

CHRISTMAS IS FOREVER PRODUCTION NOTES

by Gary Rhodes and Claire Cloninger

THE THEME

The central theme of *Christmas is Forever* is that the love of Christmas was in the heart of God from the very beginning and it will be with us throughout eternity. Jesus is God's Son and his Incarnate Word. "In the beginning was the Word." (*John 1:1*) Jesus was with God from the beginning of time. A secondary theme is that Christmas is a time for families.

THE CAST

Granddad — an older male character who traditionally tells the Christmas story to the children in his family serves as the main narrator of the musical. Granddad's narrations are a conversation recounting the Creation and the Christmas story based on scripture, from Genesis, John and Luke. He should appear to be very familiar with these words and comfortable with their meanings, since his "telling" of the tale is an annual event.

Mother — a young woman who recounts her favorite family memories of Christmas.

Kelly — a young girl between 5 and 8 years of age.

Choir Members — The Adult and Children's Choir members are leading players in this production. Soloists, Duets, Trios, Quartets and various other vocal groupings add diversity to the music. You may choose to have all members of your choir dressed as different family members grouped in "extended families."

SONG-BY-SONG STAGING DIRECTIONS

NOTE: This musical is ideal for using multimedia and ideas are included throughout for presentation.

1. *Christmas Is Forever with His Love Is Alive and No Eye Had Seen*

Begin with lights down, Choir on risers. As first statement of intro ends (around m. 6) — Narrator begins. This whole song deals with creation from the beginning of time through to the prophets foretelling of the coming of Jesus. Visually — try to word paint with the narration and lyrics of the song: darkness, light, the stars, earth, land, water, trees, plants, animals, Adam and Eve — all are ideas to be included as they are being spoken or sung. Lights come up on the Choir around m. 26 in time for them to sing. Lights back down at m. 71 for narration until the

2nd ending at m. 88, and back up for the Choir entrance to the end. When the Narrator speaks of what the prophets foretold, there could be a black screen with white letters of the scriptures coming forth.

2. Come on Christmas! *includes* Christmas Is a Time for Families, Come on Christmas! *and* School Is Out, Time for Fun!

As this song begins, the Children's Choir immediately begins to enter. Spot Narrator and dim lights a little around m. 11 stage right. (Try to make sure children are not entering at this point in front of the Narrator). Narration ends around m. 26. Bring lights up on adult Choir slowly around m. 25 in time for their entrance. (Lights should be warm but not full.) This medley deals with families preparing for Christmas and on Christmas morning. Most families have pictures and/or videos of their children growing up around Christmas through the years. For some it's their yearly Christmas Cards. This song provides an opportunity to create a picture slideshow or video collage of these kinds of moments. Some can be funny, some can be precious memories—you might choose to focus on one family or on many families from your congregation. (Again, some word painting of the narration and lyrics is in order here) Lights come up to full at m. 38 with lights on the Children's Choir. At m. 70, lights come down a bit. Spot the Trio. This is the point in the medley where pictures/video should reflect children in their teens. Youth Choir could be used here or simply a youth or adult ensemble. The ensemble could be all girls or two girls and a guy. At m. 85 bring the lights back up on the Adults and by m. 92 on the Children's Choir. Lights remain full to the end.

3. The Night Before Christmas

Exit music is provided for the Children's Choir. As soon as the intro begins, children exit. Around m. 10, lights come up on Granddad (stage left) as he puts his arm around his granddaughter, Kelly. He guides her to their chairs as they begin to talk. (Again, as they are talking, try to make sure that children do not exit in front of them.) Lights come down very slowly from m. 10 through m. 20. At this point Granddad will be sitting in a chair and telling his granddaughter the Christmas Story. Lights up on their area of the platform. As Granddad finishes around m 62, lights fade on them—spot comes up on Solo #1 center stage and all other lights are dark. As this song progresses, there are two other Soloists, at times a Duet and at times a Trio—spot all of these. This song tells the story of what goes on just before Christ's birth. (If you have a talented artist in your church, you might have that person create an original backdrop that effectively represents what the Trio and the Choir are singing.) Bring lights on Choir up to medium by m. 91 for their first entrance. Slowly bring lights down to black at m. 116 and spot Trio. Slowly bring back up to medium on the Choir by m. 132 for their entrance until m. 151. Again slow fade to black and spot Trio to the end. Slow, smooth fade on Trio at m. 162.

4. Glory to God!

As the music begins, lights are dark. Bring lights up on Granddad in the chair with Kelly continuing the Christmas Story through m. 46. At this time, bring lights up to medium on the Worship Leader and Choir. This is a song that could be taught in advance so that the congregation can join in. (They will love singing this song with you!) Lights build gradually from m. 71 to full at m. 80. Stay full to the end. Lyrics should be projected for this song onto a screen or included in their bulletin. The birth of Jesus, complete with angels and a manger scene, could be created live for this song and the coming manger sequence.

5. It Came upon the Midnight Clear

This is also a congregational moment, so project the lyrics. Worship Leader and Choir lead out — lights can go down to medium/full on the manger scene as all worship together.

6. This Is Our Son *with* No Eye Had Seen

This song can be the most powerful moment in your presentation. Lights slowly dim to dark during the intro. Spot Mary, then Joseph, then both as they sing. Lights will come up a little on the Choir around m. 41. Build on m. 68 to full on Choir at m. 77. A scrim could be behind the manger scene — when lighted from the front will appear as a background curtain to the manger scene. When lights are taken off the front and you light up the section behind the scrim, it becomes transparent. Above and behind the manger should be a cross to be lit up at m. 77 to the end. This could also be done on the screens with scenes of the crucifixion of Jesus. Lights move to dim at m. 85 and remain that way.

7. Jesus, Savior, Friend

This song begins a cappella as the last note of the previous song cuts off. During this song of worship, scenes from the life and ministry of Jesus could be projected on the screens, ending back at the cross as the chorus “We will worship you forever...” is sung.

8. Light of Jesus, Shine Forever *includes* The First Noel, It Came upon the Midnight Clear, I Could Sing of Your Love Forever *and* O Come, Let Us Adore Him

As the a cappella song ends, it segues into the intro for the candle lighting medley. (Choir should be ready if using the track — you have one 8th note before you come in ☺. Don't worry, just sneak in.) Lights are dim on Choir. Spot child Soloist. As the music begins, ushers should begin lighting candles in the congregation. Choir begins to light candles also. Ideally, all candles will be lit by m. 37. Lights should be dark everywhere except for any projected lyrics for

congregational singing. The Worship Leader and Choir lead the congregation in singing “The First Noel.” the original chorus from “It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,” “I Could Sing of Your Love Forever” (Solo included), and “O Come Let Us Adore Him.” Choir should raise their candles together as they begin the final chorus into the modulation “I Will sing of Your Love...” then lower them for the singing of “O Come...” Everyone should extinguish their candles together as the medley ends.

A word of instruction on candles: When lighting, the person whose candle is already lit keeps their candle upright while the person who is lighting their candle leans their unlit candle in to light their own. When extinguishing your candles, first blow them out, then wet your finger tips to snuff out the rest — this will keep the amount of smoke to a minimum. (Instructions could be given to the congregation before the musical begins and/or print them in the bulletin.)

9. The Name Lives On

As the candle lighting medley ends, lights are dark as music begins to this song. Spot Soloist from the beginning. Lights up medium on Choir by m. 13. Build slowly from m. 35 to full at m. 52. Visually, this could include slides/video from earlier songs but culminates with the resurrection theme during the bridge into the final chorus from m. 49 to the end.

10. Finale *includes* Glory to God!, Christmas Is Forever, Lord Most High, Joy to the World! *and* Hallelujah Chorus

This song begins with a congregational reprise of the chorus from “Glory to God.” Lights are full, lyrics are projected. Worship Leader and Choir lead out. Choir continues with one chorus from the opener, “Christmas Is Forever.” Lights come down to dim on Choir with spot on Narrator at m. 52. Build lights to medium at m. 78 on the Choir. Lyrics will be projected for the remainder of the medley which includes “Lord Most High,” “Joy to the World” and “Hallelujah Chorus.” Lights move to full at m. 142 to the end.