

PLAYTIME
Assembly Shows

A VERY DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS

Script & songs by Matt Walker

A retelling of the nativity story set during the time of Covid

(For ages 9-15)

Run time: 30 minutes approx.

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NOVELS

The Beyond | Shark Bait | Memories Unspeakable

TALES OF NUMERA

The Prisoner

Welcome to *A Very Different Christmas*!

This musical play is written for kids aged 9-15, and is the perfect length for a school assembly. The songs are intended to be sung by the entire cast, but you can of course add your own solos if you wish. I have absolutely no problem with the chorus having the song words when they are, I assume, sat on benches.

You can hear the songs on my website:

www.walkerproductions.co.uk/playtime

Backing tracks are available to download from this secret page:

www.walkerproductions.co.uk/jeffrey

If you are lucky enough to have a pianist or live band, the sheet music for the piano accompaniment starts on page 38 with optional band parts on page 61.

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I am always delighted to hear whenever my work is performed, so please feel free to drop me an email at walkerproductions.co.uk@gmail.com or tweet @_mattwalker if you're going to put this on.

The next instalment in the *PLAYTIME* series will be the Assembly Show *Hansel & Gretel*, another musical play for ages 9-15. In this one the script is one long rhyming poem! *Hansel & Gretel* will be released winter 2021/2022.

Finally, if you enjoy this publication please leave a review on Amazon. As a small publisher reviews are really important to us.

I have tried to write lots of 'main' parts and speaking parts, to give as many kids as possible their spot in the limelight. Some scenes include generic speaking angels – you can divide these lines as you wish to ensure every child who wishes to speak can do so.

If you think a joke or line doesn't work, then feel free to cut it, I won't be offended. I do hope there will be *some* laughter, however, so it's important you tell the children to pause their lines whenever the audience starts laughing.

As far as auditions go, the main character to get right is parody Elvis. He (or she) doesn't sing, but needs to at least attempt Elvis's southern drawl.

The three kings need to be pretty confident. They break the fourth wall (address the audience directly) and pull off power poses at the end of each chorus of their song. The 'Frankincense' king has the only solo line in the show: "Where is this cow's udder?" (don't ask), but s/he can just say it if needed.

There's an imp. Yes, an imp. Wearing red face paint and everything. S/he has a croaky, whiny, voice, like a witch.

Then there's King Herod. He needs to sound very strange indeed. Let the kids have some fun with it in their auditions. He could have a very strange accent, or his voice could be very low, or very slow, or just something *weird* (yes, I am thinking a male version of Moira from Schitt's Creek).

Can anyone do a Scottish accent? Someone in the chorus attempts to say "*Oh, I'm from Edinburgh. It's a lovely wee city*" in a Scottish accent. It doesn't need to be a *good* accent, because the script adapts to suit. If you happen to be a Scottish school, you could always change Edinburgh to Peterborough or Middlesbrough and attempt an English accent.

The above are what I'd describe as the 'problem' parts that require some real acting ability, and should be cast first.

One of the characters is Santa. Yes, I know. Weird. Elvis and Santa should **both remain out of sight** until their scenes, so as not to spoil the surprise. Instead of them sitting on the benches in full view, have them enter from the back of the hall or something. I'm sure you can figure it out.

CAST LIST (in order of appearance)

St Peter - Chief angel. Stern. Sensible.

Narrator - Dressed smartly, perhaps in a suit? You might want to put them behind a podium with the script on, like a newsreader.

Angels - Divide amongst the cast as you wish. All in white.

Gabriel - An arrogant angel who thinks he runs the place.

Imp - Red face paint required! A nasty creature with a croaky, whiny voice. Dressed all in black, but then does also dress in a long robe with a hood.

Joseph - Traditional dress.

Mary - Traditional dress, with a head covering.

Frankincense King – Traditional dress, holding a bottle with a little talc in it.

Gold King – Traditional dress, holding a gold bar (the gold bar does not need to be real).

Myrrh King – Traditional dress, holding a box. The box presumably contains myrrh, not that anyone knows what that is.

Elvis – Uh huh huh. Can you get an Elvis costume? And maybe even a wig?

Two Inn Keepers – Traditional dress.

Dr Solomon Man – Maybe have him in a white lab coat, why not.

Dr Solomon Wife – Maybe have her in a white lab coat, why not.

Guard 1 & Guard 2 – Dressed as soldiers, with spears or sticks or swords.

King Herod – Dressed as a king, with a plastic sword at his hip. Very strange voice.

Santa Claus – Yes, you read that right. Be really swell if you could get a kids' Santa costume.

PROPS & COSTUMES

I've gone into a little detail about suggested costumes on the previous page. You can get a kids' Santa outfit fairly cheaply online. Parody Elvis would look best in his iconic white jumpsuit, which you can find pretty easily online, but it's a bit more expensive. Try and get one that includes a wig.

The others require more standard fancy dress. King Herod and his two guards as Roman soldiers. The three Kings as, well, three kings. The angels all in white (don't worry about them having wings) – perhaps St Peter and Gabriel can look less generic *somehow*. The imp in black, although he does also need a hooded robe. This could convincingly be an adult's coat. The narrator in a suit. The two Dr Solomons in lab coats. And everyone else as traditional shepherds.

When it comes to props, Herod needs a sword at his hip. It doesn't need to be in a scabbard. His two guards need weapons too – swords or sticks or spears. If at all possible, try and get a reindeer teddy for Santa. It doesn't need to be full size, okay? If you can't get one, don't worry. But instead you'll need Santa to have a large black sack bulging with something soft. Fill it with newspaper, maybe.

The kings need a prop for gold, a fancy looking box which we will all assume is filled with myrrh (whatever that is), and a fancy looking bottle with a little talc or baby powder in it.

And then of course you need a little doll baby! It'd be quite funny if he comes out fully clothed, I guess (make sure someone shouts, "He's fully clothed!" at the opportune moment in the script). You need to be able to move the doll's arms. Mary needs to hold the doll under her dress for the *entire show*. Well, until he makes his appearance.

You need one sheep and one cow. They could be cardboard cut outs, but you need to be able to drape a wool blanket over the sheep. It doesn't need to *be* wool, of course. It just needs to look like it could be. The cow doesn't have an udder. That's more important than it should be, okay?

The narrator stands at the front corner of the stage for the whole show. If you want them at a podium, you need a podium.

Then you need some wood blocks to impersonate door knocking, and one chair in the stable, and I think that's it.

A VERY DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS

(AFTER NATIVITY IS INTRODUCED BY A TEACHER OR CHILD, ST PETER COMES TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE AND CALLS:)

ST PETER: Meeting! Hurry! Keep in your bubbles!

(ANGELS HURRY ACROSS THE STAGE, KEEPING SOCIALLY DISTANT. A COUPLE DO A COMICAL DANCE TO AVOID EACH OTHER. ANOTHER PAIR FIST BUMP IN GREETING.

WHILST THIS IS HAPPENING THE NARRATOR TAKES THEIR PLACE AT THE FRONT CORNER OF THE STAGE.)

NARRATOR: *(TO THE AUDIENCE)* This is heaven. If you're wondering why they're wearing bed sheets, it's because they're angels. If you're wondering why they haven't got wings... don't ask, okay? It wasn't in the budget.

They're having a meeting, because even up here there's a pandemic going on.

ANGEL: *(GOES UP TO NARRATOR)* Sssh! Don't mention that word!

NARRATOR: What word?

ANGEL: The P- word! P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C *(SPELL IT OUT)*

NARRATOR: Oh, *that* word. *(TO AUDIENCE)* Pandemic. P-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. I'm impressed s/he could spell it, though.

ST PETER: We can *all* spell it. We *have* been to school, you know.

CUE SONG – P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C

(score p38)

Divide whole cast into two parts. Don't worry, we're not about to do harmony – just a canon, which means 'staggered entries'. So in the last chorus one part comes in a bar later than the other part. Listen to the example track on my website to see what I mean. It's not too complicated. If the kids find it too difficult, have them sing the chorus together as normal.

*Unless you are too posh to handle it, I'd like the **here** of "Even **here**, up in heaven" to be two syllables. So **he-yur** instead of **heeeere**. Yes, a diphthong. It just works better rhythmically.*

P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C.

P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C.

Even here, up in heaven we still need to take precautions.

The Christmas mission's underway!

Remember

Wash your hands and cover your face.

Don't forget to leave enough space.

Even here, up in heaven we still need to take precautions.

The Christmas mission's underway!

Remember

P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C.

(In canon) **P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C.**

P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C.

I see!

Even here, up in heaven we still need to take precautions.

Stay alert, control the virus.

What does that mean? Someone tell us.

The Christmas mission's underway!

Remember

P.A.N.D.E.M.I

P.A.N.D.E.M.I

P.A.N.D.E.M.I.C!

ST PETER: It couldn't be worse timing. The baby's about to be born – the *special baby* – and now this!

NARRATOR: St Peter had some bad news to tell the other angels.

ST PETER: *(TO ANGELS)* I have some bad news! Are you listening, everyone? Wait... where's Gabriel? It concerns him.

(THE ANGELS SHRUG AND MURMUR AMONGST THEMSELVES, THEN THE BACK DOOR OR SIDE DOOR TO THE HALL OPENS AND GABRIEL APPEARS AT THE THRESHOLD.)

GABRIEL: *(A LITTLE ARROGANT)* I'm here! Nobody worry, I'm here.

ST PETER: You're late.

GABRIEL: Okay, keep your halo on. I was drying my hair. *(SWISHES HIS LOCKS AND WALKS ONTO THE STAGE)* What did I miss?

ST PETER: *(WALKS TO FRONT CENTRE STAGE AND THROWS HIS ARMS OUT DRAMATICALLY)* God's got Covid!

(SHOCKED GASPS ETC.)

ANGEL: Did he forget *Hands, Face, Space*?

ST PETER: Settle down now, angels, settle down. I know it's a shock. But it does mean there will have to be some changes to the baby Jesus mission.

GABRIEL: Don't panic. Whatever the Lord Almighty needs, I'll do it. I'm here.

ST PETER: I'm afraid you won't be doing anything, Gabriel. We all need to self isolate.

GABRIEL: *(SHOCKED)* But... but the baby...

ST PETER: I know.

GABRIEL: The little baby Jesus... I have to go and tell Mary that she's pregnant with the Messiah...

ST PETER: I'm afraid someone else will have to do it.

(ALL OTHER ANGELS VOLUNTEER. "I WILL" ETC.)

ST PETER: *None of us can go.* As I said, we all need to self isolate.

ANGEL: Then who?

ST PETER: Well... *(HE LOOKS SLOWLY AT HIS FEET AND POINTS AT THE GROUND. THE ANGELS REALISE WHAT HE MEANS AND GASP)*

GABRIEL: Oh no! Not one from *below!*

ST PETER: I'm afraid so.

ANGEL: But sir... the message is *delicate*.

ANGEL 2: Yes – Mary's pregnant by the holy spirit...

GABRIEL: I had written a *speech*. And it was *wonderful*, and touching. And full of pathos.

ST PETER: Pathos.

GABRIEL: Yes.

ST PETER: *(SIGHS)* Well I'm sorry, Gabriel. We don't have a choice.

GABRIEL: But an *imp*?

ST PETER: Yes. He's already been summoned. Oh, here he is now.

(IMP ENTERS, GROWLING AND SNARLING. OTHERS WITHDRAW FROM HIM)

CUE SONG – IMP SONG

(score p40)

*The imp has lines (“I’m nasty! That’s a fact.” Etc.) These should be spoken **after** each chord.*

Look at the imp
Standing here, standing there, not a care!
Oh, beware, this imp is all bad, this mad...
Imply pimply imp!

Look at his teeth and his eyes,
Red as blood, I despise!
This simple imp’ll ruin it all, this cruel...
Imply pimply imp!

(Imp)
“I’m nasty!”
“That’s a fact.”
“But I’m all you got.”
“How about that?”

(All)
Look at his face and his smile,
A disgrace, he is vile!
How can we allow this to be?
Allow him to go and steal the show?
The message is ours and ours alone, not some...
Imply pimply wimply dimply imp!

IMP: *(HE HAS A WHINY, CROAKY VOICE)* A-ha! Well, well, well, you bunch of overgrown fireflies. Looks like you need my help.

NARRATOR: St Peter told the imp what he needed to do, that he had to deliver a message – he was *very specific* about the message. And then the imp was sent to Earth, to just outside Bethlehem, where a young woman, Mary, and a young man, Joseph, were about to get the fright of their lives.

(ENTER MARY AND JOSEPH. MARY HAS DOLL UNDER DRESS,
AND SHE HOLDS HIM IN PLACE FOR ALL HER SCENES)

CUE SONG – LOCKDOWN LIFE

(score p44)

*Again, split the cast into two parts. Everyone sings the chorus and then the verse. And then there's a clichéd key change, and part 1 sings the chorus **whilst** part 2 sings the verse underneath. It works because the chord progression doesn't change, alright?*

(Chorus – full cast)

**Lockdown life. Living as a lockdown wife.
Getting through this lockdown strife!
Learning how to cope, not to give up hope.**

(Verse – full cast)

**Always on the road,
Get to Bethlehem we're told.
Essential travel is allowed.**

(Chorus – part 1)

**Lockdown life. Living as a lockdown wife.
Getting through this lockdown strife!
Learning how to cope, not to give up hope.**

(Chorus – part 2)

**Always on the road,
Get to Bethlehem we're told.
Essential travel is allowed.**

(Part 2)

Learning how to cope,

(Full cast)

Not to give up hope.

JOSEPH: What was King Herod *thinking*? Getting us to walk all the way to Bethlehem during Covid!

MARY: The census is “essential travel”, apparently. But then what's the point of a lockdown?

NARRATOR: King Herod is a bit of a wally. Even though the pandemic is going on, he's decided to make everyone travel to their birth cities to be registered, just so he knows who is living in his country.

JOSEPH: We just need to make sure we stay alert so we can control the virus.

(REST OF THE CAST FROWN AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER, CONFUSED)

NARRATOR: *(PAUSE, RAISE EYEBROWS AT AUDIENCE)* Nope. Didn't make sense back then, either.

(IMP ENTERS, HUNCHED OVER, DRESSED IN A ROBE AND HOOD SO WE CAN'T SEE HIS FACE)

JOSEPH: We better ask this old lady if we're going the right way. *(TO IMP)* Greetings old lady! *(HE APPROACHES IMP, BUT STAYS A LITTLE WAY BACK AND TURNS TO MARY)* Is this two metres?

MARY: I think so...

JOSEPH: *(TO IMP)* Would you be so kind as to tell us if this is the way to Bethlehem? Old lady?

IMP: I am *not* an old lady.

JOSEPH: Oh, I do beg your pardon...

MARY: Forgive him, sir... He has bad eye sight.

JOSEPH: Yes, and it's dark.

MARY: And he's not very clever.

IMP: Not very clever? That's lucky for you, isn't it. *(IMP TAKES OFF HOOD AND TURNS TO AUDIENCE)* It's me, if you hadn't guessed!

MARY: Oh golly gosh, my dear chap. Your face is as red as a tomato.

JOSEPH: Are you sunburnt? Do you require some aloe vera?

IMP: Don't be so rude! I'm an *imp*!

NARRATOR: The imp had to tell them the special news.

IMP: I have a message from God. (*TO MARY*) You're going to have a baby. (*HE TURNS TO JOSEPH*) And if you haven't worked it out yet, it's not yours.

MARY: (*GASPS*) That's impossible...

IMP: It's the holy spirit's, or something. I don't really get it.

JOSEPH: Oh, Mary... I thought you were just getting fat!

NARRATOR: The imp had one more thing to tell them: that they should call the baby boy Jesus.

IMP: One last thing. You must call the baby... Jeffrey.

MARY & JOSPEH: *Jeffrey?*

IMP: Yes. Jeffrey.

MARY: That's very... Anglicised.

IMP: (*SHRUGS*) Wasn't my idea.

(IMP EXITS, FOLLOWED BY MARY AND JOSEPH)

NARRATOR: Now that the special news had been delivered, the angels had to send the three kings to where Jesus - I mean Jeffrey – was to be born.

(ENTER ST PETER, GABRIEL AND ANGELS)

ST PETER: Right, it's time to send the three wise men to Bethlehem...

ANGEL 1: Are they wise men or kings?

ANGEL 2: I heard they were magi. (*PRONOUNCED MAJ-EYE*)

GABRIEL: Magi?

ANGEL 2: Yes. Like... *wizards*, or something.

ST PETER: Well whatever they are, we've got to lead them to the baby so they can give him presents.

ANGEL 3: What are their names, these kings?

ST PETER: No one remembers their names. Now, we need the shooting star to lead them to Bethlehem. It's going to get their attention with a special... *twinkle*, and they're going to follow it to the baby.

ANGEL 4: *(PUTS UP HAND)* There's a problem with the star.

ST PETER: A problem?

GABRIEL: What now?

ANGEL 4: The star is in tier 4. It can't go anywhere.

(ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER, INCREDULOUS)

GABRIEL: What do you mean "it can't go anywhere"? *It's a star.*

ANGEL 4: Well, it's in tier 4. And you're not allowed to travel in tier 4, are you.

ST PETER: *(PAUSE)* Actually yes, that does make sense.

(EVERYONE NODS IN AGREEMENT, SIGHING)

GABRIEL: Then what are we going to do? Those three wise wizard kings need to pay their respects to the little baby when he's born.

ST PETER: Hmmm. We're going to have to find another star.

(ALL EXIT)

NARRATOR: Meanwhile back on Earth, the three aforementioned kings were about to have problems of their own.

(ENTER THE THREE KINGS. THEY BREAK THE 4TH WALL, WAVING AND SAYING HELLO TO THE AUDIENCE. ONE SAYS, "Hi Mom".)

KING F: What a lovely bunch we've got this morning.

KING M: Yes. Glad to see they've all showered. (TO AUDIENCE) Are you having a good time?

KING G: (IF GOOD REACTION, SAY:) Oh good! It's because you got out of work to see this, isn't it. (IF THE AUDIENCE IS A LITTLE QUIET, SAY:) Oh dear, doesn't sound like it! Smile, you got out of work to see this.

KING M: Do you know what I think they'd like to see?

KING F: Not your Boris Johnson impression, please.

KING M: No! Well they would, but no – I mean *our song*.

KING F: Our song? I thought we were saving it for the baby.

KING M: Oh, we can do a chorus, can't we? I mean, the baby's going to end up with *quite a lot* of songs sung about him, so I don't think he'll mind.

KING F: Well that's true. (TO AUDIENCE) Would you like to hear it?

KING G: (IF AUDIENCE IS STILL QUIET, SAY:) Oh dear. We better do it to wake you all up. (IF AUDIENCE ARE MORE RECEPTIVE, SAY:) Great! Music!

CUE SONG – THE KINGS’ SONG

(score p48)

At the very end, the Kings alone say their respective “Gold!”, “Frankincense and”, “Myrrh.” They each hold up their gift as they do this, King G on the right, King F in the middle and King M on the left. Then, in perfect time with the final chord, they all strike power poses together. You (or they) can invent their own, but I suggest the following: King F in the middle holds his bottle up to the sky with both hands, like Rafiki lifting Simba. King G angles to his right, left hand on hip, right hand holding the gold outstretched. King M angles to his left, dropping to one knee and holding the myrrh box out with both hands like a begging bowl. This should be quick, slick and in time. Have fun with it!

(Full cast)

**We three kings are known for our generosity.
Bearing gifts galore from city to city.
We are known for our strange gifts
That we give to kids in cribs.
Bearing lots of presents.
Showing up the parents.
Strange thing to occur.**

(King G)

“Gold!”

(King F)

“Frankincense and”

(King M)

“Myrrh.”

(Notice that King F says, “Frankincense and”. This is important)

KING M: *(THERE IS A PINGING SOUND)* Oh hang on... *(GETS MOBILE PHONE OUT OF POCKET)* Oh no! I’ve been pinged!

KING G: *What?*

KING M: I’ve been in close contact with someone who’s tested positive and now I need to self-isolate!

KING F: I told you she looked dodgy.

KING G: So you can't come with us to see the new baby?

KING M: Doesn't look like it, does it?

KING G: Oh, that's bad luck, mate.

KING M: Wait! You won't do our song without me, will you?

(KING F & KING G EXCHANGE GLANCES)

KING G: Well, it's our only chance, though, isn't it.

KING F: Yeah, we can't really do it for anyone else, can we?

KING M: So you're still going to sing it? Without my myrrh?

KING G: I mean no disrespect, but *it's* a baby. What does a baby want with myrrh? Actually, what *is* myrrh?

(ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER CONFUSED)

KING M: I actually don't know either. I don't think anyone knows.

KING F: Well there you go then.

KING M: But the song won't *work* without my myrrh. That's the point.

KING F: I think you're overestimating the importance of your myrrh.

KING M: *(STARTING TO ARGUE)* You're bringing frankincense!

KING F: Babies like to smell nice, just like everyone else! You don't even *know* what you're bringing.

KING G: He's not bringing anything, he's isolating.

(KING G & KING F LAUGH TOGETHER. KING M FROWNS)

KING M: Fine. Laugh. But you two aren't going anywhere either because you don't know where the baby's going to be born. Ha! Very wise you are.

(KING M EXITS)

KING F: *(TO KING G)* He's got us there. It's all very well waiting for a sign, Melchior.

NARRATOR: Ah, his name is *Melchior*. That rings a bell, doesn't it?

KING G: The Lord will send us a sign, I'm telling you.

NARRATOR: In fact, the Lord had sent a star. But not the star He'd originally intended.

(ENTER PARODY ELVIS)

ELVIS: *Uh-huh-huh.*

KING G: *Who are you?*

ELVIS: They call me The King.

KING F: You're a king? The king of what?

ELVIS: The King of Rock 'n Roll.

KING F: Where's that?

KING G: We're kings too... we think. We're trying to find a baby. Who is also a King.

ELVIS: Wow, there are a lot of kings round here. Well now. A little less conversation, a little more action, please. Come with me. I'll show you the way, *uh-huh-huh.*

(ELVIS LEADS THE TWO KINGS OFF STAGE)

NARRATOR: And so The King led the kings to find the king. Meanwhile, Mary and Joseph had reached Bethlehem and were looking for somewhere to stay.

(MARY ENTERS [DOLL UNDER HER DRESS], FOLLOWED BY JOSEPH, WHO IS PANTING)

MARY: Are you alright, Joseph?

JOSEPH: I'm fine, Mary. I'm just out of breath from the walking.

MARY: We're here! I just need to find somewhere to have Jeffrey.

NARRATOR: They came to an inn, and they knocked on the door.

(SOMEONE IN THE CHORUS HITS WOOD BLOCKS TOGETHER IN TIME WITH MARY'S 'AIR KNOCKING')

INN KEEP: Can I help you?

MARY: I'm going to have a baby called Jeffrey and he's the Lord's son!

INN KEEP: *(PAUSE)* Well I haven't heard that one before. But I'm afraid we're self-isolating. If you come back in... *(LOOKS AT WATCH, WHICH MIGHT BE NON-EXISTENT)* ...about nine days we might have room.

NARRATOR: So they left the first inn and continued walking, until they came to a nice-looking Air BnB.

(SOMEONE IN THE CHORUS HITS WOOD BLOCKS TOGETHER IN TIME WITH MARY'S 'AIR KNOCKING')

INN KEEP2: *(IS WEARING A FLOWERY LANYARD, AND PERHAPS HAS A BROAD LOCAL ACCENT)* You alright?

MARY: I'm going to have a baby called Jeffrey and he's the Lord's son!

INN KEEP2: Jeffrey? That's an odd name for round here.

JOSEPH: An imp named him.

MARY: Do you have any room?

INN KEEP2: We're in tier 3 I'm afraid, so we can't mix households. *(SUSPICIOUSLY:)* Are you both one household?