

The Lost Boy

Young Jesus in the Temple

A children's musical for
unison/two-part voices and piano

*Commissioned by Helen Kemp for
The Kemp Endowment for Church Music Symposium,
Westminster Choir College of Rider University, October 2009*

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Foreword

After the birth narratives, the only glimpse we have of Jesus as a boy is found in the gospel of Luke. Mary and Joseph lose track of their twelve year old son for three long days, and when they finally find him, he is sitting in his “father’s house”—demonstrating with his questions a precocious understanding of God that confounds even the teachers of the law. While the story makes an obvious statement about the divine wisdom of a young Messiah, we also find in it a reassuringly human message: even parents chosen by God can lose a child; even a perfect child can give his parents anxiety. The passage is sure to comfort anyone who has ever been a parent, a child, or even those who have misplaced Jesus for a while.

The musical can be produced with a minimum of costumes, props, and scenery. At under 25 minutes, it is short enough to fit into a worship service, but solid enough to stand alone. We offer stage directions in the score, and production notes in the pages that follow—but we hope you’ll feel free to adapt any of our suggestions to your particular situation.

Tom Long and Allen Pote

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Characters

Narrator—can be divided into two or more parts, or read by an adult

Mary

Joseph

Elizabeth

Zechariah

Merchant

Gambler

Beggar

Rich Person

Banqueters 1, 2, 3, and 4—can be played by two actors

Crowd 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5—can be played by three actors

Chorus—visitors to Jerusalem, sellers in the marketplace, crowd at hippodrome, banqueters, crowd in the temple

Production Notes

Approximate running time: 22 minutes

Costumes

Cast members are dressed in Biblical costumes. Each costume can be as simple as a large t-shirt dyed in an earth tone with a cloth shoulder sash and headband. The look is completed with khaki shorts and natural colored sandals, or—in even simpler productions—blue jeans and black shoes. When cast members assume the roles of the Rich Person and the Banqueters they can add scarves, costume jewelry and gold cardboard armbands to the costumes they are already wearing. The cast member who becomes the beggar can slip on a ragged burlap poncho at the appropriate moment.

Set

When the musical opens, the stage is set with a number of boxes and ladders to provide levels. The boxes are tall enough to be used as seats and sturdy enough to stand on.

There is a small playing area downstage and to the left of the main stage and another small area downstage and to the right. If necessary, use small platforms to create these areas. These provide separate spaces where Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Zechariah can view the city of Jerusalem, the hippodrome, and the banquet before actually entering the scene. In fact, during the banquet scene in the original production, two short white columns were placed on the edge of the stage right platform to represent a gate. The beggar and four searchers stayed on this platform while the rest of the cast stayed on the main stage—“inside the gate.”

Although additional scenery is not necessary, more ambitious productions may want to use four-sided *periaktoi*—painted columns that can be turned to reveal a different scene on each side. These can be constructed with large refrigerator cartons or with 4' by 8' sheets of Styrofoam glued together with a cardboard base. The following scenes are then painted on different sides: 1) Jerusalem street, 2) dark night, 3) hippodrome, and 4) temple interior. As the actors move from place to place, the columns are rotated to reveal the appropriate side.

Props

Things to “sell” in market scene—baskets of fruit, cloth, pots, dishes, jewelry, etc.

Gold and silver goblets for the banqueters to hold. (*Optional*)

Staging and Movement

The only songs that suggest full choreography are ***This Day*** and portions of ***Looking for Jesus***. In both cases, the majority of the cast can contribute simple steps and hand motions upstage, while a smaller group dances with more elaborate movements downstage.

This Day—lively movement suggestive of Israeli folk dancing
Searching for Jesus—

During the hippodrome section, when the cast turns to sing at measure 82, they should all focus to the far right behind the audience with leaning bodies and some pointing—as though they are watching the horses in the distance. As they sing, their focus slowly moves to center by measure 89 and to the far left by measure 93. At this point, the focus shifts slowly back to center by measure 97 and finishes at far right again at measure 102.

During the banquet section, a small group dances during measures 142 to 154, 171 to 191, and 207 to 214, while the rest of the banqueters make “toasting” movements with mimed or real goblets.

SCENE 1

(The entire cast enters down the aisles, as though they are pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.)

NARRATOR: Every year Jesus and his family traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival.

Slowly

Piano

But this year was special. Jesus had turned twelve—the age most Jewish boys began to study the scriptures more seriously. In a year or two, he would be accepted as a man in the synagogue.

5

When Mary and Joseph and Jesus arrived in the holy city—they found themselves in the middle of a joyful celebration.

9

6 Thousands of God's people
from all over the world had
gathered to remember the day
God rescued them from slavery
in Egypt.

This Day

Tom S. Long

Allen Pote

Lively (♩ = ca. 144)
Unison *mf*

The musical score is written for a Unison voice part and a Piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (13, 17, and 21). The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The first system (measures 13-16) includes the lyrics 'This day, we'. The second system (measures 17-20) includes 'cel-e-brate; this day, a ho-ly date. This day, we'. The third system (measures 21-24) includes 'will a-wait and sing our God is great!'. The piano part starts with a dynamic of *f* and a tempo marking 'slowly with gradual accelerando', which transitions to *mf* by measure 16. The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

13 This day, we

17 cel-e-brate; this day, a ho-ly date. This day, we

21 will a-wait and sing our God is great!

f slowly with gradual accelerando *mf*

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25 Part II (optional)

Part I

This day, we lift our voices; this day, no

This day, we lift our voices; this day, no

28

long - er slaves. This day, our land re - joic - es.

long - er slaves. This day, our land re - joic - es.

31 Unison

This day, our God has saved!

35

Pha-raoh would not bow to Mo-ses. Pha-raoh would not bend his knee, _

39

so our God sends down an an-gel, by his pow-er sets us free.

43

In the dark-est hour of slav-ry, death is pass-ing o-ver-

47

head, while our lov-ing God pro-TECTS us by the lamb and

51

by the bread. This day, we cel-e-brate;

55

this day, a ho-ly date. This day, we will a-wait and

59

sing our God is great! Sev-en days we

63

tell the sto-ry, sev-en days till our re-lease... Sev-en days we

67

all re-mem-ber, till we gath-er at the feast.

71

Lis-ten child, pre - pare an an - swer. Lis-ten be quick to say:

75

why this night is like no oth - er; why we cel - e-brate this day.

79

This day, we cel-e-brate; this day, a

83

ho - ly date. This day, we will a - wait and

86

sing our God is great!

89 Part II (optional)

Part I
Part II (optional)

This day, we lift our voic - es; this day, no
This day, we lift our voic - es; this day, no

92

long - er slaves. This day, our land re - joic - es.

long - er slaves. This day, our land re - joic - es.

95 Unison

This day, our God has saved!

(The cast form themselves into a column with the women in front and the men behind during the narration. They walk into the audience, up one aisle and down another—and then return to the stage.)

99

mf

104

gradually slowing