**“Witnesses”**

A Children’s Christmas Musical

Written by Penny Chou

**Mission connection:  When advertising, ask the audience to bring a “baby gift for Jesus” to the play.  At the end, they will bring them up to the communion rail.  They can be given to Epworth Children’s Services.**

**Kids walk into the sanctuary in twos (older one with a younger one) and sit in front pews while “Do You Hear What I Hear” by Carrie Underwood.**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ad7KU9bCTAM

Director makes introductory remarks.

Narrators are “witnesses” in character, with costumes.  They will speak from the lectern.

**Scene 1 – The Annunciation**

Mic holder:  Gabriel, then Mary

**Narrator Gabriel**:  Seven hundred years before the events of tonight’s story took place, the prophet Isaiah foretold the event.  In Isaiah 7:14 he said that a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call Him Immanuel, which means “God is with us.”  This evening you will hear the story directly from witnesses and see a reenactment of the event.  The story begins over two thousand years ago in the town of Nazareth.   I, Gabriel, spoke to Mary, the aforementioned young virgin, to tell her of the good news that God had chosen her to be the mother of this Immanuel.

(Mary comes to the stage.  While she is coming, Gabriel picks up the loose mic and goes to center stage, facing Mary.)

(Mary notices Gabriel’s arrival, puts her arm up across her eyes and kneels down in fear toward Gabriel.

**Narrator Gabriel**:  Fear not, Mary.  I come to bring good news.

(Mary puts down her arm and looks up at Gabriel hopefully.)

**Narrator Gabriel**:  You are blessed among women.  The Lord is with you.    You will bear a son and His name will be Jesus.  He will be great and called Son of the Most High.  (Gabriel hands mic to Mary as she stands.)

**Mary**:  (Mary bows her head slightly toward Gabriel.) May it be as you have said.

(Gabriel exits stage on lectern side but remains nearby to return to lectern after song.)

Mary sings (or lip syncs) solo: “Breath of Heaven” by Amy Grant

(Mary puts down the mic and exits the stage.  Gabriel returns to lectern.)

**Narrator Gabriel**:  God sure made a wise choice in choosing Mary.  She was a good mother to Jesus.

(Gabriel remains at the lectern for scene 2.)

**Scene 2 The Angel speaks to Joseph**

Mic holder:  Joseph

**Narrator Gabriel**:  There was another situation that needed handling and that was with Jesus’ adoptive father.  A poor carpenter named Joseph was engaged to be married to Mary, but he discovered that she was already with child.   In those days, it would have been customary for Joseph to end the engagement, and that was exactly what he was thinking about doing.  However, that wasn’t God’s plan.  This is what happened.

(Joseph and Angel #1 come to the stage.  Joseph takes the mic.)

**Joseph**:  (to audience)  I was all excited about taking a young wife named Mary, but I just discovered that she is already with child.  Now I don’t know what to do.  I thought she was a virtuous woman, but I must have been mistaken.  I will just dismiss her quietly to avoid embarrassing her.

**Angel #1**:  Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.  She is carrying the Holy Spirit’s child.  She will bring forth a Son and you shall name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.

**Joseph**:  I will do as you have said.  I will take Mary as my wife and I will provide for her and raise Jesus as my own adopted Son.

**Angel #1**:  Praise be to God.

(Joseph puts down the mic, then Joseph and Angel #1 join the cast that is coming up for the song.)

**Narrator Gabriel**:  (stretching his arm out to the audience) Please join the cast in singing “Prepare the Way of the Lord.”  We will sing it twice in unison, then twice in rounds with the people on the lectern side beginning the round and the people on the pulpit side ended it.

(Everyone comes to stage to sing UMH 207, “Prepare the Way of the Lord.”)

Cast sings UMH 207 “Prepare the Way of the Lord.”

*Prepare the way of the Lord.*

*Prepare the way of the Lord,*

*And all people will see*

*The salvation of our God.*

*(2x in unison, 2x in rounds)*

(Everyone except Gabriel returns to their seats.  Gabriel returns to the lectern for scene 3.)

**Scene 3  Going to Bethlehem**

Mic holder:  Innkeeper

(Gabriel is at the lectern and donkey is ready to come on stage when introduced.)

**Narrator Gabriel**:  It came to pass that Joseph took Mary as his wife.  And then Caesar Augustus made a decree that everyone had to pay taxes, and that they had to pay them in the city that their family was from.  Since Joseph’s family hailed from the city of Bethlehem, this meant that he and Mary had to make a long trip back to Bethlehem to pay their taxes.  You’re going to hear the story firsthand from someone who went on that trip with Joseph and Mary.  I introduce to you (holding out hand to donkey – donkey walks onto stage) the donkey that carried Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

(Gabriel exits stage and donkey goes to lectern.)

**Narrator donkey**:  (imitating the style of Eddie Murphy if possible – smiling while talking helps)  How many of you have seen Shrek?  (looks at audience and waits for a response)  Raise your hand if you’ve seen Shrek.  Do you remember the talking donkey in Shrek?  Well, I’m another one, only I didn’t talk to the humans and there weren’t any ogres to talk to.  (pause to smile)  Anyhoo, I am a witness to the journey that Joseph and Mary took from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and also of what happened in the stable.  Let me just say that it was a long way from Nazareth to Bethlehem.  Eighty miles as the crow flies, and longer for us on the road.   Mary was heavy with child, so Joseph led me as I carried her and their provisions.  Neither one of them complained, nor did I, but only due to my vow of silence with humans.  I know they were disappointed when they arrived in Bethlehem and all the inns were full.  We were lucky that a kind innkeeper let us take shelter in his stable.  Here’s what happened.

(Mary takes Joseph’s arm and they walk onto the stage front.  Donkey comes up behind them.  Innkeeper comes to the stage from behind the lectern, picking up the mic along the way.)

**Joseph**:  My wife and I have been traveling for nearly a week from Nazareth to Bethlehem and need a place to lodge.  Do you have room for us at your inn?

**Innkeeper**:  I’d like to help you, but my inn is full.  Every inn around here is full with travelers who have come to pay their taxes.

**Joseph**:  My wife is heavy with child.  Is there no place that I may take her to rest?

**Innkeeper**:  The only space left around here would be for you to stay in my stable with the animals.

**Joseph**:  For that we would be very thankful.

**Innkeeper**:  I will show you the way.

(Innkeeper puts mic down, shows Joseph and Mary to the rear of stage, then Innkeeper exits stage.  Joseph and Mary walk to rear of stage and sit down while Narrator donkey returns to lectern.)

**Narrator donkey**:  And that is how Joseph and Mary ended up in a stable in Bethlehem.  I’ll let my bovine friend tell you what happened in the stable.

(Narrator cow comes to stage.  Narrator donkey hugs narrator cow, then does a complex handshake, as if they haven’t seen each other for a long time.  Narrator donkey walks over and stands beside Joseph and Mary while Narrator cow goes to the lectern.  Joseph, Mary, donkey remain on stage for scene 4.)

**Scene 4  Manger for a Bed**

Mic holder:  Narrator donkey, then Narrator cow

**Narrator Cow**:  It was a busy evening in the stable.  With so many people travelling for the census, all of the stalls were full of unfamiliar donkeys.  Then in walked two humans and another donkey.  I was waiting for the people to leave so I could properly greet this latest hooved visitor, but instead they settled in.  In fact, I was a little concerned about the female because she sounded like she was in pain.  Well, the next thing I knew, there was another human – a baby boy was born.  I offered my feeding manger as a bed for the little tyke.  There seemed to be something very special about Him.

(Mary picks up baby Jesus from behind the choir wall and places him gently into the manger.)

(Cast come to the stage to sing.)

Everyone sings UMH 217, verses 1-3 of “Away in a Manger.”

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,*

*The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.*

*The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,*

*The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,*

*But little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;*

*I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky*

*And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay*

*Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;*

*Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,*

*And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.*

(Narrator donkey picks up mic during first verse of next song.)

 Everyone sings UMH 227, verse 1 of “The Friendly Beasts.”

Narrator donkey sings verse 2 as a solo, then passes mic to Narrator cow who then sings verse 3 as a solo.

Everyone sings verse 1 again.  Narrator cow puts down mic.

*Jesus, our brother,strong and good,*

*Was humbly born in a stable rude,*

*And the friendly beasts around him stood,*

*Jesus, our brother, strong and good.*

(Narrator donkey solo)

*“I,” said the donkey, shaggy and brown,*

*“I carried his mother uphill and down,*

*I carried his mother to Bethlehem town;*

*I,” said the donkey, shaggy and brown.*

(Narrator cow solo)

*“I,” said the cow, all white and red,*

*“I gave him my manger for his bed,*

*I gave him hay to pillow his head;*

*I,” said the cow, all white and red.*

(Narrator cow puts mic down during last verse of song.)

(everyone)

*Jesus, our brother,strong and good,*

*Was humbly born in a stable rude,*

*And the friendly beasts around him stood,*

*Jesus, our brother, strong and good.*

(Everyone returns to seats except Joseph, Mary, Narrator donkey, and Narrator cow.  Narrator donkey and cow stand one on each side of Joseph & Mary in the manger scene at the back of the stage.)

**Scene 5 My Shepherd**

Mic holder:  Shepherd #1

(Narrator sheep goes to lectern.)

**Narrator sheep**:  My shepherd means the world to me.  He takes care of me.  He protects me and provides for me.  I trust him with my life.  When I get tired, he makes me rest.  Once, I got lost from the other sheep and he found me and brought me back to the fold.  He is my shepherd; I shall not want for anything.  He makes me lie down in green pastures.  He leads me beside still waters.  He restores me.  I am not afraid when I am with him.  He comforts me.  I will stay with my shepherd for all my days.

One day, my shepherd and I were frightened out of our wits.  An angel appeared before us and told us about a Savior being born in Bethlehem.  I hope this newborn Savior takes as good of care of His people as my shepherd takes of me.  The shepherds went to see this newborn baby and took us with them.  The shepherds worshipped the baby Jesus and seemed really happy to see Him.  This is how it happened one night while the shepherds were watching over us.

(Shepherds and sheep, including Narrator sheep,  come to stage.  Sheep baa a couple of times while shepherds stand around them.)

(All angels approach stage and sheep and shepherds face angels, all on lectern side of stage.  .  Shepherd #1 picks up mic.  Sheep grab legs of shepherds like toddlers do when they are clingy.  Shepherds and sheep look frightened.  Angels form two angled lines on pulpit side, facing shepherds, with Angel #2 in the forefront.)

**Angel #2**:  Fear not!  I bring you good news of great joy.  A baby boy was born this day in the city of David.  He is your Savior, Christ the Lord.  You will find Him wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

**All Angels in Unison**:  Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!

Shepherds and Sheep sing verse 1 of UMH 220 “Angels from the Realms of Glory” to the Angels.

*Angels from the realms of glory,*

*wing your flight o’er all the earth;*

*Ye who sang creation’s story*

*Now proclaim Messiah’s birth:*

Shepherds, sheep and angels all sing the chorus:

*Come and worship, come and worship,*

*Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

Angels sing verse 2 of UMH 220 “Angels from the Realms of Glory” to the Shepherds.

*Shepherds, in the field abiding,*

*Watching o’er your flocks by night,*

*God with us is now residing,*

*Yonder shines the infant light:*

Shepherds, sheep and angels all sing the chorus once more:

*Come and worship, come and worship,*

*Worship Christ, the newborn King.*

**Shepherd #1**:  (speaking to Angel #2)  Thank you for sharing these great tidings of joy with us lowly shepherds.  We will journey to Bethlehem at first light to see the child.

**Angel #2**:  (speaking to Shepherd #1):  God be with you.

(Angels exit stage.  Shepherds and sheep  exit by back steps on lectern side, briefly stopping to look at the baby Jesus in the manger scene.  Shepherd #1 put down mic.  Narrator sheep returns to lectern.)

**Narrator sheep**:  That next morning, we traveled to Bethlehem and searched the town for a baby in a manger.  We found Him and were truly blessed to see Him.  The shepherds told everyone what the angel had told them concerning the child.  All who heard them wondered at what they said.

Everyone goes to stage to sing verses 1 & 2 of UMH 230 “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;*

*Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.*

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;*

*The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above,*

*While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.*

*O morning stars together, proclaim the holy birth,*

*And praises sing to God the King, and peace to all on earth!*

(Everyone exits stage except Narrator Dove, who goes to lectern.)

**Scene 6  The Magi Visit**

Mic holder:  Herod’s assistant

**Narrator dove**:  I was a prisoner in King Herod’s palace.  He needed a peaceful influence like me, a dove.  I could sense that Herod was worried that this newborn baby would grow up and become King in his place.  He could see that the people were excited for this baby’s coming, and I knew that his intentions for finding the baby Jesus were evil.  I feared that he would have the baby killed.   This is what happened in the days after Jesus’ birth when wise men came to Jerusalem.

(King Herod comes to stage and sits on throne.  Herod’s assistant picks up mic and stands beside Herod.  Narrator Dove walks to pulpit side of stage and stands behind King Herod.)

**King Herod**:  Assistant, I have heard that wise men have come from the East, looking for a King other than myself.  What do you know of this?

**Herod’s Assistant**:  Sire, I have heard the same as you, but only you are King.

**King Herod**:  Have you heard how these wise men will find this false king?

**Herod’s Assistant**:  Your majesty, I have heard that they are being led by a star.

**King Herod**:  Find these wise men and bring them to me so that I may question them.

**Herod’s Assistant**:  Yes, your highness.

(King Herod, Herod’s assistant, and Narrator Dove remain on stage.  Joseph and Mary come to stage and sit at manger scene.  Narrator camel goes to the lectern.)

**Narrator camel**:  (spoken as a rap)

*I am a camel with hair of brown.*

*I carried my master uphill and down.*

*I walked through the sand day after day*

*While a shining star showed us the way.*

*My master is a magi, good and wise.*

*I carried him to Bethlehem with two other guys.*

*We went to see the newborn King*

*To pay him homage, give him bling.*

*Stopped by another king on our way.*

*Herod had some sneaky thing to us to say.*

*He told us to tell him where the baby slept*

*But that’s one promise my master’s not kept.*

*We went to the stable, my magi and me*

*And saw the baby Jesus, on bended knee.*

*Gifts for a King we gave him that day*

*And returned to our home by another way.*

**Narrator camel**:  (no longer rapping) This is what happened when King Herod’s assistant summoned the magi.

(Three magi come to the stage to face King Herod.  Narrator camel follows behind them.)

**King Herod**:  Greetings, wise men from the East.

(The 3 magi bow to King Herod.)

**King Herod**:  What brings you so far from the East to my kingdom?

**Magi #1**:  We have followed a star to find the baby Jesus.

**Magi #2**:  We go to worship Him.

**Magi #3**:  We bring gifts for Him.

**King Herod**:  Please travel through my kingdom with my blessing and find the child.  Then bring me word about Him so that I may also see Him.

**Magi #1**:  Thank you, your majesty.

**Magi #2**:  We will give Him your regards.

**Magi #3**:  We go in peace.

(The magi and Narrator camel go to the manger scene and present their gifts to Jesus, then exit the stage.  While they are doing this, piano plays one verse of UMH 254 “We Three Kings.”  No one sings. At the same time, Herod’s assistant puts down the mic, then King Herod and Herod’s assistant exit the stage on the pulpit side.  Narrator dove returns to lectern.)

**Narrator dove**:  (spoken as a prayer)

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

**Narrator dove**:  After seeing the baby Jesus and being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the wise men returned to their homes by another way.

(Narrator dove exits stage.  Narrator Gabriel returns to the lectern.)

**Narrator Gabriel**:  Now you have heard the account of Jesus’ birth firsthand from witnesses.  He was a priceless gift from God, for God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.  For that the world through Him might be saved.

(Everyone except Narrator Gabriel, but including manger scene cast, come to the front steps to sing.  Narrator Gabriel joins them after speaking again.)

**Narrator Gabriel**:  (addressing audience)  Please join us in singing “Silent Night” together.  If you have bought a baby gift, you may bring it to the communion rail during the song.

Sing 4 verses of UMH 239 “Silent Night.”

*Silent Night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright*

*Round yon virgin mother and child.  Holy infant, so tender and mild,*

*Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;*

*Glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!*

*Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!*

*Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love’s pure light;*

*Radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,*

*Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord at thy birth.*

*Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;*

*With the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;*

*Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!*

Children bow for applause.  Afterward, actors stand in place while director thanks everyone and invites everyone to Fellowship Hall for Jesus’ birthday cake.  Children process by two’s while “Can I Get a Witness” by DC Talk plays.  (display lyrics)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0N_Ivv5RZw>

Cast –  In order of appearance (# of people in that role)

Narrator Gabriel (1)

Mary (1) – must sing solo or lipsync

Joseph (1)

Angel #1 (4)

Narrator donkey (1) – must sing 1 verse solo

Innkeeper (1)

Narrator cow (1) – must sing 1 verse solo

Narrator sheep (1)

Sheep (only limited by the number of costumes)

Shepherd #1 (1)

Shepherds (about 3 more of them)

Angel #2 (1)

Angels (only limited by the number of costumes)

Narrator dove (1)

King Herod (1)

Herod’s Assistant (1)

Narrator camel (1) – must rap

Magi #1 (1)

Magi #2 (1)

Magi #3 (1)

Sound board (1)

Pianist (1)

Costume assistant (many?)

Scenery assistant (1)

Stage hands (optional)

Cast – in order of the number of sentences spoken (# of sentences spoken)

Narrator Gabriel (29 sentences)

Narrator sheep (23)

Narrator dove (19)

Narrator camel (15) – must rap

Narrator donkey (14) – must sing 1 verse solo

Joseph (11)

Narrator cow (8) – must sing 1 verse solo

King Herod (8)

Angel #2 (6)

Angel #1 (4)

Innkeeper (4)

Herod’s Assistant (3)

Shepherd #1 (2)

Magi #1 (2)

Magi #2 (2)

Magi #3 (2)

Mary (1) – but she must sing solo or lipsync

Angels (1 in unison)

Shepherds (0)

Sheep (0)