ARE YOU COMING?

by Phil Gilbreath & Steve Markovich
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Are You Coming?
A contemporary play for the Christmas season

by Phil Gilbreath and Steve Markovich
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

BOY
A twelve-year-old boy full of excitement and joy, yet with an underlying sadness about him. (NOTE: Although this character displays considerable sadness, he does not pout.)

MRS. JONES
A harried mother in her mid-thirties.

MISSY JONES
An eight-year-old girl who is generally sweet.

CAROLERS
Three strolling singers who let nothing stand in the way of their quest to spread merriment.

REV. TOM
A middle-aged pastor who is distracted by his duties.

CHUBBY
A stout young man intent on having a really good time.

VICKY
Chubby’s clingy girlfriend who has succeeded in wrapping Chubby around her finger.

PARTY PACK
Three friends of Chubby and Vicky who are eager participants in the quest for revelry.

GRANNY
A bustling elderly woman whose call in life is baking cookies.
MORRIS
A snappish mail carrier who only wants to finish his rounds and kick up his feet.

CALVIN
An obnoxious pre-teen kid whose only goal is to “cover all the bases” when it comes to his Christmas gifts.

SIMON
A young father and husband who is out for a quiet walk.

CURTIS
A small boy of five or six.

PASTOR
Your pastor says a few words at the end of the drama to summarize its message.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

SUMMARY

The invitations have been sent and the decorations put up. Now, a twelve-year-old boy (whose identity becomes apparent as that of Jesus) waits for his guests to arrive at his birthday party. But as one person after another acknowledges the day in his or her own fashion while rejecting the invitation, the boy begins to despair that no one has truly remembered the meaning of Christmas. Finally, a small boy seated in the congregation comes forward and simply exhibits more understanding of the significance of Christmas than any of the others before him.

SCENE

The scene is a modern-day birthday party, complete with a table, two to three chairs, and appropriate decorations (Christmas themes and/or colors OK).

COSTUMES

The Boy should be dressed as a normal twelve-year-old boy, though nothing too “showy” or “trendy.” Everyone else should be dressed for the Christmas season, with the Carolers especially decked out in all their holiday glory. Morris should be dressed as a mail carrier.

PROPS

A birthday cake with a cutting knife, paper plates, and plastic forks
Christmas packages and shopping bags
Caroling books
A stack of note paper
A large radio and a large ice chest
A batch of cookies
An over-full mailbag
A sealed envelope marked “Return to Sender”

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A ridiculously long “wish list”

A pencil

An invitation

CASTING

The part of the Boy need not necessarily be played by a child. In our drama team, we often have adults portray adolescents and children. It is amazing how “childish” adult actors can be when called upon to do so. It is a demanding part, and a good adult actor should easily pull off the child-like qualities needed for the role.

The casting could be pared down in the following manner; Mrs. Jones could be a part of the Carolers with a quick costume change. Similarly, the Carolers could double as the Party Pack, or the Party Pack could be cut down to just Vicky and Chubby if need be. The careful placement of scarves and hats should obscure any obvious doubling up of characters.

PLAYING TIME

The approximate playing time is 20 to 30 minutes.
(BOY enters with an armload of decorations. He dumps them on the table and quickly arranges a few things. When satisfied, he steps back and admires his decorated surroundings.)

BOY: There! Everything is ready for my party! I invited a bunch of people...I hope everybody comes! It’ll be great! (He looks about expectantly, then goes to the table where he eyes the cake hungrily.) Yum! This looks really good! (He looks about furtively before dipping his finger in the frosting for a sample.) Mmmm...chocolate!

MRS. JONES: (Off-stage) Come on, Missy! I haven’t got all day!
BOY: Oh boy! Someone’s coming! (MRS. JONES enters Stage Right, loaded down with Christmas packages. MISSY follows closely behind, happily chattering away.)

MISSY: ...And a new dress, and new slippers! And then I told him I wanted a Super-Duper Karate-Babe action figure!
MRS. JONES: (She stops dead in horror.) Oh no!
MISSY: Yeah! A Super-Duper Karate-Babe action figure!
MRS. JONES: They’re neat!
MISSY: (Happily) I know!
BOY: (Crosses to MRS. JONES and MISSY and says politely.) Excuse me...
MRS. JONES: (Looking around distractedly before seeing BOY) Yes? What is it?
BOY: Are you coming to my birthday party?
MRS. JONES: I’m afraid not. (She glances at MISSY.) It would seem I have some last-minute shopping to do.
BOY: (He gently stops MRS. JONES.) Didn’t you get my invitation?
MRS. JONES: Yes, but I told you...it’s not a good time.
BOY: But it’s all set up over there. See? It’ll be fun!
MISSY: (In wonder) Look, Mom! There’s cake and everything!
MRS. JONES: (Firmly) I said we don’t have time. Thank you all the same, but I can’t stay.
MISSY: Mom...

BOY: Well, then...could your daughter stay? She'd have a great time!

MRS. JONES: I told you...I can't stay and neither can Missy. But I promise we'll be thinking all about you and your birthday while I tear apart the mall to find... (She looks back at MISSY and sighs) ...the impossible. (She exits Stage Left.)

MISSY: (Shyly lagging behind) I'd really love to stay for your party.

BOY: Do you think your mom would really let you?

MRS. JONES: (Off-stage) Missy! Come on!

MISSY: (Sadly) I...um, I guess I'd better go before my mom gets mad. Happy birthday anyway. (She quickly exits.)

BOY: (He sadly follows MISSY to the edge of the stage.) See ya 'round. (BOY sighs heavily and looks at MISSY exiting Stage Left as the CAROLERS enter Stage Right and make a silent beeline for him. They form rank behind BOY, who jumps in surprise when they begin.)

CAROLERS: (Singing quickly and boisterously) We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year! (CAROLERS abruptly turn to leave.)

BOY: Hey! Wait! (CAROLERS stop and look back at BOY.) Are you guys coming to my birthday party? (CAROLERS look at one another in momentary confusion, shrugging and shaking their heads. At the same time REV. TOM enters, engrossed in a large sheaf of notes. CAROLERS see him and, quickly turning their attention to him, pounce. REV. TOM's notes go flying as the sudden noise startles him.)

CAROLERS: (Boisterously) We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year! (CAROLERS guiltily back at BOY and quickly exit Stage Left.)

BOY: (Calling after CAROLERS) Hey, wait! You didn't answer
my question! Didn’t you get my invitation? (BOY looks after CAROLERS curiously and then goes over to REV. TOM.
He watches for a moment as the man scurries around collecting his notes, then taps him on the shoulder. REV. TOM immediately sets off another explosion of paper as he jumps up in surprise.) Need some help?

REV. TOM: (Frazzled) Beg your pardon?

BOY: With your papers. Do you need some help?

REV. TOM: Oh. Well...aren’t you the helpful one. (He pats BOY on the head.) If you’d like. (BOY kneels and begins to help REV. TOM collect his papers.)

BOY: (As he works) I was wondering...

REV. TOM: Ummm?

BOY: (He gives the papers to REV. TOM as they stand.) I was wondering if you got my invitation to my birthday party.

REV. TOM: Oh. Well...yes I did, thank you. But I really don’t have time to stay.

BOY: (Curiously) Why?

REV. TOM: (Caught off-guard) Uh...why? (He pauses to think.) Well, I’m very busy this time of year. I have a very important sermon coming up. The biggest crowd of the year will be at church for this sermon. Wouldn’t want to disappoint anyone with a boring sermon.

BOY: But look, everything is set up already! Can’t you just stay a little while? (Encouragingly) It’s chocolate cake...

REV. TOM: (Sighs.) Well...I’m sure it’s nice, but the Ladies Sewing Circle just shoved an entire tin of homemade fudge on me less than an hour ago. And there is my sermon...

BOY: But it’s my birthday.

REV. TOM: (He pats BOY on the head again.) Well, then...have a wonderful birthday. If you’re still here after I finish my sermon, I’ll join you then. How’s that? (He smiles insincerely and exits Stage Left. BOY shakes his head and then
hears the PARTY PACK chanting Off-stage.)

PARTY PACK: (Off-stage) Party! Party! Party!

BOY: Oh, boy! Someone's coming! (He begins bouncing around excitedly as CHUBBY, VICKY and the PARTY PACK enter. They are chanting and carrying boom boxes, snacks, and various drinks.)

PARTY PACK: Party! Party! Party! (They snatch up BOY and parade around the stage.)

BOY: (While being dragged about) Hey!

PARTY PACK: Party! Party! Party!

BOY: (Raising his voice) Hey!

PARTY PACK: Party! Party! Party!

BOY: (Finally shouting) Hey! (PARTY PACK stops abruptly and looks around for the interruption to their merriment. CHUBBY finally notices BOY.)

CHUBBY: Did you say something?

BOY: (Eagerly) Yeah. Are you guys coming to my birthday party?

CHUBBY: Uh... (Looks around uncertainly.) Well...

VICKY: (Impatiently “whispering” in CHUBBY's ear) Chubby...no.

CHUBBY: No! No. We're not here for your party.

BOY: But I heard you. You were saying... (Imitating the group) Party! Party! Party!

CHUBBY: (Excitedly) Yeah! You got it! We're having a party.

VICKY: (Interrupting) But...we aren't celebrating your birthday.

BOY: (Confused) But why? I mean, it's my birthday, isn't it? I sent an invitation to each one of you.

VICKY: (Indulgently) Look, it may be your birthday, but we're just going to have a party of our own. (Loud agreements come from the PARTY PACK.)

CHUBBY: Yeah. I mean, there's a bunch of people already celebrating your birthday, right?

BOY: (Looking around) Not really...

CHUBBY: Well, uh... (Helpfully) I bet they'll be here soon.
VICKY: We just thought we’d have our own party since so many others throw you a party.

CHUBBY: Yeah! Just because we don’t celebrate your birthday doesn’t mean we should be left out of all the fun, does it?

BOY: (Confused) Well...

VICKY: (Pats BOY on the cheek.) You have fun now, 'Kay?

(PARTY PACK begins chanting again and exits Stage Right as GRANNY enters. She gives each one a cookie as he/she leaves, then sees BOY across the stage.)

GRANNY: (Approaching quickly) Oh! Aren’t you a doll?

BOY: Huh?

GRANNY: (Shoves a cookie in BOY’s hand.) Have a cookie!

BOY: Is this for my birthday?

GRANNY: (Uncertainly) What? Oh! Your birthday! Of course, dear! Whatever you say!

BOY: Thanks. I was beginning to wonder if anyone was going to accept my invitation. Would you like a piece of birthday cake.

GRANNY: Oh, the cookie is yours to keep. You don’t have to give me anything!

BOY: I know. I just thought you might want to help me celebrate my birthday.

GRANNY: What a doll! But sorry, my little lamb. I have to go bake more cookies! I have thirty-seven grandchildren, you know!

BOY: You could stay for just a little while, couldn’t you? Everything is ready! I thought you got my invitation.

GRANNY: Now, honey. Don’t be difficult. I did get your little invite, but my time is valuable. I have to bake more cookies for all my grandkids. Just think of that as my way of celebrating your birthday. (MORRIS enters Stage Left, rummaging through his mailbag.)

MORRIS: Anybody here having a birthday?

BOY: (Excitedly) I am!
MORRIS: Here! (He gives a large envelope to BOY.) This is for you.

GRANNY: See there? An R.S.V.P. You don’t need me to have a good birthday party! Have fun! (GRANNY gives MORRIS a cookie and then breezes out Stage Right. MORRIS starts across stage to exit, but BOY stops him.)

BOY: Aren’t you staying for my birthday party?

MORRIS: (Irritated) Look, kid, do you realize what time of year it is?

BOY: Yeah! My birthday!

MORRIS: And do you realize how much trouble that causes me?

BOY: (Taken aback) Uh...

MORRIS: I work my feet to the bone this time of year! My bag weighs three times what it usually does during the rest of the year! I’ve got to lug around all these huge boxes...all marked “fragile”! (CALVIN enters Stage Right, eyes the situation, and then goes to the table and grabs a chair. He drags it to Center Stage and positions it carefully behind BOY as MORRIS continues to rant.) Do people think we play catch with their precious packages or something? It’s not like we break them on purpose!

BOY: But...my invitation...

MORRIS: (Haughtily) Aren’t you listening to me? I don’t have time to waste by coming to your birthday party!

BOY: (Oblivious to CALVIN’s presence) But...

MORRIS: Listen, why don’t you just open your card and leave the rest of us alone? (He turns and exits Stage Left. CALVIN quickly grabs the card BOY is holding from behind and tosses it on the table. He pushes BOY back into the chair and plops down in BOY’s lap.)

BOY: (Slightly alarmed) Hey! What are you doing?

CALVIN: My name’s Calvin, and I’m here to tell you what I want.

BOY: Huh?
CALVIN: I got your invitation, so now I’m here to tell you what presents I want. ’Tis the season, right?
BOY: Uh…I think you’re a little confused, aren’t you?
CALVIN: I know what you’re thinkin’! But I already talked to the other guy. Gave him my whole list. (Produces a ridiculously long list out of his pocket.) I figured it couldn’t hurt to tell you what I want too, since I was here for the party anyway.
BOY: But I don’t...
CALVIN: (Irritated) Pipe down, will ya? I got a lot to cover here. (Consulting list) First, I want a Super-Speed Demolition Interstate Set. You know, the remote-controlled kind. Next, I’ll take a nineteen-inch color TV. That’s to go with the next thing…the Maxi-Alien-Blasto Video Game. And then...
BOY: (Firmly pushing CALVIN off his lap.) Hold it! Hold it!
CALVIN: What? I haven’t even gotten started on this list.
BOY: Don’t you have things backwards?
CALVIN: (Thinking, then brightening) Oh, yeah! I forgot the Maxi-Blasto Video System. Can’t play the game without the system. (He pulls out a pencil and scribbles on his list.)
BOY: No, no, no! That’s not what I mean. I mean…it’s my birthday. Wouldn’t it make more sense for you to hear what I want?
CALVIN: (He sits down in the chair and sulks.) Oh, all right. I can tell you’ll never shut up until you get this off your chest. So go on…shoot. Tell me what you want.
BOY: Well...more than anything, what I really want is for people to remember my birthday.
CALVIN: (Indignant) Hey! I remembered your birthday! How could a guy forget when you send out those invitations? Besides, would I be here asking for stuff if it wasn’t that time of year?
BOY: No! I don’t mean remember a date on the calendar! I mean remember it in your heart! By the way you treat
others. By the way you love your neighbor. (*Quietly*)
Remember it by the way you love me.

CALVIN: (*He sits and ponders seriously for a moment, as if BOY’s words have struck home. Then he sighs quickly and resumes his selfish manner.*) Well...OK, whatever. Now, back to my list...

BOY: (*Exasperated*) Didn’t you listen to me?

CALVIN: (*Stares angrily for several seconds.*) You know, you’d be a whole lot easier to get along with if you’d just learn that “Ho-ho-ho” thing. (*He exits Stage Left, muttering to himself and trailing his list behind him.*)

BOY: (*Sitting dejectedly at the table*) Wow. Isn’t anyone going to accept my invitation to my party? (*He sighs heavily. After fiddling with some of the decorations, he spots the card on the table and picks it up with excitement.*) I almost forgot about this. Maybe someone wrote to say they’re coming. (*He starts to open the envelope, but stops and stares at the front.*) What’s this? (*Reading*) “Return to sender?” I don’t believe this! They didn’t even bother to open my invitation. (*He sits down sadly, dips his finger in the cake icing, and tastes it. Shrugging, he takes a knife and begins to cut a piece.*) No reason to wait, I guess. Looks like no one is coming anyway. (*He takes a small bite, chews and then grins slightly to himself. He looks around furtively before cramming the entire piece into his mouth at once. As he chews contentedly, SIMON enters Stage Left and wanders across the stage. BOY jumps up excitedly and rushes over to SIMON. BOY takes SIMON’s arm and tries to talk with a full mouth.*) Mmmph! Hoo ou maunt oo ay or ome ake? Mmmph?

SIMON: (*Trying to understand*) Excuse me? (*BOY chews frantically while gesturing at the decorations and cake.*) What? Do you need help with something? Someone to clean up this mess?

BOY: (*Gulping down the cake*) Whew! That was a mouthful. No, I was asking you if you... (*Suddenly, from Off-stage, there is...*)
a terrified wail. CAROLERS commence their manic rendition of “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” and chase a terrified CALVIN across stage from left to right.)

CALVIN: (Wailing as he crosses) Mommm! (He exits, followed by CAROLERS. SIMON and BOY stare after them for a few seconds before shrugging simultaneously.)

SIMON: (Turning back to BOY.) Anyway...did you want something?

BOY: Yeah! Are you here for my birthday party?

SIMON: Birthday party?

BOY: Yeah! I sent you an invitation. Are you coming? See...everything is set up.

SIMON: (Uncertainly) Well, I didn’t really know anything about a birthday party. I must have missed your invitation somehow. I, uh...I didn’t bring a gift or anything.

BOY: That’s OK! I just want you to help me celebrate. You don’t have to bring anything but yourself.

SIMON: (Skeptical) Ummm... That sounds awfully simple. Sure there’s not more to it?

BOY: Nope! Now, you want some cake? (He starts to cut a piece of the cake.)

SIMON: (Obviously stalling) I think I have to go do something...

BOY: (Saddened) What?

SIMON: Um... (Trying to be nice) I really would like some cake. It’d be great to celebrate your birthday. But first I have to...um...I have to go... (He suddenly latches onto an idea.) I have to go and get my family! You invited them too, right? I’m sure they’d love to come to your party!

BOY: (Laying down the knife in disappointment) How long will it take to get them?

SIMON: Oh, no time at all! (He starts to sidle off, Stage Right.) I’ll be back as soon as I find them. They’re shopping, you know.

BOY: (Sadly) Wait a minute!
Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

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