

Marko -

THE DRUM

fiction

CHARACTERS

A Boy

Three Kings

A Peddler

Angels

Shepherds

Joseph

Mary

Act I Afternoon, on a country road a few miles from Bethlehem

Act II That night, at the Bethlehem stable

Song: Konni - alle

Act I

(Country road. A rustic bench, backless, up and left of center, on which the Boy is asleep. Another bench is farther down and a little right.)

(Enter the Peddler, right, walking freely, swinging his pack, whistling to himself. He is a lively, warm-hearted man with some imagination. He sees the first bench, throws down his packs, stretches, yawns.)

Peddler Ho-hum! (glances at other bench and sees the boy, lying asleep curled up to keep warm) Well! Hello, boy! I didn't ^{see} you.

Boy. (rousing, up on one elbow) Hello.

Peddler: Isn't it a cold day to be sleeping outdoors? Why don't you go home to sleep?

Boy I haven't any home. I mean just now I haven't.

Peddler How does that happen?

Boy I did have a home. (sits up) But there was a bad sickness in the village, and my father and mother died of it.

Peddler Well, I'm sorry to hear that, son. But surely you live with somebody.

Boy I was supposed to live with my uncle in the next village. But he had lots of children of his own. He didn't need me.

Peddler Hm!

Boy So I ran away. (He gets up, moves about in a weak, dizzy way.)

Peddler I see. Tell me, have you eaten today?

Boy No, not today.

Peddler Then suppose you and I have something together. (He opens a small leather pouch.) (Boy comes forward eagerly) See here, some bread, some cheese - and - what else have we? Aha! Here's some honey. You like honey?

Boy (ravenous) Oh yes!

Peddler Then fall to.

Boy Thank you! (They sit on benches and eat hungrily.)

Peddler I'm wondering what you did after you ran away.

Boy Oh, I worked for a shepherd. But he sold his sheep, so there wasn't any more work for me.

Peddler And now what?

Boy I'm looking for someone else who needs a boy to work. Trouble is they think I'm too small. But I'm really very strong! (flexes his muscles)

Peddler Now isn't that a stroke of good fortune! I was just needing someone to work for me.

Boy You were? With sheep?

Peddler No. I'm not a shepherd. I'm a peddler. See, this is my pack. It's full of very fine things, and I walk all over the country and show them to people, and they buy them.

Boy What would you need me for?

Peddler Well, sometimes my psck gets too heavy. I could use a boy to carry part of it. Or he could draw water, or pick up sticks for a fire -

Boy (eagerly) I could do that!

Peddler You could? Fine! And in return I'd see that you were fed and had a warm barn to sleep in. Maybe we could even find you a cloak. You do need one, don't you?

Boy Yes. And this shirt is too small. And it's patched.

Peddler We can change that! You ^{stand up} know, I think you'll like living on the road. You walk in the country where the sun is warm and the air is sweet. And at night there are all manner of stars. You'd never believe the big one I saw only last night.

Boy ^{jump up} I saw that star, too! I was sleeping under a hedge, and it made everything as bright as day. Do you always see such big stars?

Peddler I never saw one like that before. Well, do you think you'll come with me?

Boy Yes!

Peddler Then that's settled. (They continue to eat.)

Song: Oh come all ye faithful

Boy What are the things you carry in your pack?

Peddler All sorts of things. I'll show you. (He unrolls pack and holds up various objects while he speaks. The Boy makes admiring sounds.) Here's a piece of red cotton from Egypt. And bone needles. Some good thread, too. Now here's a fine pottery bowl. I have to be careful not to break it. A box of colored beads, some red wax....

Boy (pointing) What's that?

Peddler (lifting a tambourine from his pack) That? That's a timbrel.

Boy A timbrel?

Peddler It's really a little drum. You play it -- so. (strikes it with his knuckles)

Boy Do you march to it?

Peddler You could. Or you could dance to it. It's a very ancient thing. The holy books tell us how people used to play it long ago.

Boy My father used to tell me stories from the holy books.

Peddler Did he? Remember the one about the children of Israel running away from the wicked king? And how the Red Sea parted its waters and let them through?

Boy I remember! And when the bad king tried to follow, the water flowed together again, and he and all his men were drowned.

Peddler Well, and do you know, after they were safe across the sea, they had a great rejoicing to God. And their prophetess, Miriam, played the timbrel.

Boy She did? This very one?

Peddler One just like it. And in the Psalms we hear about praising the Lord with the timbrel.

Boy A timbrel is really a holy drum, isn't it?

Peddler That's right, a holy drum. And you know when I'll play this one?

Boy When?

Peddler When the Messiah comes! I suppose you know about the Messiah?

Boy My father used to speak of him, but I'm not sure who he is.

Peddler He's a great king that will be born one day to rule over Israel.

Boy A good king -- not bad?

Peddler Oh, a good one. When he comes, there'll be no more war or troubles. He'll rule us all with love. And we'll love him.

Boy And praise him with the timbrel!

Peddler That's it. The way it says in the old song. (sings. As it gets faster and gayer, he plays the timbrel and sways. The Boy joins in, singing and clapping.)

SONG: WHEN THE MESSIAH COMES

Peddler: When the Messiah comes, There will be feasting and joy,
There will be music and dancing,
Dancing to the sound of the timbrel,
Dancing to the music of the harp and the timbrel,
harp and timbrel, harp and timbrel, harp and timbrel,
~~harp and timbrel~~, Ah!

Boy joins Peddler in singing Above ^{stanza} repeats with different note at end.

Peddler (exultantly) There! (suddenly thoughtful) It'll be a wonderful day when he comes.

Boy When is he coming?

Peddler Who can say? Who knows when? But I know where he'll be born!

Boy You do? Where?

Peddler In Bethlehem. The prophet Micah said it. He said, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that is to be ruler in Israel."

Boy Does that mean the Messiah?

Peddler Who else?

(sound of singing and piping. Down one of the aisles, preferably right, come the Shepherds, full of joy, singing. They are on stage at the end of the second stanza. The Peddler has risen to speak to them.)

THE SHEPHERDS' SONG *shepherds come*

Harken, harken, friends and neighbors!
There is joyful news today!
Have you heard the song of the angels,
Bidding us all to be up and away?
Leave your sheep and leave your byre,
Leave your house and leave your fire.
Come with us and gladly travel,
seeking a Babe who is born today,

Do not be afraid of the journey,
Tho' the road be rough and far.
God has sent a beacon to guide us!
High in the heaven there shines a star!
Truly, this is a wondrous thing!
Now is born our Lord and King!
Come with us and gladly travel,
Seeking a Babe who is born our King.

SONG - 1st versic

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Boy Here come some more people singing! Look, Peddler,
how fine they are.

(The Kings are coming down the same aisle the Shepherds used. Their marching should be arranged so that they do not mount the stage until the last bars of their song. The Peddler and Boy watch their approach with curiosity and amazement.)

Peddler Boy, look well! Those are fine people all right!
Those are Kings.

SONG: MARCH OF THE KINGS

We three Kings from Orient are traveling,
Over land and sea, from realms afar.
In the sky, to lead us ever onward,
Glorious and bright there shines a star.
Why, why, why are we seeking?
Why do we pursue our onward way?
Prophet foretold it, We shall behold it!
Lo, a royal King is born today!

He shall have the honor and the glory,
He shall have a power from God above.
He will rule the mighty and the lowly,
He will rule the world with truth and love.
Where, where, Where shall we find Him?
Where shall we behold this wondrous thing?
Star shining o'er us, Going before us,
Lead us to our Master, Lord, and King!

(They pause. They do not see the Peddler and the Boy, who have respectfully withdrawn up left. They see the benches.)

First King Let us rest a moment here.

Second King We can sit down.

Third King I'll be glad to. This gold is heavy to carry.
(They sit on the benches)

Peddler (stepping forward) Your Majesties! I beg your pardon -

First King Here's a peddler.

Second King What is it, Peddler?

Peddler Your Majesties, I beg pardon, but are you looking
for a King?

Second King Yes, we are.

First King We seek a King who is greater than we are.

Third King He will rule with love.

Second King And of his Kingdom there shall be no end.

First King We have seen His star in the East, and we go to worship Him.

Boy (coming forward shyly) Peddler, ask them if they're taking Him gifts.

First King Oh yes, the most precious things we have - gold, frankincense, myrrh.

Boy (aside) It seems one always takes gifts to a King.

Third King We must be on our way.

First King We must follow the star.

Second King Good day, Peddler.

1st & 3rd Kings Good day, Peddler.

Peddler & Boy (bowing) Good day, your Majesties.
(The kings go off into the wings left)

Peddler Kings. You know, when the shepherds came by, I thought, how could they know about the Messiah? Why should I believe poor innocent shepherds? But when great kings tell you something is true, you have to believe them! Come, let's go to Bethlehem!

Boy (doubtfully) Right now?

Peddler (packing) Yes, right now.

Boy Can I meet the King with patches on my tunic? And besides I have no gift for Him.

(The peddler, absorbed in packing, pays no attention. The Boy goes down stage left and sings sorrowfully.)

SONG WHAT CAN I GIVE?

What, what can I give to the Baby?
What can I give to the King?
Shepherds are giving a cloak of wool,
For the night may be damp and cool.
I've no cloak to wear at all,
So what can I give the Baby?

What, what can I give to the Baby?
What, what can I give to the Child?
Kings are taking him gold and myrrh,
Things I never have seen before..
They are rich but I am poor,
So what can I give the Baby?

Peddler (comes forward to hear the last lines) Never mind about gifts! If God wants you to give a gift, He'll put it in your hand. Now, let's go. (picks up pack) Oh, here's that tumbrel. I forgot to pack it. No time to do it now. Here, boy, you carry it.

Peddler (continued) (Boy takes drum with rising spirits.)
You can play it as we march.

ACT II

Silent Night
(Outside the Bethlehem stable, that night. The stage is completely dark. Enter from the right wing, far down, the Peddler and the Boy. A small spotlight will reveal them without showing the rest of the stage.) *manger will left*

Boy Goodness, it's dark! I can't see a thing.

Peddler Neither can I. I wonder where we are now. We should be close to Bethlehem.

Boy Where are the kings and shepherds?

Peddler (gleefully) They're back behind us somewhere.

Boy But they started first.

Peddler Yes, but it takes an old peddler like me to know all the back lanes and short cuts.

Boy Is that why we came through all those brambles? And over the hedges?

Peddler That's why your hair is full of twigs. Brush them out.

Boy (doing so) But where is the King?

(The light grows slowly. A star appears above the manger.)

Peddler Look, boy! That star!

(The Gloria begins very quietly. The Angels' music may be supported softly by piano. The light grows and soon reveals the manger and the angels.)

SONG: GLORIA

Away in a manger
Gloria in excelsis,
Gloria in excelsis!
Gloria in excelsis,
in excelsis.

Boy (speaks)
I hear music.

(music continues as a background to the following speeches.)

Boy See! A baby! But they've put him in a manger! They must be poor, just like me.

Peddler God be praised! Our King is born! Come along, boy, we'll go in.

Boy (bitterly unhappy) Oh, Peddler, I can't go to Him
without a gift!

Peddler Give Him something from my pack.

Boy That would be your gift. It wouldn't be mine.
Oh, I can't go!

Peddler Now here come the shepherds.

(The Angels have gradually become visible, in tiered places a little above and to the right of the manger. The Shepherds enter right, hear the song, see them. The Peddler and Boy have drawn into the shadows upstage right.)

(Music continues without pause - Gloria in excelsis!)

Second Shepherd The star,
First Shepherd: There are our angels.

Second Shepherd The star has led us here.

Third Shepherd This is too great a wonder. (They stand in awe, and after the word "joy" they approach the manger, kneel and present their gift. Kings enter right and stand.)

Entry - Towns Folk
MUSIC CONTINUES

First King My brothers, our journey is over! (These lines are spoken during the quiet part of the preceding music. The Kings come to the manger, present gifts & remain kneeling.)
Second King We have found our King!
Third King Blessed be His name!

KING'S SONG

Peddler (drawing boy forward) Come! Let us go, too. (He slowly moves left and stands among the Shepherds.)

Boy (despairingly) You go. I have no gift.

(The Peddler goes quickly, kneels, gives a small gift, and, rising, becomes part of the tableau. In the Carol of the Drum the Boy stands far down right, singing to the audience. At the introduction to the second stanza he approaches the manger and, with great earnestness, addresses the Baby. As he sings "I have no gift," he stretches out his hands in a gesture of emptiness and realizes that he is holding the drum. The idea of playing it comes to him suddenly and joyfully, and he begins at the introduction of the third stanza, ff. Tenor-Bass rhythms. Continues to sing with Chorus, stanza 3.)

SONG: CAROL OF THE DRUM

"Come", they told me,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
"Our new-born king to see!	Pa rum pa pum pum,
Our finest gifts we'll bring,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
To lay before our king!	Pa rum pa pum pum,
Rum pa pum pum rum pa pum pum,	
So to honour him,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
When we come."	

"Baby Jesus,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
I'm a poor boy too,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
I have no gift to bring,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
That's fit to give a king,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
Rum pa pum pum ^{rum} pa pum pum	
— Shall I play for you	Pa rum pa pum pum,
On my drum?"	

Mary nodded,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
Ox and ass kept time,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
I played my drum for him,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
I played my best for him,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
Rum pa pum pum rum pa pum pum,	
Then he smiled at me,	Pa rum pa pum pum,
Me and my drum.	

(At the end of the song there is a moment of silence while the boy goes close to the manger, kneels, and kisses the edge of the Baby's blanket. Then he rises as the final chorus begins but stays close to the manger.)

SONG: JOY HAS FILLED THE SKY

Joy to the world
 Joy, joy has filled the sky,
 all the bells are ringing.
 Joy, joy! the angels cry,
 Through the heavens winging.
 Cradled in a bed of hay,
 Love has come to earth today.
 Praise untold. Christ the Lord
 Ev'ry heart is singing.

He is the royal gift
 God the Father gave us.
 He is the King of Kings,

Come to earth to save us.
 Let us now in wonder bow,
 Lay our hearts before Him.
 Praise now our holy Lord!
 Worship and adore Him!
 Praise we now our Lord!

Curtain