

WHILE ANGELS WATCHED

By the Rev. John C. Park

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Director's Notes

While Angles Watched is meant to assist a small church or a church on a limited budget to produce their own Christmas cantata. It includes a series of readings, along with appropriate scripture and suggested hymns.

The scripts are written in four parts, and can be read by anyone of any age, though it is suggested that Angel #1 be an older adult, while Angels #2 and #3 be children or teenagers. During the performance, all three angels should be "center stage," or in a position similar to the following diagram:

Choir

Angels

Narrator

If this piece is done as a part of a worship service, it is appropriate that the narrator should also be the worship leader. As shown above, the narrator should stand almost offstage, or at least far enough away so as not to distract from the angels.

While a certain amount of pointing or "looking" in a certain direction would not be out of place for the angels, it is not necessary. The parts are not meant to be memorized and then acted out, but simply read. Also, costumes are not necessary, though the angels should probably dress

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similarly *(for example, all in white blouses or shirts, and black skirts or trousers.)*.

Following each set of readings is a suggested hymn. The purpose of these hymns is to allow a choir to build its own cantata around these readings. The hymns suggested are mentioned because they are fairly well known, and occur in a wide variety of church hymn books. If the suggested hymn does not appear in your hymn book, any other similar hymn can be used.

Also, if a church does not have a choir, but still wishes to celebrate the Christmas season with music, these readings can provide an overall structure for a "Christmas Hymn Sing," with the suggested hymns being sung by the entire congregation.

Even if a choir is used, I have found that many people in the congregation appreciate the chance to sing. Therefore it is also suggested that several songs should be done as congregational hymns during the course of the performance.

Since there are a total of eleven hymns involved, it is unwise to use all of the verses. The choir director or worship leader is especially encouraged to choose those verses which they feel are appropriate for the readings involved. Since different hymn books often vary in the verses they include, no such recommendations are contained here.

If performed as indicated, this piece should last from 45 minutes to an hour.

(Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 1946, 1952, 1971, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.)

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Service of Worship

Prelude

Welcome

Opening Prayer:

O God, be with us beyond the worship and celebration of this night. May the voices of Your messengers reach our ears, and the tidings of Your heavenly choir touch our hearts. As we remember how Your Son first came into this world so long ago, may Christ once again enter into our lives. Amen.

Opening Hymn:

Congregational singing of a traditional Advent hymn, like "Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus."

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SCENE 1

ANGEL #1: Now then, what is bothering you two? What is it that has you acting so strangely?

ANGEL #2: We don't know, but something feels very special today. It's like a storm coming, but not so threatening ... if that makes any sense.

ANGEL #3: And it's not just a feeling. There is something going on. The angels near the throne have been busy now for months and months. A few have even gone off on some business or other, only to come back and then leave again.

ANGEL #2: And the feelings: excitement, anticipation, joy, and maybe even a little sorrow. We just know something is going to happen, but we don't know what.

ANGEL #3: Yes, something is going to happen ... and soon. We can just feel it.

ANGEL #1: So, you feel it too, my little angels. Yes, something is going to happen. God is about to begin something very, very special. So special, that all the angels, even all of creation, is waiting for it to occur. You can feel it in the excitement of those around you. You can almost hear it in the air.

NARRATOR: "For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth." (*Ephesians 1:9, 10.*)

Suggested Hymn: "There's A Song in the Air" or "Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming."

ANGEL #1: Yes, something special is going to happen, and very soon. Tonight, I think, yes probably tonight. Tonight the prophecies will be fulfilled.

ANGEL #2: What prophecies?

ANGEL #1: All of God's prophecies.

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ANGEL #3: All of them?

ANGEL #1: Yes, all of them.

ANGEL #2: Then this is the night of the Messiah!

ANGEL #3: God's promised a King will come tonight!

ANGEL #2: Oh, how wonderful.

ANGEL #1: Yes, it will be wonderful indeed. But wait and see. God may still have some surprises for you yet.

ANGEL #3: But still, just to know ... tonight the Messiah is coming.

NARRATOR: "For to us a child is born, to us 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.

"Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this." (*Isaiah 9:6,7.*)

Suggested Hymn: "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates."

ANGEL #2: The King of Glory waits!

ANGEL #3: The King of Kings is drawing near!

ANGEL #2: The Messiah is coming!

ANGEL #3: But where, where is the great King going to arrive?

ANGEL #2: Jerusalem! It must be Jerusalem.

ANGEL #3: But there's nothing going on there ... just Herod, conducting his own kind of "business-as-usual."

ANGEL #1: No my little angels. Not Jerusalem. Look more over that way.

ANGEL #2: Well I don't see anything special!

ANGEL #3: Just that couple down there on the road. A man and his wife. But wait, there does seem to be something about them ...

ANGEL #1: Yes, something special about them. And while they aren't going to Jerusalem, they are going to another place that has also been rather special to God at times.

End of Freeview

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