

The **KING of LOVE**

**A Christmas Carol Play
by Betty Lou and Ronald A. Nelson**

for unison/two part treble voices, congregation and keyboard

Contents

<i>Notes and Production Notes</i>	2
<i>Cast</i>	3
Scene One	
Come, Let Us Work	4
Hark, the Glad Sound!	6
Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel	10
O Chief of Cities, Bethlehem	13
O Little Town of Bethlehem	15
Rise Now, the Kingdom Is at Hand	16
Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel (Reprise)	18
The Lord Be With You	21
Scene Two	
The First Noel	23
Bright and Glorious Is the Sky	24
From Heaven Above	26
Angels We Have Heard on High	29
Scene Three	
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	32
Lullaby, Jesus Child	33
As Lately We Watched	35
Oh, Come, Little Children	38
Away in a Manger	39
What Can I Give Him?	41
Silent Night, Holy Night!	42
Joy to the World	43
Go, Tell It on the Mountain	44
<i>Reproducible congregational pages</i>	45

Approximate performance time: 40 minutes

Notes

In selecting a musical for Church use, a director might well ask, “Can I justify spending the required amount of time on this much music of one composer and one musical style?”

The King of Love answers this question by using only “tried and true” Advent and Christmas hymns and carols which never need be forgotten or go “out of fashion.” Some are standard favorites which parents often complain are no longer learned by every child, since many public schools cannot use them. Others are less familiar but of proven quality and endurance.

Many Christmas musicals are presented during the Advent season. *The King of Love* does not skip Advent. In fact, the entire first scene is devoted to prophesy and anticipation.

Although the main characters of the story are fictitious, the play includes a great deal of **Bible** - especially prophesies and their interpretation regarding the mission of Christ.

Congregational participation is strong in this work. The carols people know and love are not limited to the players, but draw everyone present into the drama. (See pages 45-48, which may be duplicated for congregational use.)

In nearly every musical number the melody appears prominently in a rather sparse accompaniment. Thus, children who need it will be helped in maintaining the tune, but the accompaniment will not cover their voices. It is suggested that organ be used for the congregational stanzas, and piano to accompany the choir.

Production Notes

This is a very adaptable play. Here are just two possible ways in which it may be cast:

1. In a small congregation - or, for that matter, in any congregation - the play might become an inter-generational experience. All adult roles may be played by adults, including the shepherds and angel choruses, if desired. Adults may also be part of the travelers chorus, entering with their children in very convincing family groups, as well as coming forward with them later to the manger. This could greatly reduce the musical responsibilities of the children. Some of the carols might then be done in four-part harmony (from a hymnal or carol book) by the adults, while the children sing them in unison.

2. In the original production in a large congregation with multiple choirs, all children from second grade and up were part of the travelers group in the first scene. Then, after quick costume changes, the boys choir (grades 5, 6 and 7) became the shepherds and the corresponding girls group the angels for scene two. (We could have had both boys and girls in both these groups, but this division simplified rehearsal requirements for the two groups.) All children from *age* three through *grade* four came forward during “O Come, Little Children.” All leading roles and solos were taken by upper elementary and junior high choristers. Preschoolers and first graders sat (in costume)

with their parents in the congregation until their entrance. In that way, they didn't have to miss the first part of the play, and the problem of their supervision was easily solved. Choir parents supervised other children when they were not in the scene.

Other possibilities will suit the needs and scheduling potential of different parishes. Shepherds and angels may number anywhere from three each to a multitude. Your own situation will suggest the best "adaptation" for you.

We have found that every family is willing to take responsibility for its own costumes **if** instructions are very clear and given **far** ahead of time. (Make sure any instructions really *reach* the parents and don't end up in the washing machine with the blue jeans!) A costume committee can be helpful in coordinating and giving help where needed.

As to scenery - it is assumed that the play is done in the sanctuary of the Church and must be adapted to whatever immovable furnishings are part of the chancel. A table is the only prop needed for the first scene. For the second, the shepherds (some holding staves) gazing up at the sky will give the congregation's imagination all it needs. If the angel soloist can use the pulpit or another elevated position, it will greatly enhance the scene. If the other angels can also be elevated behind the shepherds, so much the better. If there is a rear balcony, the angels might be positioned there. The third scene may use the manger alone, or with a simple shed framed around it. Sightlines must be carefully planned here so that the entering worshipers do not block the view of the manger. Of course, there are many possibilities for elaborate scenery if artists and craftspersons are available!

Above all, make the most of your own opportunities and your own imagination!

- Betty Lou and Ronald A. Nelson

Cast

Seth and Miriam - Brother and sister, children of

Obadiah and Sarah - Innkeepers in Bethlehem

Ezra - a Shepherd, brother of Sarah

Caleb and Rebecca - Ezra's children

Jacob and Hanna - a Samaritan couple

Ruth - their young daughter

Mary and Joseph

Shepherds

Angels

Travelers

Children



As the song ends, Sarah and Obadiah enter, with looks of impatience.

Obadiah: Seth! Miriam! There's no time for singing today! We must hurry to prepare for the travelers.

Sarah: Your father has just heard that they are already approaching Bethlehem! There is no time to lose!

Seth: Why are all these people coming to Bethlehem anyway? I'd rather go to Jerusalem if I were a traveler.

Miriam: Why, Seth — haven't you heard of the decree of the emperor Caesar Augustus?

Seth: But I thought he was the *Roman* emperor. What does he have to do with *our* people?

Obadiah: Alas, my son, we are under Roman rule now and must be registered to pay taxes to Caesar.

Sarah: That is why so many people are coming to Bethlehem. Each family must register in their own city.

Miriam: (*Importantly*) Bethlehem is our city, so we don't have to travel.

Seth: (*Puzzled*) Will the Romans always rule our people?

Obadiah: Who knows?

Sarah: Many people believe that the Savior promised in our scriptures will deliver us from the rule of Rome.

Seth: The Savior? Is that the one who is called Messiah?

Sarah: Yes. God promised our ancestors that the Messiah would be sent to be a blessing to all the world.

Miriam: He's also called Christ, and the Lord. He's the one we are singing about, Seth. (*Sings:*)

Come, Let Us Work (Reprise)

19

Miriam:

Pro-phets have told the won - drous

22 All four:

sto - ry of the Christ, the King of glo - ry. Come, let us

25

work and sing to - day, for the Lord is on his way.

Seth: (*Thoughtfully*) I wonder if he really is on the way. (*Stops working to think*)

Obadiah: Come, Come! We have no time to wonder — or to sing! We can make more money in this one day than we've made all year.

Sarah: Oh, let the children sing, Obadiah. Our work will be easier if they do.

Miriam: I know another song about the Messiah. (*Sings first stanza of the following song. Sarah sings the second; Miriam, Seth and Sarah the third. Congregation may join in the final stanza. This may vary, of course, with each production.*)

Hark, the Glad Sound!

Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751

Chesterfield
attr. Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820
composite setting

29 **Miriam:**

1. Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior prom-ised