

OVERVIEW

A Storybook Christmas is a theme-based, complete Christmas concert. It has been designed to include every student in the school, while dividing the work load equally among the staff through the component system.

Each staff member should become familiar with the story and the component that they wish their class to perform. Each component is a unit in itself and can be rehearsed as a separate classroom unit, thus greatly reducing the time needed to prepare this production. Each component includes a description of characters, props, costumes, and stage directions. Those staff members who do not have a regular class of students, such as the Librarian or the Teacher Assistants, might wish to be the Director and/or be responsible for rehearsing the main characters or the choir.

The component feature allows teachers to add or delete items to suit their particular school size. To include more classrooms, creative teachers may wish to make up or adapt other acts to fit the theme. Other possibilities might include any adaptation of a popular fairytale. For example: "Jack and the Beanstalk" might make one last trip up the beanstalk to get gifts and gold for the needy at Christmas; "Hansel and Gretel" could go to the forest to find a Christmas tree, get lost, meet the witch, and end up coming home with gingerbread from the witch's house for Christmas; "Little Red Riding Hood" could take a Christmas basket to Gramma, encounter the wolf, convince him to turn over a new leaf and have some Christmas spirit, and culminate in everyone gathered around the Christmas tree at Gramma's house. Versions of Christmas stories such as "The Gift of the Magi", "The Nutcracker", and "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" could be acted, pantomimed, or done in shadow play. Almost any concert item can be inserted by writing a few introductory lines for Grandpa and Kim, and inserting a song for the choir which provides time for each act to get on and off stage. If your school does not wish to follow the theme, each individual component may be used in a variety concert by excluding Grandpa and Kim, and having a Master of Ceremonies.

THE STORY

Grandpa is babysitting his granddaughter, Kim, while her Mom and Dad are away, doing some last minute Christmas shopping. The weather turns nasty and Kim's parents have to stop at a restaurant along the way to wait out the storm. Kim is worried about her parent's safety and so to pass the time, Grandpa tells Kim Christmas stories, some true and some he has made up. The stories include a variety of literary genre such as a biography, fantasy, fiction, sequel, historical fiction, and poetry. The concert culminates with a Bible story - The Nativity - and the safe, happy arrival home of Kim's parents, which to her is the best Christmas gift of all.

In memory of our dear colleague, Vivian Bertrand, whose dedication, devotion, and love of Christmas concerts made these books a reality.

COMPONENTS

	<u>SUGGESTED</u> <u>GRADE LEVEL</u>
#1 Countdown 'Til Concert.....	K - 2
#2 Santa And Me.....	K - 2
#3 The Christmas Party.....	4 - 6
#4 Charlotte's Web - The Second Generation.....	3 - 5
#5 Silver Collection.....	6 - 8
#6 Peter Pan's Christmas Adventure.....	5 - 8
#7 'Twas The Night Before Christmas - Rap.....	5 - 8
#8 Guinness Book Of World Records.....	2 - 4
#9 A Christmas Carol.....	4 - 8
#10 The Nativity.....	K - 3

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Director	Lighting Director
Stage Hands	Sound Director
Curtain Puller(s)	Choir Director

THE MAIN CAST

The main characters in the program are Grandpa and his granddaughter, Kim. Grandpa should be performed by an older student or you may wish to cast a staff member or parent volunteer in this part. Kim, a young child of six to eight years of age, will need to be a smaller student but one who can memorize the part. Costuming is attire appropriate to the parts. At the end of the program, Kim's parents return home dressed in outdoor attire and carrying bags and parcels. Their parts can be played by older students. Props for the main characters include a rug, a swivel easy chair, an end table, and a telephone.

CHOIR

The choir selections are inserted after each component. Some selections are suggested but any seasonal or appropriate songs may be used. The words and music for the suggested selections can be found in "The Reader's Digest Merry Christmas Songbook" (Reader's Digest Association Inc., Pleasantville, New York/ Montreal c1981) or in most books containing common Christmas songs. The choir could be one classroom or could be selected from the entire student body. The choir selections immediately follow each component and provide time for each class to get on and off stage.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Throughout the concert, Grandpa and Kim perform in front of the curtain or below stage level. Grandpa sits in a swivel chair facing the audience, with Kim on the floor on a rug at his feet. Each time Grandpa starts to tell a story, the curtain opens and he turns his chair to face the stage. Kim stretches out on her tummy on the rug, chin in hands, facing the stage. The script of Grandpa and Kim plus the singing of the choir provides enough time for one class to leave the stage and for the next class to get on stage and get ready. Two aisles and two side stage doors allow for a smooth arrival and departure of classes by having them enter by one aisle and leave by the other. Stage hands for the entire performance are a definite asset in setting and clearing the stage, and allowing for a smooth transition from one story to the next. The stage hands will find it much easier to do their jobs efficiently if you prepare a list of props for each performance.

A complete rehearsal is recommended to time the items so that each class can be ready to enter on time and so that Grandpa and Kim, the lighting and sound directors, stage hands, and curtain puller(s) can practice their cues. This also provides an opportunity for students to practice using the microphones.

The choir is best placed below stage level or to the right of the stage so that while they are singing, the stage can be set for the next performance. If Grandpa, Kim and the choir are below stage level, flood lights will be required for each of them when they perform. The lighting director will need to put these lights on and off at the appropriate times. For approximately \$75 - \$100, a set of four lights can be rented from a theatrical company. Each light can be controlled from a switch box. Position one light on the choir, one on the main characters below stage, and two on the main stage. The house lights will be dimmed throughout the performance unless you are using Component #5, the Silver Collection.

Stage decoration is not necessary for the concert but if you wish to decorate, it should be as neutral as possible, considering the variety of settings for the stories. We covered the back of the stage with a replica of a large book open at the table of contents page on which all the stories were listed.

We have found that most students cannot project their voices well enough to be heard. Much of the continuity and humour of the concert is lost to the audience by not hearing the crucial lines. We therefore recommend the use of microphones - 2 on stage, 1 for the main characters, and 1 for the choir. Any music required for the class performances is best handled by the sound director and run through the P.A. system. Rehearsing for the concert is much more efficient if the whole school practices at a designated time. This allows assisting teachers, aides, and parents to pull the main characters and the choir from class for their practice.

A STORYBOOK CHRISTMAS - INTRODUCTION

Grandpa and Kim are the main characters throughout the concert. The scene is set below the stage and to the side. The scene contains a swivel easy chair, a rug on the floor, and an end table on which is placed a telephone. Grandpa is seated in the easy chair wearing a gray hair piece, shirt, trousers with suspenders, and slippers. Kim is seated on the floor at Grandpa's feet wearing pigtails, a shirt, bib-overalls, and running shoes.

Master of Ceremonies: "We take you now to Grandpa's house where Grandpa is babysitting his granddaughter, Kim, while her parents are away doing some last minute Christmas shopping."

(HOUSE LIGHTS DIM. SPOTLIGHT ON GRANDPA AND KIM.)

(Kim gets up and goes to center front. With hands shading her eyes, she peers out into the audience as though she were looking out a window.)

Kim: "Oh, Grandpa. When will Mommy and Daddy be home from doing their last minute Christmas shopping? They've been gone all day and they said they'd be back before supper time. It's already five o'clock."

Grandpa: "Oh, Kim. Hold your horses! They'll be along soon. You know that shopping always takes longer than parents think it will."

Kim: "Maybe something happened to them. Oh, Grandpa, I'm worried. It's started to snow, you know."

Grandpa: "Now! Now! Don't get your shirt tail in a knot, little girl! I'm sure everything is fine. No use to worry, you know. Come sit here beside me. I feel a story coming on."

Kim: *(Goes over and sits on the rug at Grandpa's feet.)*
"Oh, yes! Grandpa, tell me a story! You tell the 'bestest' stories!"

Grandpa: "You know, Kim, I read a book once about a teacher who was so worried about the Christmas concert that she got herself into a real tizzy. Her name was Mrs. McCallum and she was some "Gloomy Gus", stewing away over what her Grade one class would perform. What she didn't know was that while she was so busy fretting, her problem was really being solved. It happened like this....."

Class: "Mrs. McCallum, you look so solemn. What is bothering you?"

Teacher #1: "It's time to prepare - Christmas Concert - beware! I'm worried, why aren't you?"

(Sign bearer walks across the stage with the sign "15 day 'til concert". Meanwhile, Teacher #1 hands wig and pointer to the next teacher who goes to stand by the chart. Teacher #1 joins class sitting on the floor. Teacher #2 puts on the wig, looks solemn and dejected, and points to the three steps on the chart. This procedure is followed throughout the skit for each new teacher.)

Class: "Mrs. McCallum, you look so solemn. What is bothering you?"

Teacher #2: "I'm having a fit, can't think of a skit! I'm worried, why aren't you?"

(Sign bearer - 14 days 'til concert. New teacher.)

Class: "Mrs. McCallum, you look so solemn. What is bothering you?"

Teacher #3: "Don't know of a thing we'd be able to sing. I'm worried, why aren't you?"

(Sign bearer - 13 days 'til concert. New teacher.)

Class: "Mrs. McCallum, you look so solemn. What is bothering you?"

Teacher #4: "Stunts on gym mats? We can't do that! I've done that before, oh phoo!"

(Sign bearer - 12 days 'til concert. New teacher.)

Class: "Mrs. McCallum, you look so solemn. What is bothering you?"

Choir:

COUNTDOWN 'TIL CONCERT
(To the tune of "Frosty The Snowman")

Mrs. McCallum
Was so sad, as you can see
For she didn't know
How to do the show
And the concert soon would be.

Mrs. McCallum
Was feeling very blue
It was getting late
Close to the date
Oh my, what would she do?

The Grade One class became concerned
As the days they dwindled down
'Cause now her usual smiling face
Had turned into a frown.

So to the rescue
Came the Grade One class - Yahoo!
They made a rhyme
One day at a time
'Fore they knew it, they were through.

Hippety hoo-ray, hippety hoo-ray
Look at teacher smile
Hippety hoo-ray, hippety hoo-ray
She pulled it off in style!

(SPOTLIGHT OFF CHOIR. SPOTLIGHT ON GRANDPA AND KIM.)

Critter #8:
"I like to eat shortbread
Pudding and candy
So we made some fudge
Just Santa and me."

(Santa brings in Critter #9 who carries a songbook.)

Critter #9:
"I know you like music
Oh Christmas tree, oh Christmas tree
(Critter sings off key, Santa joins in)
So we sang a little tune
Just Santa and me."

(Santa brings in Critter #10 who carries a large stocking with his/her name on it.)

Critter #10:
"We found some stockings
To hang on the chimney
We'll line them all up
Just Santa and me."

(Santa brings in Critter #11 who holds mistletoe over his/her head.)

Critter #11:
"Stand under the mistletoe
Then just wait and see
You'll get a surprise
From Santa and me."

(Santa brings in Critter #12 who wears a nightgown and carries a book.)

Critter #12:
"The Night Before Christmas
Is a great bedtime story
We read it three times
Just Santa and me."

(Santa brings in Critter #13 who carries odd things for stuffing a turkey, such as a sock, slinky, cutlery, etc.)

COMPONENT 3 - THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES:

<i>Santa Claus</i>	-Santa suit
<i>Boy</i>	-casual attire
<i>Girl</i>	-casual attire
<i>Lady</i>	-dress and purse
<i>Mary</i>	-frilly, little girl type dress
<i>Mother</i>	-dress, coat, purse and shopping bag
<i>Father</i>	-pants, coat, and hat
<i>Cowboy Doll</i>	-cowboy hat, pants, shirt, and hobby horse
<i>Mama Doll</i>	-dress, hat, gloves, shoes
<i>Teddy Bear</i>	-suit made of fun fur
<i>Tin Soldier</i>	-cardboard box covered in tin foil for body with a big key in the back, two kleenex boxes covered with tin foil for feet, gray jogging pants, toy rifle
<i>Jack-In-The-Box</i>	-cardboard box painted red with bottom cut out so he/she can walk

If you have a larger class and need to include more characters, you might have more than one cowboy doll, teddy bear, or tin soldier and have them speak the part in unison.

PROPS:

An arm chair; shelf of toys including a drum, a toy piano, small table, and tea set.

STAGE SET:

It is Christmas Eve in the toy section of a department store. At stage right is a counter or shelf full of toys. At stage left is an easy chair, a brightly decorated Christmas tree, and a sign reading, "Don't forget to say hello to Santa". As the curtain opens, Santa is seated in the chair at left stage talking to the Boy and Girl.

Girl: "You will be sure not to miss our house, Santa?"

Boy: "And please don't forget what we want, Santa!"

Santa Claus: "Now, now, don't you worry. Everything will be taken care of."

COMPONENT 9 - A CHRISTMAS CAROL

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES:

<i>Scrooge</i>	-top hat, suit jacket, dress pants, long coat
<i>Marley</i>	-top hat, suit jacket, dress pants, long coat, draped in chains
<i>Bob Cratchit</i>	-top hat, suit jacket, dress pants, long coat
<i>Mrs. Cratchit</i>	-long dress to the ankles
<i>Tiny Tim</i>	-ordinary pants and shirt, suspenders, crutches
<i>Nephew Fred</i>	-top hat, suit jacket, dress pants, long coat
<i>Collectors (for the poor)</i>	-(any number) coats and scarves
<i>Alice (Scrooge's former wife)</i>	-long dress, wedding ring
<i>Young Scrooge</i>	-suit jacket, dress pants
<i>Spirit Of Christmas Past</i>	-black robe, black hat
<i>Spirit Of Christmas Present</i>	-black robe, pillows for padding
<i>Spirit Of Christmas Yet To Come</i>	-black robe
<i>Party Folk</i>	-(2 or 3 couples) fancy dress
<i>Tombstone</i>	-cardboard tombstone large enough to hide student, with Scrooge's name on it
<i>Narrator</i>	

PROPS AND PRODUCTIONS SUGGESTIONS:

We used an arm chair for Scrooge at his counting house and Cratchit used a stool and table on which was an ink well, quill pen, and large ledger. We had a coat and hat rack off to the side of the armchair on the right side of the stage. When Scrooge left the stage, he left by one door and returned by another, to the same armchair which served as the setting for his home. We alternated the scenes with the Spirits from one side of the stage to the other, and used a spotlight to draw attention to each scene rather than do a lot of scene changes. This allowed the play to move along smoothly without any awkward pauses. The Spirits and Marley entered through a curtained door at center back stage. The Spirits lead Scrooge back and forth across the stage from scene to scene. You will need the sound of bells as each Spirit enters and some dance music for the party scenes. You will need some papers for Scrooge to be studying, a coal bucket and a lump of coal, a collection box for the collectors, a skinny turkey for the Cratchit's (a rubber chicken worked well), and a plump turkey (could be made from a paper bag) for Scrooge to deliver.