

**MIDWINTER**  
**An Advent Play**

**Written by Ruthie Buescher**

*Featuring scripture (NKJV) and song*

Cast:

Narrator One / Angel

Narrator Two / Elizabeth / Anna

Narrator Three / Mary

Narrator Four / Zacharias / Simeon

Narrator Five / John / Herod

Narrator Six / Joseph

*Note about the cast: Originally, this play was performed with an all-female cast. Whether male or female, the actors move fluidly in and out of their narrator and character roles. To make this possible, we eliminated all costumes and props except the two babies, which were represented by simple cloth bundles.*

Setting:

As simple as possible, with room for movement. Space for musicians to set up in full view.

Scripture:

John 1:1-18

Luke 1:5-80

Isaiah 9:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

Isaiah 11:1-5

Luke 2:1-40

Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew 2:1-23

Excerpts from Lamentations 1

Isaiah 66:12-14

Isaiah 53:3-5

Songs:

Of the Father's Love Begotten  
O Savior of Our Fallen Race  
The People Who Walked in Darkness (instrumental)  
For Unto Us the Child is Born  
Mary's Song  
Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord  
O Come, O Come Emmanuel  
Hark, the Herald Angels Sing  
Moonlight Sonata (instrumental)  
Lamb of God  
Excerpt from Beethoven 7 (instrumental)  
Be Near Me Lord  
Man of Sorrows (instrumental)  
O Sacred Head Now Wounded (instrumental)

*Note about the music: Despite the diversity of this music list, all songs were arranged to convey a simple, elevated, somewhat folksy feel. Our trio of musicians included a guitarist/classical guitarist, pianist/percussionist, and violinist. The selections were chosen for an all-female cast, so some of the songs may need to be adjusted for a mixed gender cast.*

*Additional notes: I am including notes on the original staging, but it should be noted that as a devised piece of theater, the script is malleable and should be tailored to the abilities/desires of each cast. We used movement throughout, especially during the "Triumph of Begots," to help illuminate the text, and we used the style of heightened realism--meaning that the movements were often very stylized, while the dialogue and delivery was always natural. There were also some elements of dance and sign language, which could be expanded with a cast that specializes in these areas.*

**First Movement (John 1:1-18)**  
**A DANCE**

**SONG - NARRATOR SIX: "Of the Father's Love Begotten"**

*NARRATOR SIX enters alone and stands center stage.*

*As he sings the final verse, NARRATORS ONE, TWO, THREE, and JOHN enter.  
At the conclusion of his song, NARRATOR SIX exits.*

NARRATOR THREE: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

NARRATOR TWO: In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

NARRATOR ONE: There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

*JOHN, who is standing behind NARRATOR ONE, appears.  
While she speaks, NARRATOR ONE molds JOHN into position.*

*He remains frozen throughout the ensuing dialogue.*

NARRATOR ONE: This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

NARRATOR THREE: He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

NARRATOR TWO: He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

NARRATOR ONE: But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born,

NARRATOR TWO and THREE: not of blood,

NARRATOR ONE: nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,

NARRATOR TWO and THREE: but of God.

NARRATOR ONE: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,

NARRATOR TWO: and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

NARRATOR THREE: John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying,

*JOHN animates as he speaks, then becomes frozen again.*

JOHN: "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

*NARRATORS ONE, TWO, and THREE move together during these last lines, becoming a single unit.*

NARRATOR ONE: And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

NARRATOR TWO: For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time.

NARRATOR ONE: The only begotten Son

NARRATOR TWO: Who is in the bosom of the Father

NARRATOR THREE: He has declared Him.

**SONG - JOHN: "O Savior of Our Fallen Race"**

*As JOHN sings, NARRATORS ONE, TWO, and THREE slowly peel off and exit one by one.*

**Second Movement (Luke 1:5-80)**  
**ANNUNCIATION**

*ALL enter, walking quickly to symbolize crowd movement. During the narration, ZACHARIUS and then ELIZABETH freeze when their names are spoken.*

NARRATOR THREE: There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

NARRATOR SIX: But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

*ZACHARIUS moves downstage right. The others move to stage left. The ANGEL appears.*

NARRATOR THREE: Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him,

ANGEL: "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

NARRATOR SIX: And Zacharias said to the angel,

ZACHARIAS: "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

NARRATOR SIX: And the angel answered and said to him,

ANGEL: "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

*Movement indicating the silencing of ZACHARIAS.*

*ZACHARIUS and ELIZABETH move center stage as the narration continues.*

NARRATOR SIX: And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

NARRATOR THREE: Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying,

ELIZABETH: "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

*ZACHARIUS, ELIZABETH and NARRATOR FIVE exit.*

NARRATOR SIX: Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her,

ANGEL: "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

NARRATOR SIX: But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her,

ANGEL: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

NARRATOR SIX: Then Mary said to the angel,

MARY: "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

NARRATOR SIX: And the angel answered and said to her,

ANGEL: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

NARRATOR SIX: Then Mary said,

MARY: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word."

NARRATOR SIX: And the angel departed from her.

**Interlude (Isaiah 9:1-7)**  
**THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED IN DARKNESS**

**SONG - "The People Who Walked in Darkness" (Instrumental)**

*MARY moves center. ZACHARIUS and ELIZABETH return and stand on either side of her.  
ANGEL and NARRATOR SIX are upstage. Music plays under the lines.*

NARRATOR TWO: Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed,  
As when at first He lightly esteemed  
The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,  
And afterward more heavily oppressed her,  
By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,  
In Galilee of the Gentiles.

NARRATOR THREE: The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,  
Upon them a light has shined.

NARRATOR FOUR: You have multiplied the nation  
And increased its joy;  
They rejoice before You  
According to the joy of harvest,  
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

NARRATOR TWO: For You have broken the yoke of his burden  
And the staff of his shoulder,  
The rod of his oppressor,  
As in the day of Midian.  
For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle,  
And garments rolled in blood,  
Will be used for burning and fuel of fire.

**SONG - (music change): "For Unto Us A Child is Born" (instrumental)**

NARRATOR THREE: For unto us a Child is born,

Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

NARRATOR FOUR: Of the increase of His government and peace  
There will be no end,  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
From that time forward, even forever.  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

**SONG - ANGEL: Adaptation of "For Unto Us the Child is Born"**

*ANGEL moves in and out of the others as s/he sings.  
Sign language (ASL) used during the song.*

*At the conclusion of the song, NARRATORS FOUR and SIX, and ANGEL exit.*

NARRATOR FIVE: Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said,

ELIZABETH: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

NARRATOR FIVE: And Mary said:

MARY: "My soul magnifies the Lord,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is His name.  
And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with His arm;  
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,

And exalted the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich He has sent away empty.  
He has helped His servant Israel,  
In remembrance of His mercy,  
As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his seed forever."

**SONG - MARY: "Mary's Song"**

*MARY interacts with ELIZABETH while she sings. NARRATOR FIVE sits and watches.*

NARRATOR FIVE: And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

*MARY and ELIZABETH embrace. MARY exits.*

*NARRATOR SIX returns to the stage. As he speaks, ZACHARIUS brings the baby and hands him to ELIZABETH.*

NARRATOR SIX: Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

NARRATOR FIVE: So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said,

ELIZABETH: "No; he shall be called John."

NARRATOR SIX: But they said to her,

NARRATOR FIVE AND SIX: "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name."

NARRATOR FIVE: So they made signs to his father--what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying,

ZACHARIAS: (Holds up a tablet that reads: "His name is John.")

NARRATOR SIX: So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying,

NARRATOR FIVE AND SIX: "What kind of child will this be?"

NARRATOR FIVE: And the hand of the Lord was with him.

NARRATOR SIX: Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

ZACHARIAS: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,  
For He has visited and redeemed His people,  
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
In the house of His servant David,  
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,  
Who have been since the world began,  
That we should be saved from our enemies  
And from the hand of all who hate us,  
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers  
And to remember His holy covenant,  
The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:  
To grant us that we,  
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
Might serve Him without fear,  
In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.  
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;  
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,  
To give knowledge of salvation to His people  
By the remission of their sins,  
Through the tender mercy of our God,  
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;  
To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

NARRATOR FIVE: So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

**SONG - ZACHARIUS (optional: JOHN): "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord"**

*ZACHARIUS begins the song, singing the first two lines alone. The full cast joins in. With high energy, they move into the audience, take baskets filled with flowers and pass them out to the audience while continuing to sing. Joyful, playful, and celebratory.  
At the conclusion of the song, MARY and JOSEPH are alone onstage.*

**Third Movement (Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 11:1-5)**  
**A JUST MAN**

*ANGEL appears as MARY speaks.*

MARY: Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying,

ANGEL: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

*ANGEL exits.*

MARY: So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

JOSEPH: There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,  
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.  
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,  
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit of counsel and might,  
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.  
His delight is in the fear of the Lord,  
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,  
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;  
But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,  
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.

MARY: Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

*JOSEPH and MARY make contact as music begins. MARY exits.*

**SONG - JOSEPH and JOHN: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"**

*JOSEPH begins the song. JOHN enters with harmony on second verse.*