

OVERVIEW

Christmas Castaways is a theme-based, complete Christmas concert. It has been designed to include every student in grades K through 8, 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 the 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 acts from other countries. These can be inserted by writing a few introductory lines for the main characters 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 of ways by including the main characters and having a Master of Ceremonies.

THE STORY

Just prior to the Christmas holiday, a cruise ship went down at sea and a life boat of survivors has landed on a deserted tropical island. As it turns out, they are all from different countries. Christmas is drawing near and the individuals are, each in their own way, fearing that they will miss the festivities of the season with their respective families, culture, and customs. While they await rescue, they discuss the traditions of Christmas in their own country. These traditions are performed, in a sometimes serious and sometimes humorous light, on stage by the various classes. Of course, the common thread of the Nativity is found in all cultures that celebrate Christmas, and so the concert culminates with the Nativity scene and the rescue of the “castaways” - the best Christmas gift of all.

CHOIR

The choir selections are inserted at the end of each component. Some selections are suggested but any appropriate songs may be used. The choir could be one classroom or could be selected from the entire student body. The choir selections immediately follow each component thereby providing time for each class to get on and off stage.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Throughout the concert, the main characters are seated on tiered gym mats in front of the curtain or below stage, facing the audience. The script of the main characters and 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 are a definite asset in setting and clearing the stage, and allowing for a smooth transition from one scene to the next. The stage hands will find it much easier to do their job efficiently if you prepare a list of props for each class' performance.

A complete rehearsal is recommended to time the items so that each class can be ready to enter on time, and so that the main characters, 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 up for a next performance. If the main characters 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 turn 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 #8, the Silver Collection.

Stage decoration is not necessary for the concert, but if you wish to, it should be as neutral as possible considering the variety of settings for the scenes. We used a starry night sky for a background and found that it enhanced the lighting and visibility of the performers, and reduced the amount of shadows.

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 and 1 or 2 for the main characters. 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.

COMPONENTS

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL

#1	Sweden - Christmas in Sweden.....	K - 1
#2	Ukraine - Christmas Eve in the Ukraine.....	4 - 6
#3	Denmark - Christmas in Denmark.....	2 - 3
#4	Germany - Dance of the Toys.....	1 - 3
#5	Hawaii - Blue Hawaii.....	4 - 8
#6	Mexico - Christmas in Mexico.....	4 - 6
#7	England - Your Home is Your Castle.....	6 - 8
#8	Silver Collection.....	5 - 8
#9	Ireland - Ireland is in "Jeopardy".....	3 - 5
#10	Scotland - Santy Where's Your Troosers.....	2 - 4
#11	The Nativity.....	K - 1

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Director
Stage Hands
Curtain Puller(s)

Lighting Director
Sound Director
Choir Director

THE MAIN CAST

The main characters in the program are: Gretchen (a German lady), Lena (a Ukrainian lady), Ole (a Swedish man), Torbin (a Danish man), Juanita (a Mexican lady), Colleen (an Irish lady), Angus (a Scottish man), Loni (a Hawaiian man), and Elizabeth (an English lady). These parts are best played by older students who are able to memorize the lines and project their voices well. Accents for the various nationalities may be used if you wish. The characters are dressed in appropriate "vacation" attire - colourful shirts or dresses, sunglasses, sandals, beach hats, etc. Props for the main characters include two or three palm trees (We made these from large cardboard fabric tubes slipped over our highjump standards with green paper palm leaves attached to the top.), gym mats covered with brown blankets to represent a desert island, surrounded by blue blankets to represent the ocean. Sound effects include the sound of the surf on the beach and the sound of helicopter. These sounds can be obtained from most electronic keyboards.

All Children: “For the sixth course at Christmas the family is served...”

Perogies: “Plump perogies.”

All Children: “For the seventh course at Christmas the family is served...”

Poppy Seed Bread: “Poppy seed bread.”

All Children: “For the eighth course at Christmas the family is served...”

Salmon: “Baked stuffed salmon.”

All Children: “For the ninth course at Christmas the family is served...”

Mushrooms: “Mushrooms in sauce.”

All Children: “For the tenth course at Christmas the family is served...”

Oysters: “Fried oysters.”

All Children: “For the eleventh course at Christmas the family is served...”

Sauerkraut & Peas: “Sauerkraut and peas.”

All Children: “For the twelfth course at Christmas the family is served...”

Fruit: “Stewed fruit.”

All Children: “And a heaping bowl of kucha.”

(Fork and knife enter and chase the food off the stage.)

Leader: “After the Christmas Eve meal is complete, family members attend church services. Many go to Midnight Mass in their communities. After midnight the fast is over. It is a time for visiting, dancing, and eating to celebrate the birth of Christ.”

(Children dance to Ukrainian music as the curtain closes.)