him, poor as I am?
SPEAKER #2:	If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.
SPEAKER #3:	If I were a wise man, I would do my part.
Speaker #4:	I am a child of God. I give to Him my heart.
ALL:	Christ was born at Christmas, gift from God, love divine. Love will be our token, love our gift — yours and mine.



^{*} Words and Music from *Piae Cantiones*, 1582; translated by JANE M. JOSEPH (ca. 1894-1929); adapted by JEAN ANNE SHAFFERMAN.





