

Christmas at Happy Valley

A Christmas Comedy With Heart

By
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STORY OF THE PLAY

Christmas at Happy Valley isn't going to be so happy for Leo or his forgetful buddy, Al. They're the only two residents of the retirement home not leaving to spend the holiday with family or friends. Leo especially is undone over the plans put in motion by his estranged daughter-in-law, Chelsea. In anticipation of his early demise, she has consigned him to the home and taken over his finances.

Meanwhile, the activities director cons a church group into performing a Christmas program for the two old gentlemen, but at such late notice, only a few teens show up. Joined by Austin, a teen fulfilling his court-assigned community service, they try desperately to perform a nativity play, but unrehearsed and with ill-fitting costumes, it's a mess. The manger even catches on fire! The only one who's enjoying anything is young William, who looks very much like his late father who was Leo's son.

However, with the help of Rosie, a dedicated Christian nurse, Leo and Chelsea find their way back to Christmas.

Add to the festivities with Carolers singing a song or two of your own choosing.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Adults (4 m, 5 f)

WITHERSPOON: Staff member who makes announcements.
PENDERGAST: Director of Happy Valley Retirement Home.
MRS. NOBLES: Happy Valley recreation supervisor.
LEO SHARP: Determined to live his own way in retirement.
AL: Somewhat confused resident, Leo's friend.
CHELSEA SHARP: Leo's selfish daughter-in-law.
ROSIE CAVANAUGH: Dedicated nurse and strong Christian.
AARON: Another attendant.
MARIAN: Another attendant.

Teens (3 m, 4 f)

AUSTIN: Teen assigned community service hours by court.
ALLISON: Leader of a church youth group.
RALPH: Member of the youth group.
EDDIE: Another.
JORDAN: Another.
JOANNA: Another.
CHRISTINA: Another.

Children (1 boy)

WILLIAM TAGGERT SHARP: 7 to 9-year-old boy,
Chelsea's son, Leo's grandson.

Flexible roles

CAROLERS: Any number. Four have speaking parts.

SETTING: A dayroom in a retirement home, current day.

SET

"Christmas at Happy Valley" is produced on a single set with two entrances. Set props are limited to a small desk with phone, and a couch. A Christmas tree in front of one of the entrances adds a nice touch. A wreath may also be hung center. These type of decorations need to be typical to what you would see in the dayroom of most retirement centers. There must also be a wall display large enough for the audience to read that gives the day/date/weather as outlined in the script.

Pendergast's office is achieved by bringing the desk forward, adding a small chair and possibly a potted plant, then isolating the area with lighting. Side entrances can accommodate the "preschool" nativity.

COSTUMES

Al and Leo wear casual clothes. Rosie, Aaron and Marian are all in medical uniforms. Austin needs to dress a little more rebelliously and have colored hair but not be all in black. (He used to be Goth.) Pendergast and Mrs. Nobles look more professional. He wears a sport coat and tie; she wears a two-piece suit. Chelsea and William Taggart look upscale and wealthy. All other students are in weekday school clothes. Some may wear appropriate Christmas sweaters etc.

In the storyline, the youth group is required to use the preschool props and music to produce the live nativity sequence. It is fully played for laughs. We had all costumes made to appear too small but to actually fit across shoulders and torso. High-waisted belts and three-quarter sleeves on Ralph and Eddie helped make their costumes look too small. Eddie is required to change headpieces in the nativity scene. The quick change can be achieved by constructing each on a baseball cap turned backwards.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

In the original production, a large manger was constructed, not only to meet the needs of the script but to hide the two things it took to achieve the smoke and fire. For the explosion, a professional stage effects device (easily available over the internet) was used. Many such devices use preloaded cartridges that are fired by remote control over a regular microphone cord. It delivers a nice flash followed by a small mushroom cloud. It's a real crowd pleaser and it's also safe. DO NOT ATTEMPT to use fireworks or other devices that have you mixing chemicals like a medieval alchemist. Go with theatre-tested effects that are safe for your actors and audience.

The "fire" device was purchased at a local music store. It is simply a piece of silk blown over a small fan with three tiny colored light bulbs. The "large orange cord" mentioned in the script was actually used to power our flame. Even though Austin was "plugging it in" on stage, the actual switch for the flame machine was thrown backstage at the sound of the explosion.

PRE-RECORDED TAPE OR CD

Prior to your production, you will need to create a CD or tape of door knocks interspersed with Christmas music as well as any music for carols of your own selection.

PROPS

Microphone on a desk stand
Chimes (children's resonator bells, C, A, & F, taped together)
Small rubber mallet to ring chimes
Mop
Clipboard, pen and forms
Can of Coke
Bags of small-sized nativity costumes
Crown
Innkeepers' headpieces (3)
Fairy wand with small star
Short shepherd's staff
Large star on a pole
Boom box
Sack of bananas
Cell phone
Bag of Cheetos
Small stuffed sheep toy
IV stands (2)
Fire extinguisher
Small bottle of pills
Envelope from courier service filled with legal papers

End of Freeview

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