

The Camel's Arms

Primary Script
by
Dave Corbett

Ideal Cast Size 40

Speaking Roles 19

Minimum Cast Size 19

Duration (minutes) 35

ISBN: 978 1 84237 165 7

Published by

Musicline Publications

P.O. Box 15632

Tamworth

Staffordshire

B78 2DP

01827 281 431

www.musiclinedirect.com

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CAST LIST

N.B. In the following list, the bracketed numbers show the number of spoken lines each role has.

An asterisk (*) before the character's name indicates that this character ALSO has solo or featured sung lines

Narrator 1	(9)	Man 1	(3)
Narrator 2	(8)	Man 2	(3)
Scene Announcer	(6)		
		King 1	(5)
Tamir (Innkeeper)	(5)	King 2	(5)
Danita (Innkeeper's Wife)	(10)	King 3	(5)
Asaf (their Son)	(12)	Camels 1-3 (optional) ¹	(0)
Naomi (their Daughter)	(11)		
Roi (Older Son – a Shepherd)	(11)	Shepherd 1	(2)
		Shepherd 2	(1)
*Joseph	(6)	*Sheep (as many as you like)	(0)
Mary	(6)		
Donkey	(0)	*Angel 1	(2)
		*Angel 2	(2)

Additional Non-speaking Roles:

Shopkeepers

Crowd

*Angels (sing as a group)

Stable Animals (optional)

¹*If actors are not used to play the Camels, we suggest the use of hobby-horse-type props.*

SPEAKING ROLES BY NUMBER OF LINES

NB. In the following list, the number shows how many spoken lines each role has. An asterisk (*) before the character's name indicates that this character ALSO has solo or featured sung lines.

Asaf (Son)	12
Naomi (Daughter).....	11
Roi (Older Son – a Shepherd).....	11
Danita (Innkeeper's Wife).....	10
Narrator 1	9
Narrator 2	8
Scene Announcer.....	6
*Joseph	6
Mary	6
Tamir (Innkeeper).....	5
King 1	5
King 2	5
King 3	5
Man 1	3
Man 2	3
Shepherd 1.....	2
*Angel 1.....	2
*Angel 2.....	2
Shepherd 2.....	1

SUGGESTED (REDUCED) CAST LIST FOR 23 ACTORS

NB. In the following list, the number shows how many spoken lines each role has. An asterisk (*) before the character's name indicates that this character ALSO has solo or featured sung lines.

Narrator 1	also covers Scene Announcer's lines with Narrator 2	15
Narrator 2	also covers Scene Announcer's lines with Narrator 1	14
Roi (Older Son)	also plays Shopkeeper (Sc One) and Man 2 (Sc Three)	14
Asaf (Son)		12
Naomi (Daughter).....		11
Danita (Innkeeper's Wife)....	also plays Crowd member (Scenes One and Three)	10
*Joseph		6
Mary		6
Tamir (Innkeeper).....	also plays Crowd member (Scenes One and Three)	5
King 1		5
King 2		5
King 3		5
Shepherd 1.....	also plays Shopkeeper (Sc One) and Man 1 (Sc Three)	5
*Angel 1.....		2
*Angel 2.....		2
Shepherd 2.....	also plays Crowd member (Scenes One and Three)	1

Non-speaking Roles:

Donkey (Scenes Two and Three) who doesn't have a singing role; four Sheep (Scene Five) and two additional Angels (Scene Five), all of whom do.

(NB: No Camels or Stable Animals in this casting.)

CHARACTERS IN EACH SCENE**Prologue**

Narrator 1
 Narrator 2
 All (for Track 1)

Scene One

Asaf
 Naomi
 Announcer
 Wife (Danita)
 Innkeeper (Tamir)
 Shopkeepers
 Crowd
 Narrator 1
 Narrator 2

Scene Two

Announcer
 Asaf
 Naomi
 Joseph
 Mary
 Donkey

Scene Three

Announcer
 Narrator 1
 Narrator 2
 Crowd
 Joseph
 Mary
 Donkey
 Man 1
 Man 2
 Wife (Danita)
 Innkeeper (Tamir)

Scene Four

Announcer
 King 1
 King 2
 King 3
 Camels 1-3 (optional)

Scene Five

Announcer
 Roi
 Shepherd 1
 Shepherd 2
 Asaf
 Naomi
 Sheep
 Angel 1
 Angel 2
 Chorus of Angels (for Track 6)

Scene Six

Mary
 Joseph
 Innkeeper (Tamir)
 Wife (Danita)
 Stable Animals (optional)
 Announcer
 Shepherd 1
 Shepherd 2
 Asaf
 Naomi
 King 1
 King 2
 King 3
 Camels 1-3 (optional)
 Remaining Cast (for Track 7)

LIST OF PROPERTIES**Prologue** (and throughout)

Clipboard(s) (optional) Narrators
 Picture of the cover of "The Camel's Arms" Narrators

Scene One

Small basket Scene Prop
 Market stalls (see Production Notes) Shopkeepers
 Items for sale (especially cheese, figs and milk) Shopkeepers/Crowd

Scene Two

Small basket Asaf and Naomi
 Stool disguised as a rock Scene Prop

Scene Three

Items to be carried such as bundles representing belongings Crowd members
 Woodblock or similar 'knocking' sound-maker Offstage Prop

Scene Four

'Hobby-Horse' Camels (if not using actors) Kings

Scene Five

Small basket Asaf and Naomi
 Shepherds' crooks Shepherds

Scene Six

Manger Scene Prop
 Baby doll (Jesus) Mary
 Toy lamb Asaf
 'Hobby-Horse' Camels (if not using actors) Kings
 Gold King 1
 Frankincense King 2
 Myrrh King 3

HELPFUL HINTS AND TIPS

Give your children their words to learn first – enlist the help of parents here. Set a date by which they should know them; you cannot hope to rehearse movement or introduce props until words and cues are learned.

If sending home words to learn, send cues (the preceding line or two) as well, so children not only know what to say but when to say it!

Songs are best learned separately (it helps to keep the blood pressure down for all concerned).

Once rehearsing begins on stage, introduce any flats (free standing scenery) as soon as possible, so that children have their positions correct from the start. And don't forget to have one or two rehearsals with props, microphones (and lights if using) before the official dress rehearsal to allow time for children to get used to them.

Finally – this may seem obvious but is often forgotten – don't forget to practise your cast's final bows (arms across tummies or not?) and the order in which they should lead off stage. All too often a super show ends in foot shuffling embarrassment because no one knows quite what to do when the applause ends.

PRODUCTION NOTES

CASTING

Welcome to 'The Camel's Arms!' We're sure you will enjoy rehearsing and performing this nativity musical, but to aid you in your production it may be helpful to consider the following production notes.

This musical is perfect for adapting to suit the number of actors you have available. With nineteen speaking roles and a range of non-speaking supporting characters and chorus, it will happily accommodate up to fifty children (and beyond) if you have them, but will equally suit a cast of just twenty-three (see the suggested reduced cast list on page 4), and can even be pruned to nineteen if you use a hobby-horse for the Donkey, reduce the Sheep to three and don't have any non-speaking Angels.

If you have a cast of mixed year groups, it would be practical to give the speaking parts to older children (Y2 or above) and have the younger ones playing the non-speaking roles. We recommend that all actors sit near the stage when not involved in the action on it, in order to provide an offstage Chorus for the songs.

Cast the part of Joseph carefully, as he sings the song "Here for you" as a solo. The Angels, too, sing as a group in "Gloria". The Sheep song "Brainless?" is most effective when performed by a goodly number of Sheep by themselves, but will work well sung by just a few Sheep with an offstage Chorus. You may like to split singers into two groups for the days of the week section, otherwise just sing the whole section in one group as normal.

STAGING

This show is set in and around Bethlehem. Depending on the facilities available it can be as simple or as complex as you want. Just remember, this is not intended to be a West End production. All most parents want to see is their child on stage. All most teachers want is to survive unscathed. So feel free to add, subtract or completely change the ideas below. And don't forget to send your comments and pictures to kate@musicline-ltd.com.

Prologue

The Narrators can enter and stand/sit front stage right or left and remain in position throughout the show so that they can deliver their lines in later scenes. It would be good to have a copy of the show's cover illustration (or a child's hand-drawn version), perhaps on a clipboard, to show the audience at the appropriate point in the dialogue. Clipboards also serve to make the Narrators look quite "official".

Scene One: Inside A Bethlehem Inn

A simple backdrop of the hallway/reception area inside an inn is more helpful and practical here (see details in the BACKDROPS section of these production notes.) There is then no

need for any stage furniture, but if this is not possible, a table or cut-out representing a counter, with a visitor's/checking-in book, could be placed slightly downstage on the opposite side of the stage from where Asaf and Naomi are playing. This could then either be removed/pushed further downstage as Track 2 begins, or, if a table, become part of the market scene itself.

Asaf and Naomi could be playing a simple hand-clapping game at the start, thus avoiding the need for any props. The Scene Announcer could either enter and exit the stage to deliver his/her line for each scene, or sit/stand with the Narrators if this is easier.

The market stalls could be simple cardboard trays or blankets carried on by the Shopkeepers, on which items for sale (play or real) are laid out, e.g. cheeses, figs, bread, nuts, spices. Children could mime the buying of food to put in the small basket, if preferred. Large cardboard cut-outs of milk churns can also be carried on.

Scene Two: On The Way From 'The Camel's Arms'

A stool disguised to look like a rock for Mary to sit on (either covered or with a screen in front) should be placed slightly off-centre stage, and you could have a few extra cardboard rock boulders on stage if you like, but other than that, a bare stage will suffice.

Scene Three: No Room At The Inn

As in Scene One, the idea here is that Bethlehem is busy, so if you are working with a smaller cast, try to get all your available 'Crowd' actors moving from point to point around the stage (greeting/waving to each other silently, or even carrying something like a bundle) while the main characters are speaking.

Scene Four: Weary Kings, Not Too Far Now From 'The Camel's Arms'

If you have enough actors to have some playing Camels, get them to use facial expressions and gestures to react to the Kings' comments, as this adds even more humour to the scene. Good, strong interplay between the Kings is recommended.

Scene Five: On The Hillside Above 'The Camel's Arms'

Fun to stage. After the hugely amusing "Brainless?" song, and when the sheep have lined up, the actor playing Roi should move across the stage to the furthest end of the line. This will make the best use of the stage and maximise the impact of the interruptions from Asaf and Naomi. Encourage Roi to really make a meal out of the sheep-counting sequence in this scene. Playing it out slowly will bring out the mischief of Asaf and Naomi's distraction plan and have your audience laughing out loud. Change the mood when the Angels appear, however, and go for the full majesty and splendour in the song "Gloria". A glowing light behind the Angels would be good, if you have one.

Scene Six: A Child Is Born In The Stable At 'The Camel's Arms'

This scene is very easy to stage – just follow the stage directions, which are very clear. Mary (holding baby Jesus) and Joseph should be centre stage by the manger, with the

stable animals (if you have them), Innkeeper and his Wife close by. The entire cast should be involved in the final song so it is best if they can all be fitted on the stage.

BACKDROPS

Although not essential, scenery does enhance the action, so, if you have the facilities for changing backdrops, and budding scenery designers at your disposal, go to town. The following suggestions serve as a guide. However, if this is not practical, then a general backdrop showing the rolling hills just outside Bethlehem would be suitable throughout.

Prologue

No scenery needed, but a “Welcome to **‘The Camel’s Arms’**” banner, painted to look like an Inn sign, would be appropriate. This could be in situ prior to the start of the show as your audience arrives.

Scene One: Inside A Bethlehem Inn

The backdrop should portray the inside of an inn, perhaps showing a sandy coloured wall on which is painted a counter with a visitor’s book on top and a board showing keys hanging up on the wall behind; an open cupboard – wine-rack style – for sandals; and one or two appropriate signs such as “Rooms this way” or “Evening meals must be pre-booked” etc.

Scene Two: On The Way From ‘The Camel’s Arms

A backdrop depicting the road a mile or so out of Bethlehem, perhaps with a ‘Town Centre’ road sign pointing the way, would be good here.

Scene Three: No Room At The Inn

Bethlehem Town Centre – showing flat-roofed houses, palm trees, domed buildings and various camel related inn signs on the buildings such as ‘The Camel and Jockey’, ‘The Cart and Camel’, ‘The Camel’s Head’ and, of course, ‘The Camel’s Arms’.

Scene Four: Weary Kings, Not Too Far Now From ‘The Camel’s Arms’

General Middle Eastern hilly landscape with Bethlehem in the background.

Scene Five: On The Hillside Above ‘The Camel’s Arms’

Typical starry-night hillside scene above Bethlehem. A bright star should be visible shining down on one part of the city. You could simply have a black/dark blue gauze, with the bright star on it, in front of the backdrop from Scene 4 to give the sense of night having fallen.

Scene Six: A Child Is Born In The Stable At ‘The Camel’s Arms’

If you want to go the extra mile, you could make a backdrop showing the wooden walls and inner animal pens of a stable, but, as the whole cast will be on stage for the final number, there’s no real need.

COSTUMES

Costumes for this show do not have to be elaborate - everyday materials and clothing items can easily be adapted to create outfits for shepherds, townspeople and kings. A simple pair of open sandals would complete the costumes of all the human characters.

The **Narrators** can be dressed in school uniform or everyday smart clothing. The **Announcer** could do the same, or be dressed as a townspeople.

The **Innkeeper** (Tamir) and his **Wife** (Danita) should be dressed in typical peasant style costume – a simple tunic or shirt and trousers for Tamir and an ankle-length skirt or dress for Danita. Perhaps both could wear an apron over this costume to make them look a little different from the other townsfolk.

Asaf, Naomi, Man1, Man 2, Shopkeepers and any other **Townspeople** should be dressed in similar fashion. The shopkeepers could have full-length smocks tied around the waist with cord, and will need to carry their wares for the market in simple cardboard trays or blankets. (See 'Staging' notes above.)

Joseph should have a thigh-length smock and calf-length trousers. Some sort of apron worn over the top to potentially hold carpentry tools (not actually needed) would be good.

Mary would usually wear a blue tunic or outer garment with a white headscarf over the top.

Roi and the **Shepherds** could wear long (ankle-length) smocks or knee-length tunics and tea-towel head-dresses.

The **Three Kings** could wear capes or robes over tunics or brightly-coloured smocks. Jewel colours of gold and purple or crimson are the colours of choice. Crowns on their heads would complete the effect. They carry their gifts of Gold (a gold-coloured trinket box), Frankincense (maybe a wooden, carved box) and Myrrh (a phial of sorts).

The **Angels** should be clothed in white, with tinsel bling!

The **Donkey, Camels** and **Stable Animals** should wear colour-appropriate tights/leggings/trousers and tops, and card face-shapes fastened onto simple headbands. (Try to avoid masking the face.) If budget allows, animal costumes can be purchased online.

MUSIC

All the music required to stage this production is on the high quality Backing Tracks and Vocal Tracks CDs (both also available as mp3 downloads). An Easy Play Score is also available for purchase (see our website). These products are not only invaluable for performance, but can assist with the teaching of the songs too.

In addition, a brand new product: a CD-ROM or download of all the songs called **Sing it!** is also available. This CD-ROM or download can teach the songs to the children without any teacher input. Children can use it at school or at home - think of the time it will save you! Most schools use it in class on an interactive white board or in the school hall on the overhead projector to allow full cast practice."

Although the solo parts in songs are written for soloist only, directors may, as has already been suggested, allow the whole cast to accompany or replace the soloist, if they wish. This is often necessary if certain cast members are unable to perform the solo themselves, or if a larger chorus or choir is required to be employed more fully throughout the show.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Please feel free to interpret the songs in your own way. The following suggestions are merely a guide:

Track 1: Things About A Camel

This is a lively opening number sung by everyone. If you have actors playing Camels, incorporate them into the choreography by having them on stage bending knees or step-kicking in time to the music while a few children (narrators?) point to the appropriate parts of the camel according to the lyrics.

Track 2: A Bit Of What You Fancy

A jaunty song. Ideally Asaf and Naomi should go from seller to seller to buy the appropriate item as sung in each verse. Take the opportunity to have your cast bob and sway alternately left and right to the Calypso style rhythm of the chorus.

Track 3: Here For You

Joseph comforts Mary during this track as they travel to Bethlehem. No dance movements are required. Joseph should occasionally put his hand on Mary's shoulder as she sits to rest.

Track 4: There's A Census

This song is set in Bethlehem's busy town centre, so characters *could* move to meet and greet each other as the verses are sung, but keep this as simple as you need, according to the age of your cast. Just a few simple hand gestures to suit the words will enhance the lyrics.

Track 5: Brainless?

This is a fun number and one of the highlights of the show. Sheep could mingle slowly during the verses then dramatically face the audience for the word “Maaaiir”. You could incorporate standard actions for the words “play and eat and sleep” in the choruses.

Track 6: Gloria

Simple actions by the cast in the verses (whilst the Angels perhaps keep their hands pressed together as if in prayer), followed by sweeping arm movements by the Angels as they sing the refrain are all that's required for this gentle but uplifting song.

Track 7: This Is The Day

As this happy song has a jig rhythm there is scope for the remaining cast joining the tableau to skip into position when they enter the stage. The irony, however, is that movement is likely to be limited, as the whole cast are on stage for the song. If that is the case, have your children sway happily in the “This is the day” sections, and then stand quietly, just performing simple hand actions in the “See the child in the manger” sections (pointing to the manger; peeping around hands in front of them; rocking arms or putting finger to lips etc. etc.) Above all, enthusiastic singing is to be encouraged. Don't forget to show the children how the music slows down a little for the very last line.

PROLOGUE:

(The scene is set inside 'The Camel's Arms', an inn in Bethlehem.)

NARRATOR 1: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls...
NARRATOR 2: Welcome to our Christmas play...
BOTH: 'The Camel's Arms'.
NARRATOR 2: Hang on a minute – did we just say 'The Camel's Arms'?
NARRATOR 1: Camels haven't got arms.
NARRATOR 2: Well, this one must have – that's what it says on the cover.
NARRATOR 1: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, we proudly present...
BOTH: 'The Camel's Arms'!

TRACK 1:**THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL**

ALL: WE CAN TELL YOU THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL –
 FOUR LEGS WITH WIDE TOES;
 WE CAN TELL YOU THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL –
 PERFECT FEET FOR WHERE HE GOES.

WE'VE SEEN HIS GREAT BIG TEETH,
 HIS KNOBBLY KNEES,
 THE LUMPS WHERE FOOD IS GUARANTEED.
 WE'VE NEVER, EVER SEEN...
 WE'VE NEVER SEEN A CAMEL WITH ARMS.

WE CAN TELL YOU THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL –
 HE CAN CLOSE HIS NOSE;
 WE CAN TELL YOU THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL –
 PERFECT WHEN THE SANDSTORM BLOWS.

WE'VE SEEN HIS GREAT BIG TEETH,
 HIS KNOBBLY KNEES,
 THE LUMPS WHERE FOOD IS GUARANTEED.
 WE'VE NEVER, EVER SEEN...
 WE'VE NEVER SEEN A CAMEL WITH ARMS.

WE CAN TELL YOU THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL –
 VERY USEFUL HUMPS;
 WE CAN TELL YOU THINGS ABOUT A CAMEL –
 PERFECT, WOBBLY, HAIRY BUMPS.

WE'VE SEEN HIS GREAT BIG TEETH,
 HIS KNOBBLY KNEES,
 THE LUMPS WHERE FOOD IS GUARANTEED.

TRACK 2:**A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY**

(During the song the shopkeepers and crowd enter, and a market, or shop, is quickly represented onstage. The children buy the various items mentioned in the song. At the end the stage is cleared and all exit.)

ALL: A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT,
A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD.
A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT,
A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD.

MAY WE HAVE SOME CHEESE, PLEASE?
CHEESE, PLEASE? CHEESE, PLEASE?
MAY WE HAVE SOME CHEESE?
CHEESE PLEASE; CHEESE PLEASE;
CHEESE PLEASE, TODAY.
(Spoken) (WHAT DID YOU SAY?)
CHEESE PLEASE, TODAY.

A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT,
A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD.
A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT,
A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD.

MAY WE HAVE SOME FIGS, PLEASE?
FIGS, PLEASE? FIGS, PLEASE?
MAY WE HAVE SOME FIGS?
FIGS, PLEASE; FIGS, PLEASE;
FIGS PLEASE, TODAY.
(Spoken) (WHAT DID YOU SAY?)
FIGS PLEASE, TODAY.

A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT,
A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD.
A LITTLE BIT OF THIS, A LITTLE BIT OF THAT,
A BIT OF WHAT YOU FANCY DOES YOU GOOD.

MAY WE HAVE SOME MILK, PLEASE?
MILK, PLEASE? MILK, PLEASE?
MAY WE HAVE SOME MILK?
MILK PLEASE; MILK PLEASE;
MILK PLEASE, TODAY.
(Spoken) (WHAT DID YOU SAY?)
MILK PLEASE, TODAY.

NARRATOR 1: Mmm, lovely goat cheese sandwiches...

NARRATOR 2: ...With date pickle and a juicy great bunch of figs...