

The
STAR
and the
ANIMALS

Book, Music & Lyrics
by

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A Nativity Story for Junior Schools

Script

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Teacher

William

Kathy

Helen

Richard

Members of the school

Anne

James

Christopher

Lucy

Tich, *the mouse*

Rusty, *the squirrel*

Snowy, *the rabbit*

The animals

Robin

Remy, *the fox*

Professor, *the sheepdog*

Star

Mary & Joseph

Innkeeper

Shepherd 1

Shepherd 2

Shepherd 3

Angel 1

The performers

Angel 2

Angel 3

Caspar – A King

Melchor – A King

Balthazar – A King

Choir

Costumes

The CHILDREN and TEACHER should wear 'usual school clothes'. The ANIMALS may be simply dressed in face masks, although more elaborate costumes would greatly enhance the effect.

A mixture of any shiny material and aluminium foil will form a suitable basis for the STAR's costume.

The nativity characters should be traditionally dressed.

Scenery

A backcloth depicts the beams and plasterwork of an old barn. To one side of the stage a stable scene is set out, with bales of straw and a crib. A length of material spread out over loose straw forms a makeshift bed. Opposite, towards the front of the stage, is a campfire scene with cooking pots, utensils, etc.

Props

A painting of each ANIMAL for the children to place against the backcloth; a doll to represent the CHILD (hidden from view until the appropriate moment); cooking pots, utensils, etc. for the SHEPHERDS' scene; a fleece for the 3rd SHEPHERD to present to the child; traditional gifts for the KINGS.

(A backcloth depicts the beams and plasterwork of an old barn. To one side of the stage a stable scene is set out, with bales of straw and a crib. A length of material spread out over loose straw forms a makeshift bed. Opposite, towards the front of the stage, is a campfire scene with cooking pots, utensils, etc.)

Music One – Overture

(Lights up. Enter TEACHER, WILLIAM, KATHY, HELEN, RICHARD, ANNE, JAMES, CHRISTOPHER and LUCY. They have been responsible for the painting of the backcloth and the laying out of the stage. They look around, pleased with the result. During the following dialogue they make final cosmetic adjustments to the set: sweeping up bits of straw, arranging and rearranging the stable scene, etc.)

Teacher: Well, I think you've all done a marvellous job. I'm proud of you.

William: Thank you, sir.

Kathy: It was very good of the farmer to lend us his barn.

Helen: It really does look like the stable in Bethlehem doesn't it?

Richard: Yes, and just like a Christmas card scene, except our scene doesn't have oxen and a donkey.

Anne: Why don't we add a few animals? We could paint pictures of them and stand them against the backcloth.

James: We could paint our favourite animals.

Christopher: What do you think, sir?

Lucy: Go on, sir, say yes!

Teacher: Before you all get carried away, what kind of animals do you have in mind?

Richard: Well, we could still have the oxen and the donkey.

Anne: No! Let's have something different. James made a good suggestion. Let's choose our own animals.

Teacher: Let me suggest something. Why don't you consider the animals that live locally?

Kathy: Yes! That's a great idea. I know what my animal would be – a fieldmouse.

William: If I had my way, I'd choose a fox. There's always a fox lurking about the farm.

James: What about the farmer's sheepdog? I'd make him look intelligent, dignified and proud. He could even wear glasses!

Helen: And there's got to be a rabbit. A white, furry one.

Christopher: I would want a red squirrel.

Lucy: We *must* include a robin. We always see a robin in our garden every winter.

William: What do you think of our selection, sir? Can we start the paintings?

Teacher: Hold on a minute! I must admit I like your choice of animals, but the biggest problem is *time*. Remember, the show opens this evening!

Anne: Oh, please, sir, it wouldn't take us very long. We'll have our paintings finished in time!

(The TEACHER looks at the CHILDREN'S faces. The CHILDREN are awaiting his decision.)

Teacher: Right! Away you go. But hurry, there isn't much time.

(Exit TEACHER and CHILDREN. The CHOIR sing 'Let's Remember Christmas Night'. During the song the CHILDREN, one by one, enter and place their paintings against the backcloth. They exit quietly, lights gradually fading to coincide with the end of the song.)

Song Two – Let's Remember Christmas Night

Choir: Let's remember Christmas night,
When Jesus Christ was born.
It all began in Bethlehem,
One cold December morn.
Not a palace for this child,
No, nothing at all;
Just a manger bed,
For his sleepy head,
Snug and warm in his swaddling shawl.

Let's search the sky on Christmas night,
And we shall surely see
The brightest star in all the world
Shine down on you and me.
Three wise men did follow
Precious gifts did they bring;
What a marvellous sight
On this Christmas night,
As they knelt before their King.

*Christmas bells ring
Everywhere this Christmas eve.
Ding! Dong! Ding! Dong!
Their song is telling
The world to believe.*

Let's celebrate this Christmas night,
All nations round the world
For giving hope to all mankind
Let's thank the Holy Birth;
The story of a little child
Sent from heaven above.
When we think of Christmas
And what it means,
Then our hearts will be filled with love.

(Lights up. Enter TICH and RUSTY. They are engrossed in conversation.)

Tich: **(Extremely agitated)** ... And the noise! It was unbelievable. It seemed as if it would go on for ever! You must have heard it, surely. The yelling and screaming was deafening.

Rusty: Well, I suppose I heard something, but I didn't pay too much attention to it. I just rolled over and went back to sleep.

Tich: **(Amazed)** Sleep! You mean to tell me you slept through all that pandemonium? I don't believe it. No one could have slept through all that noise. **(Suddenly out of the corner of his eye, TICH sees the painting of himself. Slowly he turns round, and looks at it.)**

Rusty: **(Mystified)** What's the matter? Is something wrong? You would think you had seen a ghost.

Tich: I... think... I have. Look! **(Points).**

(Rusty turns round and sees the painting. He looks at TICH and then again at the painting.)

Rusty: Is that supposed to be you? **(Laughs)** It's nothing like you. Look at the ears, the nose! It does look funny! Who do you think is responsible for this monstrosity? **(More ridicule and laughter).**

Tich: **(Furiously)** It'll be one of those horrible little kids from the local school. I know what I would do with them if I had my way. **(Suddenly sees painting of Rusty)** And you can wipe that smile off your face!

Rusty: What do you mean? Surely you can take a little good-humoured criticism? I was only giving you my honest opinion.

(TICH points to the backcloth. Rusty turns around and comes face to face with his own picture.)

Tich: **(Smiling)** Well, Rusty, take a good look at yourself. That's some masterpiece. **(Sarcastically)** Wouldn't you agree? **(Rusty rubs his eyes and blinks in disbelief.)**

Rusty: Well, that's the limit. I'm lost for words. It certainly doesn't flatter me, does it?

(They see the other paintings)

Tich: Look! There's the Professor! **(Points to SHEEPDOG)** I don't think he'll be exactly pleased when he sees that.

Rusty: And there's Remy... and Snowy.

Tich: Really, this is too bad. What do these children think they're doing, displaying us like this? I call it impertinence.

(TICH points to the backcloth. RUSTY turns round and comes face to face with his own picture.)

Rusty: Perhaps you're right. I think we need expert advice on this. There's only one person we know who has the experience to solve this little problem and it's... **(both look at each other)**

(with Tich) ... the Professor!

Song Three – Ask For the Professor

Rusty & Tich: When there's something we don't know,
We know just where we can go.
We've a friend
And he lives next door,
We call him the Professor.

When our problems multiply,
He explains the reasons why.
You won't go wrong
If you take his advice.
He's so nice, the Professor.

*A brilliant mind,
A genius,
A university don,
Answers at his fingertips,
On everything under the sun.*

Any subject he'll debate,
Facts and figures he'll relate.
A friend in need is a friend indeed.
So when you're flat on the floor,
And you can't take anything more
There's a friend who's waiting for
One knock on his door,
Who's only willing to please –
Just ask for the Professor,
Just ask for the Professor.

Tich: Now you dash off and find the Professor and the others. I'll wait here. Hurry!

(Exit RUSTY. Meanwhile TICH inspects each painting in more detail. It is clear from the odd audible comment that he is very angry. Enter RUSTY, PROFESSOR, REMY, SNOWY and ROBIN.)

Professor: What's all the fuss about? Why have we been summoned here? Will someone explain?

Rusty: Patience, Professor. All will be revealed.

Snowy: And pretty quick, I hope.

Robin: Come on, Tich, what's it all about?

Tich: **(Agitated again)** Let me begin with the children.

Remy: Children? What this got to do with children?

Rusty: You'll find out soon enough.

Tich: The fact is, the local school has completely taken over the barn and is presenting some kind of Christmas play.

Rusty: We think the disturbance to our home will last anything up to three or four days.

Snowy: **(Angrily)** Three or four days, you say? *Three or four days* of continuous screaming, shouting and absolute bedlam? No way! What do you say, Professor?

Remy: Come on, Professor. It's not like you to be quiet.

Professor: Well, I think we should examine the situation sensibly. Yes, I've heard all the noise and yelling, but in my considered opinion, you're all getting excited over nothing. In fact, as our human friends would say, you're making a mountain out of a molehill.

Tich: A mountain out of a molehill, eh? And I'm getting excited over nothing am I? Well, Professor, we'll see about that!

Rusty: May I suggest you all look behind you.

(They turn around and see their individual paintings. There is silence. The PROFESSOR removes his glasses and approaches his painting to inspect it more closely.)

Professor: Hmm! Hmm! A remarkable resemblance. Excellent, in fact. And the blend of colours – such harmony, and very pleasing to the eye. Obviously children's work, but I must say I'm delighted with the finished product.

Robin: **(Looks at his picture)** It's me in every detail! I couldn't fault it! I can only admire and congratulate such talent.

(Snowy is amazed at everyone's reaction.)

Snowy: Hold on a minute! Am I hearing things? We're not here to admire and applaud the children's artistic ability. We want to get rid of them. We want them out – and *now!*

Tich: Well said, Snowy.

(The PROFESSOR interrupts and speaks with authority.)

Professor: Now, wait a minute. Let's discuss this problem quietly and sensibly. Listen to me. Although I have little experience with young children, I've always found them rather interesting and generally kind. Perhaps we should give them the benefit of the doubt and let them continue their play. Who knows, we may even enjoy it.

Remy: What's this play about?

Rusty: Don't ask me! I don't even know what a play is.

Robin: Perhaps the Professor knows.

Professor: Well, as far as I can remember, a play is a story which is told by, not one person, but many. Each person pretends to be one of the people in the story. If someone wrote down what we are saying now, it would be a play. Not a very good one, of course.

Tich: And what about all this squeaking? Do they have that in plays?

Professor: Not necessarily. But some plays do have squeaking, or *singing* as the humans call it and maybe a little dancing here and there.

Snowy: **(Loudly)** Dancing! It's bad enough with all this so-called singing, but if they're going to be jumping and prancing about all over the place it's going to be unbearable.

Rusty: I heard the word *nativity* mentioned. Does anyone know what it means?

Robin: I suppose it could be some kind of very special play. What does it mean, Professor?

(The PROFESSOR fumbles for words.)

Professor: Well... er... er... hmm. Never been asked this before. It could be – in my humble opinion, of course – something possibly historical in meaning and er...

Remy: Professor, I don't think you know. You're guessing! It looks as if we'll never find out what a nativity play really is.

(An impatient voice interrupts)

Voice: I could tell you, if only I could get a word in edgeways!

(There is silence. Everyone looks at each other.)

Rusty: Who said that? **(All shake their heads. Everyone is mystified.)** There must be someone here.

Tich: **(Frightened)** Do you think... it's ... it's a... ggghost?

Voice: **(Indignantly)** A ghost! Don't be silly. I'm no ghost.

(There is silence. Everyone turns and looks at the PROFESSOR, hoping for an explanation. Enter STAR. Everyone is astonished.)