

A STORY FOR THE AGES

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# A STORY FOR THE AGES

## A CHRISTMAS MUSICAL

*Story by Carol Pirtle*

*Music by Brian G. Downen*

PUBLISHED BY

**ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY**

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## INTRODUCTION

A STORY FOR THE AGES is a Christmas musical that can be performed by all age groups and is especially suited for a children's program. The main characters may be played by high school youth or adults. The parts of the shepherds and angels are suitable for young children. Music for the play can be performed with piano accompaniment only or with the optional flute and organ accompaniment tape.

The play opens with the busy, happy song, "Christmas Time Is Here," and the storytellers invite the audience to come along with them and find out what everyday life was like at the time of our Savior's birth. We join Rachel, a young woman who is applying for a job as a reporter at The Jerusalem Star.

Chief and Ezra, editors of the failing newspaper, decide to let Rachel have a chance to prove herself and send her to Bethlehem where she is to find a "good news" story to help boost readership.

Rachel sings the lyrical song, "Bethlehem Town," wondering what she will encounter on her first assignment. In Bethlehem Rachel talks to many people present for the census, but can't find anyone worthy enough to merit a story.

But outside of town in a field, Rachel finds Shepherds and Angels who tell of a wonderful event, the birth of the Christ Child. The Shepherds and Angels sing "Gloria," "Be Not Afraid," and "The Most Wonderful Day" proclaiming the birth of the Messiah. Rachel feels this could be the story for which she is searching. Together they find the Baby with Mary and Joseph in a simple stable. As they gaze at the newborn child, the Wise Men enter to the singing of "Three Kings." (An optional flute obligato, advanced elementary level, is given for "Gloria" and "Three Kings.")

As the others bow down before Him, Rachel realizes she has found her "good news" story. The Child born this holy night is God's gift for all people. God has sent his precious Son to be the Savior of the world. Here is a story that surpasses anything she had hoped for. Here is a story that will outlast time.

As Rachel turns and joins the others kneeling at the nativity, a soloist sings the beautiful, melodic song, "A Story for the Ages."

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(28 or more flexible parts; extras; one soloist; and optional choir)*

**Storytellers, 1-3:** They set the scene for the audience; wear modern clothes.

*(All other actors wear Biblical dress befitting their stations in life.)*

**Chief:** Editor under pressure to keep the "Jerusalem Star" going.

**Ezra:** Assistant editor and reporter, willing to give Rachel a try.

**Rachel:** A young woman looking for a job as a reporter.

**Woman and Man:** Part of the crowd in Bethlehem.

**Man #1:** Part of the crowd in Bethlehem.

**Horatio:** A Roman official in Bethlehem.

**Man #2:** Part of the party at Horatio's house.

**Micah:** Chief shepherd.

**Shepherds 1-5:** Short speaking parts.

**Angels 1-5:** Short speaking parts.

**Innkeeper's Wife:** Wants to help Joseph and Mary.

**Wise Men 1-3:** Non-singing parts.

**Joseph:** Small speaking part.

**Mary:** Non-speaking part.

**Extras:** Several non-speaking characters appear as part of the crowd scene in Bethlehem (*Scene 2*) and as part of the party scene at Horatio's house (*Scene 3*).

### SCENES

Scene 1: Office of the "Jerusalem Star."

Scene 2: A street in Bethlehem.

Scene 3: At Horatio's house.

Scene 4: A field outside Bethlehem.

Scene 5: At the manger.

**PLAYING TIME:** About 30 minutes.

### PROPS

Crude table, 2 crude chairs or stools, telephone, paper scrolls, cigar, pad and pencil, floor cushions, wooden cups (*for party scene*), manger and baby doll, straw, feather duster, blanket, and gifts for the 3 kings to offer.

Scene 1

*(BEFORE CURTAIN: The entire cast or separate choir sings "Christmas Time is Here.")*

**CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE**

\*CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE  
CAN YOU HEAR THE BELLS RINGING  
PRAISES HIGH UPON THE AIR?  
CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE  
CAN YOU HEAR THE VOICES  
JOYFULLY SINGING EV'RYWHERE?  
TINY BABY IN A MANGER,  
SENT FROM HEAVEN ABOVE  
GIVE US PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING,  
HEAR OUR VOICES FILLED WITH LOVE +  
SINGING, CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE  
FOR THE KING OF KINGS IS  
BORN TODAY IN BETHLEHEM.  
JOYFULLY WE SING ALLELUIA SAVIOR.  
PEACE HAS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE LAND.  
THREE KINGS COME TO SEE THE SAVIOR  
FOLLOWING AN EASTERN STAR,  
SHINING UP ABOVE THE HEAVENS  
TRAVELING FROM AFAR, SAYING  
CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE.  
(Go back to \* and sing to + ; conclude with \*\*)

\*\*SINGING CHRISTMAS TIME  
CHRISTMAS TIME . . .  
CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE, IS HERE  
CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE!

STORYTELLER #1: Oh, I just love everything about Christmas, don't you? I like the crowds, the shopping, the tinsel, the trees. Most of all, though, I love to hear the Christmas story.

STORYTELLER #2: So do I. But sometimes I wonder about the people who lived back then. I wonder what their lives were like.

STORYTELLER #3: But we know all about those people: Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the Wise Men...they are all written about in the Bible.

STORYTELLER #2: Well, we do know things about those people. But I didn't mean them. I wonder about all the people we don't read about in the Bible. Who were they? What were their lives like? Sometimes I try to imagine what it was like to be there the night our Savior was born.

STORYTELLER #1: Yeah, I wonder if the people then were like us. Do you suppose they laughed like we do? And did they ever cry? I wonder what their problems were and how they solved them. *(To audience)* Do you ever wonder about those people too? If you do, come with us to meet Rachel, a young girl seeking to prove herself. Imagine, if you can, what could have been that holy night almost 2,000 years ago. Travel with her from Jerusalem to Bethlehem as she tries to find "A Story for the Ages."

*(Entire choir exits, house lights dim. AT RISE: CHIEF, the editor of the the "Jerusalem Star," a newspaper that is having difficulty keeping in business, is seated at a crude desk talking on the phone with an unlit cigar between his teeth.)*

CHIEF: We're doing the best we can, J.R....but...Yes, I understand that. I wish that were possible, but--

*(At this point, EZRA rushes in from SR carrying a bundle of scrolls.)*

EZRA: I gotta' talk to you, Chief. Right now!

CHIEF: *(Waves EZRA away)* Look, J.R., there are lots of reason, but it's useless to go into them over the phone...I wish it were that easy. Yes, sir...I'll get on that right away. *(Hangs up)* What is it, Ezra? Didn't you hear who I was talking to? J.R. is upset because his paper isn't making money!

EZRA: That's what I need to talk to you about, Chief. The new circulation figures are in, and it's as bad as we thought. Circulation is down for the sixth month in a row!

CHIEF: Let me see that, Ezra. Boy, it looks bad. Really bad. We've got to do something to beef up those figures Ezra. If we don't, the "Jerusalem Star" will go out of business. *(Shakes head)* Those boys at the "Tribune" are really giving us a beating.

EZRA: You know what we need, Chief? We need a scoop...a story so big that everyone will snap up our papers as fast as we can print them.

CHIEF: Yeah, sure! The problem is...where do we find such a story? We've already run stories on graft in the police department and at city hall...we've even run an article on corruption at the temple. Nothing! Nobody buys our papers!

EZRA: Could I offer a suggestion, Chief? I think our emphasis is wrong. Nobody wants to read about the horrible things in life. We need a story about something good...something wonderful that affects everyone. If we could get that scoop, our problems will be solved!

CHIEF: *(Skeptically)* But where? Where will we find a scoop that isn't crime or corruption? Personally, I don't see too much good in the world to report.

EZRA: I don't know where we'll find it, Chief. But I do think there's a story out there just waiting for us.

RACHEL: *(Entering from SR)* Excuse me, gentlemen. I'd like to speak to someone about a job.

EZRA: He does the interviewing, ma'am. He's the chief editor.

CHIEF: Waddayah want, lady?

RACHEL: I'd like a job as a reporter.

CHIEF: *(Laughs)* Yeah...and I'd like to be Caesar!

EZRA: Would you like a chair, miss?

RACHEL: I'm perfectly capable of standing, thank you.

EZRA: Oh, sorry.

RACHEL: If you don't mind, Chief, I'd like to tell you about a few of my abilities. I'm a good writer, and I've--

CHIEF: *(Interrupts)* Makes no difference. Women have never been reporters! And they never will be!

RACHEL: Listen here, Chief. I can write rings around the best men you have. You need a story on raising camels? I'll do it. Or how about an article on women's new role in Jerusalem? I can write that one with my hands tied!

CHIEF: Never! Women don't have brains enough to be reporters! Go back to the kitchen, lady.

EZRA: Now, Chief...wait a minute. Maybe you should reconsider. You know how much we need a story. Maybe this young lady can help us. Why don't we give her a chance?

CHIEF: That's ridiculous! A woman bring in a scoop when all my best men can't find one? Ha! That would take a miracle!

EZRA: What about Bethlehem, Chief? Our stringer there quit last week. Why don't we try her out there?

CHIEF: Bethlehem? ... Why not? Nothing ever happens there anyway. I think our man there quit out of boredom. OK...uh...what's your name?

RACHEL: Rachel, sir.

CHIEF: OK, Rachel...you got the Bethlehem beat. See what you can do with it.

RACHEL: Oh, thank you, sir. You won't regret this...I promise!

CHIEF: We'll see about that! Now listen, Rachel, and listen real hard. I have a few rules that you'd better jot down. First of all, I want good, clean copy. And I don't want any small-town gossip like who met whom at the well! What I want is a story about something good happening. I've decided that's the only way to sell papers. If you can find a scoop like that, you're on permanently...if you can't...tough. You'll have to find another job!

*(CHIEF and EZRA freeze as RACHEL moves DS to sing "Bethlehem Town.")*

### BETHLEHEM TOWN

BETHLEHEM TOWN, BETHLEHEM TOWN,  
QUIET AND SIMPLE, OH, BEAUTIFUL TOWN.  
BETHLEHEM TOWN, BETHLEHEM TOWN,  
WHAT IS THE SECRET YOU'RE KEEPING?  
HAVE YOU A MESSAGE JUST MEANT FOR OUR HEARTS?  
HAVE YOU A MESSAGE TO TELL US?  
GIVE US YOUR SECRETS, OH, BETHLEHEM TOWN:  
GIVE US THE PEACE ALL YOUR PEOPLE CAN SHARE.

BETHLEHEM TOWN, BETHLEHEM TOWN,  
TELL US A STORY OF PEACE AND OF LOVE.

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