

WHAT THE MICE KNEW

by Kathleen B. Hindman



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What the Mice Knew

A costumed Christmas
play with music

by Kathleen B. Hindman

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SPEAKER

TWELVE MICE

*(One a long soloist, perhaps a teen or adult;
another to sing a short solo)*

THREE OR FOUR GUESTS AT THE INN

INNKEEPER

JOSEPH

TWO DOVES

(One to sing a short solo)

TWO COWS

(One to sing a short solo)

TWO DONKEYS

(One to sing a short solo)

TWO SHEEP

(One to sing a short solo)

TWO CAMELS

(One to sing a short solo)

MALE OR FEMALE SOLOIST

MARY

ONE OR MORE ANGELS

SEVERAL SHEPHERDS

THREE KINGS

PASTOR

(for benediction)

DEDICATION

For my late uncle, Garold Mikel

PRODUCTION NOTES

This play takes a lighthearted approach to the Christmas story, although the actual pageant is presented quite seriously. The performers should be encouraged to speak their lines with feeling, yet very naturally; the dialog seeks to convey informal modern speech. They should also be prepared for the laughter (hopefully!) of the audience, so they understand that they have not done something wrong but something right when they hear the amusement. They should also understand that the people are not laughing at them, but at the story they are portraying.

The entire cast should be dressed in basic biblical costumes. There are simple patterns available from major pattern companies, or you may use plain-colored bathrobes and squares of cloth held on the head with elastic headbands. Mary is traditionally dressed in blue and white; Joseph, the Innkeeper and the Shepherds in fairly drab colors. A large doll wrapped in a blanket can represent the Christ child. (A light stick, which can be found in camping or fishing stores, is a nice touch as a halo.) Joseph will need an easily portable manger to carry On-stage with him — one from an outdoor display or a simple handmade wooden one. A few shepherd's staffs, or canes, and perhaps a stuffed lamb or two may be added to the Shepherds' attire. The Angels should be dressed in white, with tinsel halos and belts if desired. The Kings (and perhaps a couple of the guests at the inn) should be dressed in brighter colors; their crowns made of foil-covered cardboard. They may carry a couple of fancy bottles and a small wooden box to represent their gifts. The animals add ears to their basic robes. The ears may be purchased at some zoos or made from faux fur, fleece and/or felt. These ears can be stuffed with fiber-fill and stiffened with wire, then fastened to elastic or fabric-covered plastic headbands. The

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curly horn of the sheep can be made from vinyl and stuffed like the ears, then fastened onto the headband. It is only necessary to make one of each kind except for the mice, because they can be transferred from one performer to another. Three to five sets of mouse ears are needed to avoid too much confusion. The children should know who to pass their ears to when they have completed their parts. The dove can be suggested with a disposable shower cap covered with white feathers that are fastened on with a low temperature hot glue gun. Feathers, like faux fur, are available in craft stores. If robes can be color-cued to the animal, so much the better.

At the beginning of the program, there should be a couple folding tables and three or four folding chairs on the stage area. A microphone should also be placed at the front of the stage. There should be some way of lighting the stage area separate from the houselights, if possible. Another microphone should be placed at some distance from the stage — in a choir area or even to one side of the church. A spotlight is recommended for this area. A third area is needed for those performers not currently on the stage where they will not distract the audience, but from which they can readily enter the stage or reach the other microphone.

There are seventeen speaking parts, two long solos and six short solos in the play. The short solos for the animals might be spoken rhythmically instead of sung if there are not enough willing soloists. The number of speaking parts can be reduced by having the same person take the animal's speaking part and its singing part. Fewer mice can also be used by doubling up parts. Non-speaking parts can easily be added by increasing the numbers of shepherds, angels and visitors at the inn. More animals might also be added to the pageant scene itself. Except for Mary and Joseph and the cow, the characters may be either male or female.

The program takes about forty minutes to present.

MUSIC SOURCES

Many of these songs are in the public domain and should be fairly easy to find on the Internet, if not in songbooks. Following are suggested sources of printed music and websites that were current at the time of this printing.

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming” — Tr. by Theodore Baker and Harriet R. Spaeth. *Performed by:* Anyone willing to play it on an instrument. *Availability:* Found in most hymnals.

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus” — Charles Wesley and Rowland H. Prichard. *Performed by:* The congregation. *Availability:* Found in most hymnals.

“I Was Born about Ten Thousand Years Ago” — Traditional American. *Performed by:* A teen or adult as a solo, establishing the “authority” of the mice. The performer must be willing to wear mouse ears and take some kidding. The last verse was written specifically to tie in with this program. *Availability:* The music and some of the other verses may be found in The Max Hunter Folk Song Collection, a website. The address is www.smsu.edu/folksong/maxhunter/0262. It may also be found in *Jerry Silverman's Folk Song Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Chappell Music Company, © 1975). This book may be ordered from www.hitsquad.com/smm/sheetmusic/genre/folk/ listed alphabetically under “J.” Click on the songbook title.

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” — Phillips Brooks and Lewis Henry Redner. *Performed by:* The congregation. A duet may be sung on verses 3 and 4. *Availability:* Found in most hymnals.

“Humbly Grateful or Grumbly Hateful?” — Kathie Hill and Janet McMahan. *Performed by:* The Sunday school children or a children’s choir (to include more participants). *Availability:* This song may be found in *A Pocketful of Praise*,

compiled by Ken Bible (Kansas City, MO: Lillenas Publishing Co., © 1987). It may be ordered from www.Christianbook.com. Go to “search,” click on “CBD Stock Number” from the pulldown menu, and enter WW4192837. Any song with the theme of gratitude may be substituted.

“Sweet Little Jesus Boy” — Robert MacGimsey, © MCMXXXIV by Carl Fischer Inc., New York. *Performed by:* A teen or adult, as a solo. *Availability:* One source is *The Reader’s Digest Merry Christmas Songbook* (Pleasantville, NY, © 1981), which may be ordered from www.grothmusic.com. Scroll to “Search” at the bottom and insert the songbook title. Lyrics may be found at www.santasearch.com. Click on “Music, Songs & Lyrics” — it’s listed alphabetically. A public domain song about the birth of Christ, such as “What Child Is This?” may be substituted.

“The Friendly Beasts” — Author Unknown. *Performed by:* The Sunday school children or a children’s choir. It contains several short solos and a special mouse verse written for this script. *Availability:* One source is *The Reader’s Digest Merry Christmas Songbook* (see above).

“Silent Night” — Joseph Mohr and Franz Gruber. *Performed by:* The congregation. *Availability:* Found in most hymnals.

“As With Gladness Men of Old” — William C. Dix and Conrad Kocher. *Performed by:* The congregation. *Availability:* Found in most hymnals.

1 **SONG:** “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” (*Instrumental or organ*
2 *prelude*)

3

4 **SONG:** “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

5 **CONGREGATION:** Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,

6 Born to set Thy people free;

7 From our fears and sins release us;

8 Let us find our rest in Thee.

9 Israel’s strength and consolation,

10 Hope of all the earth Thou art;

11 Dear Desire of ev’ry nation,

12 Joy of ev’ry longing heart.

13

14 Born Thy people to deliver,

15 Born a Child, and yet a King,

16 Born to reign in us forever,

17 Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

18 By Thine own eternal Spirit

19 Rule in all our hearts alone;

20 By Thine all-sufficient merit,

21 Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

22 (*Lights out*)

23

24 **Introduction**

25

26 **VOICE FROM STAGE:** ’Twas the night before Christmas,

27 And all through the house

28 Not a creature was stirring,

29 Not even a mouse. (*Interruption, followed by spotlight on*
30 *Off-stage location, on MOUSE 1.*)

31 **MOUSE 1:** Waddaya mean — not even a mouse? I’ll have you

32 know that we mice are stirring every night. Even

33 Christmas! This Christmas and every Christmas. Right

34 on back to that very first Christmas. Why, just listen to

35 this. (*MOUSE 2 enters and stands at microphone.*)

1 **SONG:** "I Was Born about Ten Thousand Years Ago" (*Solo by*
2 *MOUSE 2*)

3 **MOUSE 2:** I was born about ten thousand years ago,
4 And there's nothing in the world that I don't know,
5 I saw Peter, Paul, and Moses
6 Playing ring around the roses,
7 And I'll lick the guy that says it isn't so.

8
9 I saw Satan when he looked the garden o'er,
10 I saw Eve and Adam driven from the door,
11 And behind the bushes peeping,
12 Saw the apple they were eating,
13 And I'll swear that I'm the guy that ate the core.

14
15 I taught Samson how to reach this happy land,
16 Showed Columbus how to reach this happy land,
17 And for Pharaoh's little kiddies
18 I built all the pyramiddies,
19 And to Sahara carried all the sand.

20
21 I taught Solomon his little ABC's,
22 I was the first one ate Limburger cheese,
23 And while sailing down the bay
24 With Methuselah one day,
25 I saved his flowing whiskers from the breeze.

26
27 I saw Samson when he laid the village cold,
28 I saw Daniel tame the lions in their hold,
29 I helped build the tower of Babel
30 Up as high as they were able,
31 And there's lots of other things I haven't told.

32
33 So you see that I'm not often sleeping sound;
34 I am much too busy getting all around
35 To see everything that goes on

1 **I can get my little nose on**
 2 **And to keep my little ear close to the ground.** (*MOUSE*
 3 *1 and MOUSE 2 exit. MOUSE 3, 4, 5 and 6 enter and stand*
 4 *at microphone.*)

5

6

No Room

7

8 **MOUSE 3:** So, as you can see, we haven't missed much over
 9 the years. But maybe *you'd* like to hear a little bit about
 10 the *first* Christmas. I'll bet you've *never* heard the *whole*
 11 story. So listen up! Maybe you'll learn something new!

12 **MOUSE 4:** It was only about two thousand years ago that
 13 this happened, so, of course I remember it very well.
 14 (*Lights up On-stage. There are a couple tables with people*
 15 *sitting at them, eating and talking silently.*) **We were busy**
 16 **at an inn in Bethlehem, finding a few crumbs here and**
 17 **there around the dining room. It had been a very busy**
 18 **night and the inn was full early — something about a**
 19 **census the Roman governor required.**

20 **MOUSE 5:** Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. (*Knock*
 21 *behind curtain.*) **The innkeeper went to open it, and a**
 22 **man stepped in,** (*One of those sitting at the tables goes to*
 23 *the side of the stage and brings on stage JOSEPH*) **asking**
 24 **for a room for himself and his wife, who was expecting**
 25 **a baby. He said he'd been to every inn in the city, and**
 26 **every single one was full.**

27 **MOUSE 6:** Well, as (s)he told you, *this* inn was already full
 28 too, but the innkeeper felt sorry for the couple and
 29 offered them shelter in the stable behind the inn. I was
 30 really surprised when the man accepted. (*INNKEEPER*
 31 *and JOSEPH and MOUSE 3, 4, 5 and 6 exit behind curtain;*
 32 *lights down on stage, stage cleared during the following*
 33 *song.*)

34

35 **SONG:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
 2 How still we see thee lie!
 3 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
 4 The silent stars go by.
 5 Yet in thy dark streets shineth
 6 The everlasting Light;
 7 The hopes and fears of all the years
 8 Are met in thee tonight.
 9 (*MOUSE 7 enters and stands at microphone.*)

10

11 Displaced and Disgruntled Animals

12

13 **MOUSE 7:** After a while, we went out back of the inn to see
 14 how things were going, and what a commotion! All the
 15 animals were outside, grumbling and complaining. You'd
 16 think the world was coming to an end or something.
 17 **Just listen!** (*MOUSE 7 exits. Lights up On-stage where*
 18 *DOVE, COW and DONKEY are pacing and gesturing in*
 19 *anger.*)

20 **DOVE:** All day Mr(s). Dove and I have been out searching
 21 for food, flying till I thought my wings would drop right
 22 off. I was really looking forward to a quiet night's sleep,
 23 and look what happens! All this confusion! People!
 24 Lights! That woman moaning about some baby! It's
 25 hopeless!

26 **COW:** *You* don't know what trouble is! Sleep is only *one* of
 27 *my* problems. Here I am, the long-time family cow. I
 28 just got fed, and those people, those strangers, took my
 29 manger and hay right away from me! What am I
 30 supposed to do? Starve, I suppose. That's gratitude for
 31 you. And after all the milk I've given them, too!

32 **DONKEY:** I hate to join the chorus; we donkeys pride
 33 ourselves on our independence. But really, *you're* the
 34 one who doesn't know what trouble is. Not only can I
 35 not sleep from the noise, not only was my food taken

1 away along with yours, but I just got here after many
 2 long days of carrying that woman all the way from
 3 Nazareth to here. (*Enter SHEEP.*)

4 **SHEEP:** What are all of you doing out here? Why aren't you
 5 inside eating and resting? That's what all we sheep
 6 were doing until this terrible, frightening light
 7 appeared in the sky, and a bunch of angels told our
 8 shepherds to come to Bethlehem. That was the end of
 9 *our* rest. Nothing would do but that we hurry over the
 10 hills and come to this miserable, crowded little city. For
 11 what, I ask you? (*Enter CAMEL.*)

12 **CAMEL:** I overheard the end of your complaint. But let me
 13 tell you, *you* don't know *anything* about hurrying over
 14 hills. *This* camel has been traveling for months over
 15 moors and mountains to get here. Just where is here,
 16 anyway? And why on earth did I have to get so tired
 17 and foot-sore to get here? (*MOUSE 8 enters and stands at*
 18 *microphone.*)

19 **MOUSE 8:** You can certainly see how much in the dark they
 20 all were! They were so busy worrying about
 21 themselves, they didn't have time to see what was
 22 happening. They all had *serious* attitude problems! (*All*
 23 *CHILDREN On-stage for the following song.*)

24

25 **SONG:** "Are You Humbly Grateful?" (*Or any other song about*
 26 *gratitude*)

27

28 **MOUSE 9:** (*Enters and speaks.*) But while the animals were all
 29 wallowing in self-pity, something wonderful was
 30 happening! So wonderful that *finally* even these selfish
 31 beasts couldn't miss it! (*CHILDREN and ANIMALS exit*
 32 *stage; lights off On-stage.*)

33

34 **SONG:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem," verses 3 and 4 (*Duet or*
 35 *solo*)

1 How silently, how silently
 2 The wondrous gift is given!
 3 So God imparts to human hearts
 4 The blessings of his heaven.
 5 No ear may hear his coming,
 6 But in this world of sin,
 7 Where meek souls will receive him, still
 8 The dear Christ enters in.

9
 10 O holy Child of Bethlehem,
 11 Descend to us, we pray;
 12 Cast out our sin, and enter in,
 13 Be born in us today.
 14 We hear the Christmas angels
 15 The great glad tidings tell;
 16 O come to us, abide with us,
 17 Our Lord Emmanuel!

18

19

The Birth

20

21 **SONG:** "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" ("What Child Is This?" or any
 22 *other song about the birth of Christ may be substituted.*

23 *(During the singing of this song, MARY and JOSEPH*
 24 *enter the stage, MARY carrying the baby [who has a light*
 25 *stick halo fastened on his head], JOSEPH carrying the*
 26 *manger. Lights On-stage come up. JOSEPH sets the manger*
 27 *down and stands to left; MARY places baby in the manger*
 28 *and kneels behind it. ANGEL(s) enter and stand behind her.*
 29 *SHEPHERDS enter and kneel at Downstage Left. WISE*
 30 *MEN enter and kneel at Downstage Right.)*

31

32 **MOUSE 10:** *(Enters and stands at the microphone.) And then*
 33 *something wonderful happened! Those selfish animals*
 34 *finally realized just what had happened. They*
 35 *recognized the Christ child with his flowing halo and*



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