

THE CHRISTMAS BOX

by Stathie Afendoulis

Adapted by Phyllis Meshel Onest [1991- 2nd edition]

CAST: Speaking Parts

Sonia, age 14
Mary, age 11
Basil, age 12
Isaiah
Gabriel
Innkeeper
Innkeeper's Wife
Shepherd
Balthazar

Musical Flourish
Choir:

CAST: Non-speaking Parts

Gabriel, also Head Angel
Mary
Joseph
Innkeeper
Innkeeper's Wife
Star
Shepherd 1
Shepherd 2
Host of Angels
Wise Man 1
Wise Man 2
Wise Man 3
26 students to hold stars & proclaim: "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!"

PROPS:

Manger that will hold a doll
Baby doll/Jesus
3 chairs around it for the younger children (Mary, Joseph, Star) to sit
Christmas box large enough to contain [box should have an "old" look, like one stored in an attic]
A complete manger scene: Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Shepherds, 3 Wise Men, etc.
An icon of the Prophet Isaiah
A few tree ornaments, including a large star
A piece of sheet music - "Joy to the World"
Stuffed sheep
Instrument for the "flourish"
Stars for the "Star" to wear
Gifts for the Magi:
Gold
Frankincense
Myrrh
4 Crowns
Christmas tree for the background
Table on which the box is placed
Cave (pop up tent) center stage

Costumes for Speaking Cast:

Sonia, Mary & Basil are in everyday clothes
Isaiah - robe & head covering
Gabriel - fancy robe & halo/wings
Innkeeper - robe & head covering
Innkeeper's wife - long skirt, shawl, head covering
Shepherd - robe & head covering

Balthazar – fancy robe & crown

Costumes for Non-speaking cast,

Isaiah - robe & head covering

Angel Gabriel/ Head Angel – fancy robe & halo/wings

Mary - robe & red head covering

Joseph - robe & head covering

Innkeeper - robe & head covering

Innkeeper's Wife -long skirt, shawl, head covering

Shepherd 1 - robe & head covering

Shepherd 2 - robe & head covering

Wise Man 1 - robe & crown

Wise Man 2 - robe & crown

Wise Man 3 - robe & crown

CHOIR is standing in the corner

The play begins when the three young people enter from the back, down the center aisle.

The boy is carrying a box containing Christmas ornaments and a manger scene.

They are talking to each other about the box as they proceed toward the stage - ad lib.

When they reach the table [stage left] they place the box on the table concealing a script if needed.

Sonia: Basil, I wonder what's in this old box? Mom has had this in the attic for a long time.

Basil: I can't imagine what could be in it that we could use; that stuff must be "ancient" by now!

Mary: Do you think it's something from the olden days when Mom was a little girl?

[She peers into the box & sits down to look closer.]

Basil: Mary, I just said so, didn't I?

Sonia: You two are being silly. Mom isn't "that old"! And besides, we're supposed to empty the box and set up what's inside. So let's get to work!

They take turns reaching into the box & pulling things out. Basil reaches into the box & pulls out an icon of a man.

Basil: Hey, does anybody know who this is?

He shows his sisters the icon. While he continues to rummage, Mary takes the icon & reads from the back.

Mary: Isaiah the Prophet.

Basil: Who?

Sonia: *[knowingly]* Isaiah. He was an Old Testament prophet.

Mary: What's a prophet?

Basil: I think it's someone who can tell about the future.

Sonia: You're right, Basil.

Mary: But what did Isaiah tell everybody?

At this point a musical FLOURISH is heard & the children freeze. Enter Isaiah (from the center aisle or stage right). He crosses to the table where the kids are & takes the icon from Mary's hand.

Isaiah: Frankly, I'm surprised she doesn't already know the answer to that question. Excuse me for barging in like this and interrupting your little play. Let me introduce myself. I'm Isaiah the Prophet, from the Old Testament. When I lived on earth, I prophesied many things. But the most important thing I foretold was the coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ. "For unto us a child is born, a son is given: and the government will be upon his shoulders, and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

ISAIAH walks back to Mary. As he places the icon back into her hand, he finishes by saying.
and that my dear child is the answer to your question!

ISAIAH exits up the center aisle.

Another FLOURISH is heard and the children come back to life.

Basil: [*excitedly*] So that's what Isaiah did! But how did he know and how did all the people know that Jesus was coming? Didn't Isaiah say all those things long before Jesus was born?

Sonia: Of course he did. He was a prophet, remember? Now, what else is in that box?

All the children begin to look into the box again. They begin to remove little ornaments and statues of the manger scene.

Mary: Who told Isaiah that Jesus was coming? Was it God?

Sonia: It had to be.

Basil: [*removing the statue of the Virgin Mary*] Oh, look, here is the Virgin Mary!

Mary: Did God tell Mary that she was going to have Jesus?

Sonia: I remember studying in Church School that an angel came to her and told her, but I don't remember his name...

Another FLOURISH is sounded and the children freeze. Enter GABRIEL 1, who walks to center stage, facing the audience. At the same time the younger GABRIEL 2 & VIRGIN MARY enter stage right. And stay on the right side of the stage. While Gabriel 1 speaks, Gabriel 2 & Virgin Mary act out what he says.

Gabriel 1: [*He finishes her sentence.*] Gabriel. My name is Gabriel. I'm surprised she didn't remember! I mean, I only delivered the most important message that any one person has ever

received. God sent me to Mary. At first, she was frightened. But I told her not to be afraid; that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and she would conceive a son. And he would be called Jesus, Son of the Most High. The Son of God, Emanuel, meaning "God With Us."

GABRIEL 1 exits up center aisle.

GABRIEL 2 & VIRGIN MARY exit stage right.

A FLOURISH is sounded. The children come back to life.

Sonia: Gabriel! That's it! Gabriel! God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary. And she was so happy to be the chosen one of God. She knew what a great honor it would be to be the Mother of Jesus.

Basil: Yes, but wasn't she scared? It's a big responsibility being the Mother of the Son of God.

Sonia: Sure she was scared, at first. But she had faith and her faith made her strong.

Mary: Wait a minute! Aren't you supposed to be married to have children?

Basil: Of course you are, and Mary had a husband. Although Jesus was born by the power of the Holy Spirit, God gave Mary a husband to protect her & the child. His name was Joseph. That way Jesus would be born into a family. He would also have the guidance of a human father.

During this line, Sonia pulls the stable/cave with the manger from the box and sets it on the table.

Mary: Is that the cave with the manger where Jesus was born?

Sonia: Yes, it is.

Basil: Well, if Jesus was the Son of God, why was he born in a cave? Why not a hospital, or a big, beautiful house?

Sonia: Everybody knows that story. Sit down a minute and let me tell you what happened...

A FLOURISH is sounded and the children freeze. Enter INNKEEPERS 1. They stop at center stage, facing the audience. The younger INNKEEPERS 2 stand behind a door to the right of center.

Innkeeper 1: We know the story, too.

Innkeeper's Wife 1: *[excitedly]* Because we were a part of it!

Innkeeper 1: Yes, we were. I'm an innkeeper in Bethlehem. During the time when the baby Jesus was to be born, the Emperor, Caesar Augustus, sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed.

Wife 1: *[interrupting him]*...so Joseph traveled with Mary to Bethlehem where he was from, because everyone was to go to his or her hometown to be counted.

Innkeeper 1: Yes. We were working at the inn that night, and they came to us asking for a room...

JOSEPH & VIRGIN MARY enter stage right and walk to the door that is decorated to look like an inn. They knock on the door. It opens. We see INNKEEPERS 2 shake their heads "no" as the dialogue proceeds.

Wife 1: *[interrupting]*...but because there were so many people in the city for the taxing, there was no place for Joseph and Mary at any inn.

Innkeeper 1: *[a little aggravated]* That's true. Unfortunately, we had no spare room at our inn either. But then we saw that Mary was with child...

Wife 1: *[interrupting again]*... and we felt so sorry for the couple that we offered them the safety and warmth of the cave where our animals were kept.

INNKEEPERS 2 walk JOSEPH & MARY to center stage where the cave and manger are positioned. BABY JESUS appears during the singing of "Silent Night."

Innkeeper 1: And it was there that the baby Jesus was born!

CHOIR sings "Silent Night" as INNKEEPERS 1 exit arm-in-arm up the center aisle; INNKEEPERS 2 exit arm-in-arm stage right.

Choir:

Silent Night, Holy Night. All is calm, all is bright.
'Round yon Virgin, Mother & Child! Holy Infant so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

A FLOURISH is sounded and the children come back to life.

Sonia: ...and that's how the Baby Jesus came to be born in Bethlehem.

Basil: And Isaiah's prophecy came true! But didn't Isaiah say that he would be the Savior of the world? How did the world know that Jesus was born?

Mary pulls a star from the box.

Sonia: That's it!

Basil: What's it?

Sonia: The star, the star!

Mary: Yes, a strange, special star in the sky told the world that something special had occurred; that a King, a Saviour had been born!

Sonia: Not only a star, but angels, too. Angels appeared to the shepherds who were tending their flocks.

A FLOURISH is sounded and the children freeze. Enter SHEPHERD 1 stage left and stops center stage, facing the audience. Meanwhile, the STAR enters stage right and stops at the cave. Then Shepherds 2 enters stage right stopping to the right of the manger scene. They act out the scene that Shepherd 1 describes.

Shepherd 1: Ah, yes. I remember that night. What a glorious night it was. The first Christmas. We were in the fields tending to the sheep when this brilliant light appeared in the sky. And from within the light a great voice told us to "fear not," and brought us the glad tidings that Christ the Lord had been born in Bethlehem.

As the CHOIR sings "The First Noel," the HOST OF ANGELS & the HEAD ANGEL enter from the back, down the center aisle, and stop when they reach the shepherds & sheep.

Choir:

The first Noel the angels did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was to deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, Born is the King of Israel.

As the song ends, SHEPHERD 1 exits up the center aisle. SHEPHERDS, SHEEP, STAR & ANGELS move toward the cave and position themselves.

Enter BALTHAZAR stage left and moves to center stage to speak to the audience.

Balthazar: Greetings. I am Balthazar, one of the three wise men who followed the star to where the Baby Jesus lay. When we arrived we found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger. The Virgin Mary and Joseph were there, and some animals. Also some shepherds from nearby fields. We rejoiced at this beautiful sight, and offered gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

As the CHOIR sings "We Three Kings," the 3 WISE MEN enter stage right. They move to the manger scene as the STAR moves back and forth to guide them. They kneel before the baby Jesus and offer their gifts.

Choir:

We three kings of orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
O, star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

BALTHAZAR exits up the center aisle as the song ends. A FLOURISH is sounded and the children come to life again.

Sonia: ... and that's how the entire world learned that the baby Jesus had been born.

Basil: I think it was a fantastic idea to use a star, especially since they didn't have TV or newspapers in those days.

Mary: I like unpacking Christmas boxes. You sure do learn a lot by keeping things from the olden days.

Sonia: Yes, I guess you do, Mary.

Sonia reaches to the bottom of the box and pulls out some sheet music - "Joy to the World."

Sonia: Hey! Look at this!

Mary: What is it?

Basil: It's a Christmas Carol. [*Basil walks over to Sonia.*] "Joy to the World." That is my favorite carol. Let's sing it!

Mary: But we don't have anyone to sing with us.

Sonia: Oh yes we do.

Sonia gestures to the CHOIR and the audience to join them. CAST MEMBERS who are off stage now enter. Those stage right stand near the cave; those in the back enter from the left side aisle and surround the table.

Mary: Come on everybody. Let's all join in singing it together.

Joy to the world! The Lord is come. Let earth receive her King,
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove;
The glories of, His right-eous-ness,
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love,
And wonders, and wonders of His love.

Youngest students stand holding stars, each containing a letter that spells out "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!"

Once they are in position, all students cry out: "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!"

All student sing the Troparion of the Nativity:

Your Nativity O Christ Our God,
Has shown to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star,
To adore you the Sun of Righteousness.
And to know you the Orient from on High.
O Lord, Glory to You.