

Sing the Songs of Christmas

by Aileen Fisher

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Characters

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
PEASANT
TWO WOODCARVERS
APPRENTICE WOODCARVER
FRANCIS OF ASSISI
THREE SHEPHERDS
JEANNETTE
ISABELLA
CHILDREN
MARTIN LUTHER
CATHERINE LUTHER
LUTHER'S SONS
LUTHER'S DAUGHTER
WAITS, roving singers
THREE INDIAN BRAVES
ISAAC WATTS
FATHER MOHR
FRANZ GRUBER
PHILLIPS BROOKS
LEWIS REDNER
CHORUS, boys and girls

SETTING: *The stage is decorated gaily for Christmas. There is a reading stand at one side.*

AT RISE: *The CHORUS stands upstage. MASTER OF CEREMONIES comes in briskly, carrying a script, and goes to reading stand.*

M.C. (To audience): Merry Christmas!
(To CHORUS) Merry Christmas!

BOY IN CHORUS: In France, it's *Joyeux Noël.*

GIRL IN CHORUS: In China, it's *Tin Hao Nian.*

BOY: In Italy, it's *Bono Natale.*

GIRL: In Germany, it's *Froeliche Weinachten.*

BOY: In Sweden, it's *God Jul.*

GIRL: In Mexico, it's *Felices Pascuas.*

M.C.: But wherever you are, however you say it, it means the same thing: Merry Christmas!

ALL: Merry Christmas! (CHORUS begins to march around, singing the first two stanzas of "Deck the Hall." As they march they throw sprigs of fir or small red paper bells around the stage. At the end of the second stanza, M.C. stops them.)

M.C.: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I'm afraid you're starting at the wrong place. "Deck the Hall" shouldn't come at the beginning of the program. You'll be getting everybody all mixed up. (All CHORUS members except one GIRL go back to their places.)

GIRL: But it's such a merry song, and we were just talking about a Merry Christmas! (She dances a comic jig as she sings.) "Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la-la."

M.C.: Merry, yes, but we have to have some order here, not just a jumble of carols. (Thumbs through script) "Deck the Hall" doesn't come until page ten.

GIRL (Dancing again; merrily): Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la-la.

M.C. (Back at stand, ignoring GIRL):

Ladies and gentlemen, a great deal of obscurity surrounds the origins of many of our favorite Christmas carols, but we are going to do our best to shed some light on them. (GIRL begins to dance jig again. M.C. leads her back to her place in CHORUS, then returns to stand.) People have been singing Christmas carols for hundreds and hundreds of years. Let's go back to 1223 A.D., more than seven hundred years ago. It is the Christmas season in Assisi, a town in central Italy. (PEASANT enters with box and some hay, looks around curiously, puts down box, and shrugs. 1ST WOODCARVER enters, carrying wooden figures of animals, and looks around.)

1ST WOODCARVER: Is this the place?

PEASANT (Shrugging): What place do you mean?

1ST WOODCARVER: I was told to come to the edge of town near a certain olive tree.

PEASANT (Indicating imaginary tree): Here's an olive tree, that's certain. What have you there?

1ST WOODCARVER: An ox, an ass and three sheep, carved of wood and painted according to instructions.

PEASANT: You, too, had instructions?

1ST WOODCARVER (Nodding): From Brother Francis. (2ND WOODCARVER comes in briskly, carrying wooden figures.)

2ND WOODCARVER: Good morrow to you. Where is Brother Francis?

1ST WOODCARVER: Who can say?

2ND WOODCARVER: I can say I'd like to know the meaning of all this — hay, a wooden box, animals of wood. And my carved figures.

PEASANT: Figures of what?

2ND WOODCARVER: A middle-aged man, a young mother, and a child. At first I hesitated to carve the child. "Such a child as the infant Jesus might have been," that's what Brother Francis instructed me. How could I carve such a child? How would a stern Judge who fills us with fear and awe look as a child, I wondered. Ah, it was as if Brother Francis read my thoughts.

1ST WOODCARVER: How's that?

2ND WOODCARVER: "Not a Judge!" he told me. "People have the wrong impression of Jesus. I must show them they are mistaken. He is not a dreaded Judge. He is a friendly, loving child. Can you carve him so?" (APPRENTICE WOODCARVER, carrying other figures, enters, and stands listening.) So I carved a smiling child, like my own son in the cradle! So! (Holds up figure. Sees APPRENTICE WOODCARVER) Who are you?

APPRENTICE WOODCARVER: I am an apprentice woodcarver. My master is ill. He was unable to bring the three kings to the appointed place, so I brought them for him. (Puts kings down, takes angel from pocket) And the angels. (Somewhat embarrassed) Brother Francis asked me, a mere apprentice, if I could carve angels. Are they all right?

1ST WOODCARVER (Appraisingly): A little small, I should say.

2ND WOODCARVER: On the contrary, not small enough.

PEASANT: Here comes Brother Francis. He will know what is large enough

and small enough! (FRANCIS OF ASSISI enters.)

FRANCIS (Cheerfully): So you are all here, brothers. Ah! I see you have brought what I asked. (Bends over box) The manger is just as I wanted it — not too fine or fancy. (Puts in some hay and begins to set up creche) Here is the manger in Bethlehem, the city of David, where Joseph, who was of the house of David, went to be taxed. Here, brothers, are the humble, friendly beasts in the stable, giving of their warmth that winter night so long ago. (Places animals around the manger) 'This is the little donkey Mary rode from Nazareth, she being great with child. (Places Mary near the manger) "And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Reciting) And there were shepherds in the same district living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night." (To 1ST WOODCARVER) Your cloak will make an excellent field, brother, being of such a good earthy color. (Takes cloak, puts it at one side, places shepherds on it) "And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them . . ."

APPRENTICE (Holding out angel): Here is the angel, Brother Francis. Is it too small? Or too large, perhaps?

FRANCIS: Just right, my boy! (Places angel near shepherds) "And the glory of the Lord shone round about them. 'Behold,' the angel said, 'I bring you news of great joy, which shall be to all people. For today in

the town of David a Savior has been born to you. You shall find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger'."

PEASANT: Aye, a manger.

FRANCIS: "And suddenly, there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God . . ." Come, brothers, we must praise God. We must circle around the manger. Christmas is a time of joy, and a time for singing. Come, join hands, and sing on the holy eve of Christmas. Sing with joy! (They join hands and circle around the creche, singing "Angels We Have Heard on High.")

FRANCIS, PEASANT, WOODCARVERS (Singing):

Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.

CHORUS (Joining them; singing):

Gloria,
In excelsis Deo,
Gloria,
In excelsis Deo.

(FRANCIS, PEASANT and WOODCARVERS sing second verse as they move creche to back of stage, where it will be out of sight behind CHORUS. CHORUS parts, standing on both sides of stage, temporarily.)

FRANCIS, PEASANT, WOODCARVERS (Singing):

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be,
Which inspire your heav'nly song?

CHORUS (Joining; singing):

Gloria,
In excelsis Deo,

Gloria,
In excelsis Deo.

(PEASANT, WOODCARVERS and FRANCIS exit up center as CHORUS closes ranks at center, concealing creche.)

M.C.: That was the beginning of Christmas caroling, more than seven hundred years ago — singing for joy around the first creche of St. Francis of Assisi! Soon, Christmas songs sprang up among the people. In Italy, peasants and shepherds came down out of the hills at Christmas time, to sing and play their pipes in the village. Townsfolk would place a wooden spoon outside their door as a signal. (BOY from CHORUS puts out a wooden spoon. THREE SHEPHERDS, frightened, come running in.)

1ST SHEPHERD: What a woman!

2ND SHEPHERD: Chasing us down the road like that with a stick!

3RD SHEPHERD: Wake her baby, indeed! With our singing? As if her baby wouldn't be lulled to sleep by our singing!

1ST SHEPHERD: Aye. (Sees spoon) Look, a spoon. (Looks back toward wings) Is it safe? Has she gone? (Picks up spoon, uses it for baton) Come, lads, let's give them a song of rejoicing. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel."

THREE SHEPHERDS (Singing):

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel,
Shall come to Thee, O Israel.
(They sing more stanzas of song, if desired, then exit, taking spoon.)

M.C.: In France, too, songs were being sung to celebrate the infant's birthday. Noel, they called it. Joyeux Noel! (Several CHILDREN carrying flashlight torches hurry across the stage.) What was that? Lights? Torches? Yes, of course. We are still in France in the Middle Ages. We are in Provence, in southeastern France, at Christmas time. There must be a creche for Christmas Eve in Provence. (CHORUS parts, so creche shows.)

GIRL IN CHORUS (Calling): Bring a torch, Jeannette, Isabella! Bring a torch, to the cradle run! (JEANNETTE and ISABELLA, followed by other CHILDREN, come running in with lights. They stand near creche to light it and sing first verse of "Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella." They remain as GIRL IN CHORUS sings second verse.)

Wrong it is, when the child is sleeping,

Wrong it is to shout so loud.

(Others fall back, chagrined.)

Now you there, and you others,
be quiet!

For at a sound our Jesus wakens.

JEANNETTE: Hush!

ISABELLA: Hush!

CHORUS (Singing):

See how fast He slumbers,

Hush! Hush!

See how fast He sleeps.

(JEANNETTE, ISABELLA and CHILDREN tiptoe out with their torches.

GIRL IN CHORUS comes forward and stands looking at creche with curiosity mixed with awe. She begins to sing "What Child Is This?" At conclusion

of song, GIRL exits behind CHORUS as CHORUS closes in front of creche.)

M.C.: Joy and rejoice — those are the words for Christmas, over and over again. Germans were the first to rejoice around a Christmas tree, as the Italians were the first to rejoice around a creche. It may be just legend, but a famous German pastor, Martin Luther, is credited with bringing home the first Christmas tree. He also wrote several Christmas songs. (CHORUS begins to hum, very softly, "Away in a Manger" as background.) It is a snowy Christmas Eve in the 1530s. Martin Luther is walking home through the woods, thinking of the comfort of home ahead, yet not unmindful of the beauty around him. He sees stars caught in the branches of the fir trees. He thinks of the star that shone down on a stable in Bethlehem on just such a sparkling night many years ago. Why, he wonders, can we not bring some of the light into a home on Christmas Eve? Eagerly, he cuts a small fir tree by the roadside and hurries home. (LUTHER comes in with fir tree and stand. CHORUS stops humming.)

LUTHER: Wife! Wife! My dear Catherine, see here!

CATHERINE (GIRL IN CHORUS, stepping forward): Sh, Martin. You will wake the children.

LUTHER: Wake the children! Yes, indeed, by all means, I will wake the children, so they may see, too.

CATHERINE: See what?

LUTHER: The glory of Christmas Eve! The light of the star! (He sets tree in stand.) Have you some small candles,

my dear Catherine, so we can bring the starry heavens right into the house?

CATHERINE: Candles for stars? Why, yes. I made some little candles from the last beeswax.

LUTHER: Let us tie them to the tree! (CATHERINE starts out for candles.) And one candle larger than the rest, even as the star of Bethlehem dominated the heavens that night. (She exits. He admires tree. She returns with a string of white lights. LUTHER and CATHERINE put the lights on the tree, with one larger light near the top.) Under the tree we must arrange the manger scene. Stars above to light the heavens, and Jesus below to light the world!

CATHERINE (Excited): How did you ever think of it?

LUTHER: Walking through the woods, meditating on the nativity. (They finish lights, then arrange manger scene. CHORUS parts so they can arrange it.) Now call the children, Catherine! (He continues to work on creche while CATHERINE exits and re-enters with SONS and DAUGHTER, who are very sleepy. They are awed by the lighted tree.)

1ST SON: Where did the shining tree come from?

DAUGHTER: What is it, Father?

2ND SON: It shines like stars in the night.

LUTHER: Do you hear, Catherine? Like stars in the night.

1ST SON (Looking at manger scene): I know. You have brought in the stars to shine above the manger.

DAUGHTER: A birthday tree.

1ST SON: A Christmas tree. (They join

hands and circle around tree, singing
"O Christmas Tree.")

LUTHER FAMILY (*Singing*):

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
With faithful leaves unchanging,
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
With faithful leaves unchanging;
Not only green in summer's heat,
But also winter's snow and sleet,
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
With faithful leaves unchanging.

(CHORUS may repeat, giving LUTHER family time to replace creche upstage and exit, taking tree.)

M.C.: Carols from Italy, carols from England, carols from France and Germany. (GIRL steps out from CHORUS.)

GIRL: What about America? Didn't we make up any carols of our own?
M.C.: Yes, but first we must go back to England.

GIRL: Back to England?

M.C.: We must go back to Elizabethan England, always remembering that England gave us most of our Christmas carols.

GIRL (*Dancing comic jig again*): "Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la-la."

M.C.: As a matter of fact, "Deck the Hall" is an old Welsh carol, full of the spirit of England under the first Queen Elizabeth. In England, as time went on, Christmas became more and more a great festival of merrymaking. The halls of the lords were decked with holly.

CHORUS (*Singing*):

Deck the hall with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la,
(GIRL dances comic jig on each "fa la.")

'Tis the season to be jolly,

Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Don we now our gay apparel,
Fa la la, la la la, la, la, la,
Troll the ancient Yuletide carol.
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

M.C.: Elizabethan England was gay with feasting and singing and games and wassailing at Christmas time. Masked actors called *mummers* presented pantomimes. Roving bands of singers called *waits* went about the streets singing Christmas carols, and hoping to be paid for their efforts. (A group of WAITS enter, gaily singing "Vassail Song." They turn toward audience.)

WAITS (*Singing*):

Here we come a wassailing
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a wand'ring,
So fair to be seen,
(*Refrain*) Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too,
And God bless you, and send you
A happy new year,
And God send you a happy new year.

(*Turning to CHORUS, holding out little purses*)

We have got a little purse
Of stretching leather skin;
We want a little money,
To line it well within:

(*Refrain*) Love and joy come to you . . . (*Etc.*)

(*As they sing refrain, WAITS pretend to gather coins from CHORUS.*)

Good master and good mistress,
As you sit by the fire,
Pray think of us poor children,
Who wander in the mire:

(*Refrain*) Love and joy come to you . . . (*Etc.*)

(*Singing refrain, WAITS slowly exit.*)

M.C.: Christmas in old England! The Yule log — roast goose — plum pudding — singers in the streets — holly and ivy!

GIRL: Now do we go to America? To jolly young America?

M.C.: Just a minute! In the early days Christmas was anything but jolly in America.

GIRL: Anything but jolly?

M.C.: The Puritans were opposed to such frivolous sport as singing carols. Early New England colonists even forbade the celebration of Christmas. In 1644, the Puritans declared December 25th to be a market day instead of a holiday, and forbade anyone to have plum pudding or mince pie. Later, they even fined anyone who stopped work or feasted on Christmas Day.

GIRLS: So we didn't have any carols in the early days? Or any holiday? Or any mince pie?

M.C.: That's right. But strangely enough, about that very time, the first American carol was born. Not in New England. In New France. The time is around 1640. Father Jean de Brebeuf, Jesuit missionary to the Huron Indians on the neck of land between Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario, is rehearsing a group of Indians for the celebration of Christmas just a few days off. He has composed a carol for them in their own language. But he has no organ. The Indians have only tom-toms and rattles. So Father Brebeuf used words that would fit a tom-tom accompaniment. Here is the English translation. (*Several members of the CHORUS begin to beat muted drums to*

the rhythm of "God Rest You Merry Gentlemen." A Boy who has slipped on an Indian headdress steps from CHORUS to chant words of the carol.

Boy:

'Twas in the moon of wintertime,
When all the birds had fled,
That mighty Gitchi Manitou
Sent angel choirs instead.
Before their light the stars grew dim
And hunters heard the hymn:

CHORUS (*Joining chant*):

Jesus, your King, is born;
Jesus is born,
In Excelsis Gloria!
(*Several INDIAN BRAVES with bow and arrows come in from wings. They kneel in reverence.*)

1ST INDIAN BRAVE:

In the lodge of broken bark
The tender babe was found;
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapped his beauty round.
And as the hunter braves drew nigh,
The angel song rang high:

CHORUS (*Joining chant*):

Jesus, your King is born;
Jesus is born,
In Excelsis Gloria! (*CHORUS repeats chorus as INDIANS exit.*)

M.C.: The first American Christmas carol! Few of us have ever heard it sung. The infant in a bark lodge instead of in a manger! Wrapped in a rabbit skin instead of swaddling clothes! Wandering hunters instead of shepherds hearing the angel choir! Christmas in the New World! (*Pauses*) As America was settled, of course, the Puritans were outvoted. Carols from the "old country" came over with the settlers, and Christmas became a

joyous occasion up and down the Atlantic seaboard. Meanwhile, the English produced another famous Christmas carol. It was written by the great English hymn writer of the eighteenth century, Isaac Watts. He was working on a book, telling the psalms of David in his own words, when his inspiration came. He was reading the 98th Psalm. (ISAAC WATTS enters with Bible, reads aloud.)

WATTS: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. For he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." (Looks up) Make a joyful noise, for he cometh! What a text for a song! A Christmas song of joy. (Sings) Joy to the world! The Lord is come —

CHORUS (Taking up carol, "Joy to the World"):

Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and heav'n and nature sing.

WATTS (Singing second stanza as solo):
Joy to the world! the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills
and plains,

Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

CHORUS (Singing third stanza, as WATTS exits):

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove —
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

M.C.: Carols from Italy, carols from France, carols from England and Germany! But we have to go to Austria for one of the most beloved carols of all. (GIRL steps out from CHORUS and starts to dance comic jig.)

GIRL: To Austria we go! Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la-la. (Others pull her back.)

M.C.: We go to the little town of Obendorf in the Austrian Alps. It is a sparkling cold night, just before Christmas, 1818. The mountains are covered with snow, the air is clear, almost brittle, the sky bright with stars. Joseph Mohr, 26-year-old vicar of the little church, is hurrying down the village street to call on his friend Franz Gruber, the schoolmaster, who plays the organ at church. (FATHER MOHR and FRANZ GRUBER enter.)

GRUBER: A cold night to be abroad, Father.

MOHR: But calm and bright. I was struck by the brightness when I returned to my room after meeting with the children of the parish. (Smiles) The same children you know and teach, my dear Franz.

GRUBER: Ach, and their minds full of nothing but Christmas!

MOHR: I am afraid that is the state of my mind, too. Soon we shall be celebrating the nativity. My thoughts were full of it as I walked

home. I wished for some new way to celebrate, something a little different to sing in church on Christmas eve. (He takes the paper from his pocket, thrusts it at GRUBER.) Here, tell me what you think, Franz.

GRUBER (Reading aloud):

Silent night! Holy night!

All is calm, all is bright . . .

(He reads in silence for a moment, then looks up excitedly.) Why, it is beautiful, Father. Where did it come from?

MOHR: I — well, I wrote it. Do you think the words could make a song, Franz?

GRUBER: Yes, yes. Indeed, yes. (Looks at words, beats time to imaginary tune.)

MOHR (Urgently): Can you do it, Franz? You can play the organ, you have instruction in music. Can you set it to music right away, for the Christmas celebration? I know there is little time, but will you try?

GRUBER: I will try. (Looks at words again, becomes absorbed. FATHER MOHR smiles and tiptoes out.)

M.C.: Franz Gruber, the 29-year-old schoolmaster, wrote music for the vicar's words, but when he went to try the song on the organ, the organ refused to play. It was old and there were mice in it! Still, Father Mohr must have his new song for the Christmas festivities. So the schoolmaster taught the children to sing the song with only a guitar for accompaniment. (GRUBER turns to CHORUS and directs the singing of "Silent Night," either à cappella or with only a guitar accompaniment.

Second and third stanzas may be sung with solo parts and CHORUS. During the last chorus, GRUBER exits.)

M.C.: Gradually, Father Mohr's wonderful song spread through Austria and Germany. It became popular wherever it was heard. In 1833, fifteen years after it was written, "Silent Night" was sung at a Christmas concert in Leipzig. From that time its fame was assured. Now it belongs to the world! (Pause) Carols have come from Christians of all nationalities and races — from the Czechs, the Chinese, the Croats; from the Scandinavians, the Sicilians, the Poles; from the Puerto Ricans, the Russians, and even from black slaves in the United States before the Civil War. Here is one of the carols they gave us.

BOY (Swinging into "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow"):

There's a star in the East on Christmas morn,

CHORUS:

Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

BOY:

It will lead to the place where the Savior's born;

CHORUS:

Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

BOY:

Leave your ewes and leave your lambs,

CHORUS:

Rise up, shepherd, and follow,

BOY:

Leave your sheep, leave your rams,

CHORUS:

Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

ALL:

Follow, follow,

Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
Boy:

Follow the star of Bethlehem;

CHORUS:

Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

M.C.: And now here is a strange coincidence. In Austria, Father Mohr and his church organist produced "Silent Night" as something different for the children of the parish to sing for Christmas. Fifty years later, an Episcopalian rector in Philadelphia and his organist composed a new carol for the children of their Sunday school. The song was as speedily written and as speedily set to music as was "Silent Night." It, too, became world famous. The American rector's name was Phillips Brooks; his organist was Lewis Redner. (BROOKS and REDNER enter.)

REDNER: A cold night to be abroad, isn't it, sir?

BROOKS: But calm and bright, Redner. As I walked home from the meeting at the church, I was struck by the brightness. On just such a night three years ago, I was in the Holy Land. I will never forget it. I was riding horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, following the stars.

REDNER: How does Bethlehem look by starlight? I've often wondered.

BROOKS: It's on a hill, you know. Just five miles from Jerusalem. By day it isn't much of a town, but at night — (Takes paper from pocket) Redner, you know I have been wishing for some new way to celebrate Christmas this year, something a little different for the children to sing. (Holds out paper) Here, tell me what

you think of this. Do you see anything in it?

REDNER (Taking paper, reading aloud):

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

(Looks up) Where did you find it?

BROOKS: I wrote it. Perhaps I should say it wrote itself, out of my memories. Do you think it would make a song?

REDNER: I should say it would!
(Studies words, drumming rhythm)

BROOKS: Will you do it, Redner? Will you set it to music right away?

I know there isn't much time. Tomorrow is the last day of Sunday school before Christmas.

REDNER: I will try. A tune is opening up already. (He is engrossed with the paper. BROOKS smiles and tiptoes out.)

M.C.: Sure enough, the church organist had his rector's words set to music in time for Sunday school the next morning, and the song has been heard at Christmas time ever since. (REDNER directs CHORUS in "O Little Town of Bethlehem," all four stanzas, if desired. At end of song, he joins CHORUS.) Hundreds of Christmas carols have been written over the centuries. We couldn't sing them all on one program, but we have time for one of the oldest of all Christmas songs. The tune is attributed to St. Bonaventura, who lived in the thirteenth century. The

song has been translated into more than a hundred languages and dialects, and every year it is sung throughout the world. "Adeste Fidelis" — "O Come, All Ye Faithful." (M.C. gestures for audience to join in singing "O Come, All Ye

Faithful," or other carol, and CHORUS begins the singing. Then CHORUS leads audience in singing other stanzas, if desired. At conclusion, curtains close.)

THE END

Adapted from the December 1957 issue.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SING THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS

Characters: 21 male; 4 female; 7 male or female; 12 or more, male or female, for chorus. Most actors may take more than one part, if desired, or cast and chorus may be enlarged.

Playing Time: 35 minutes.

Costumes: Master of Ceremonies wears modern dress. Chorus wears modern dress or choral robes. Peasant, Woodcarvers, Jeanette, Isabella, and Children wear peasant clothes; 1st Woodcarver also wears a brown cloak. Martin Luther wears dark trousers, a heavy coat, scarf, and gloves. Catherine Luther wears a blouse, shawl, and long, dark skirt. Luther's Sons wear old-fashioned nightshirts; Luther's Daughter wears a nightgown. Shepherds wear brown robes and carry shepherds' crooks. Waits wear long, red-hooded capes. Indian Braves wear simple Indian dress and headbands with one or two feathers. Isaac Watts wears an 18th century English costume. Father Mohr wears black priest's

suit, black overcoat, and scarf. Franz Gruber wears early 19th century suit. Phillips Brooks and Lewis Redner wear American 19th century clothes; Brooks wears a heavy coat.

Properties: Sprigs of fir or small red paper bells; wooden spoon; Indian headdress, drums; script for Master of Ceremonies; wooden box and bundle of hay; figures of ox, ass, and 3 sheep; figures of the Holy Family; figures of 3 kings and angels, flashlight torches; fir tree and stand; string of white Christmas tree lights; small lanterns, and leather purses; bows and arrows; Bible; two pieces of paper.

Setting: The stage should be decorated gaily for Christmas. A reading stand is at one side. There are exits at each side and at rear.

Lighting: No special effects.

Sound: Piano accompaniment for carols. Guitar, or recorded music, may also be used.

