

ORNAMENTS ALIVE!

by Scott Icenhower



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Ornaments Alive!

An exploration of Christmas
customs for children

by Scott Icenhower

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Dad — Adult male (only adult in play).

Chris — Male or female (many lines).

Thanksgiving Decoration — Male or female.

Sheep — Male or female (many lines).

Angel — Female.

Christian Ornament Family:

Dad Ornament — Male.

Mom Ornament — Female.

“J” Ornament — Male or female.

“O” Ornament — Male or female.

“Y” Ornament — Male or female.

Reindeer — Male or female.

Wise Man — Male.

Christmas Ball — Male or female.

Christmas Music Box — Children’s choir.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Set Design

This is an interior single set design. It is a living room being decorated for Christmas. There are piles of boxes all over the floor. The set contains three unique features:

1) Christmas Decorations Box

This is a large cardboard box marked accordingly and placed near an exit. It has either a back or side missing, which allows the “ornaments” — i.e., children — to be placed in the box so they can crawl Off-stage, unnoticed by the audience. It should be on the opposite side of the stage from the tree.

2) Christmas Music Box

The Children’s Choir sitting in a roped-off area constitutes the music box. They may be dressed as angels or carolers. They are motion activated. They stand, sing, and sit as a group when someone waves his arms in front of them.

3) Christmas Tree

- Paint a green outline of a Christmas tree on a white bedsheet.
- The outline should take up as much of the sheet as possible and should be painted lengthwise.
- Cut seven head-size holes in the sheet. Three holes at the bottom and two above that will be for the Christian Ornament Family. The other two holes should be placed above those five for the Reindeer and Christmas Ball — wherever they fit best.
- The children will sit on the floor, kneel, or stand behind the sheet and poke their heads through these holes. They are the ornaments on the tree.
- The bottom end of the sheet is then stapled to an eight-foot 2 x 4.
- A large sandbag is placed in the middle of the 2 x 4. This is to secure it Downstage and create the impression of a base for the Christmas tree.
- Heavy twine or wire is secured to the full width of the top of the sheet.
- With the bottom of the sheet secured with the sandbag base, raise the top of the sheet to a height of around five feet and tie off the twine or wire to two free-standing poles at each of the top corners or to hooks in the wall.
- The sheet will resemble a lean-to tent. The audience should be able

to see the outline of the Christmas tree and the children's heads when they are in place.

- A table should be placed Upstage behind the raised portion of the sheet for the Angel to stand on. From the audience's perspective, the Angel should look as if she/he is on the top of the tree.

Costumes

Dad — Casual street clothes.

Chris — Casual street clothes.

Thanksgiving Decoration — Child wearing a pilgrim hat or turkey costume.

Sheep — Ears on a hat to suggest a sheep is fine. You may also wish to add a black nose (use face paint) and a white sweatsuit with a white fabric tail.

Angel — Typical angel costume with halo, wings, and white robe.

Christian Ornament Family* — All wear T-shirts and jeans.

Dad Ornament — The Greek letters "chi" and "rho" fabric-painted or pinned onto the shirt. The "X" is on the stem of the "P."

Mom Ornament — Two shepherds' staffs crossed like an "X" with a cross in the middle, fabric-painted or pinned onto the shirt.

"J" Ornament — The letter "J" fabric-painted or pinned onto the shirt.

"O" Ornament — The letter "O" fabric-painted or pinned onto the shirt.

"Y" Ornament — The letter "Y" fabric-painted or pinned onto the shirt.

Reindeer* — Antlers (may be found at Christmas time, affixed to a headband) and a black nose (use face paint).

Wise Man — A robe and turban or crown.

Christmas Ball* — A picture of a Christmas ball painted or pinned to a T-shirt.

- * These children need to have "hook hats." Similar to an angel's halo, a metal hanger or wire is wrapped around their heads with one end going straight up and bending over. This creates the "hooks" that allow them to "hang" on the tree. Wrapping the wires in aluminum foil will cause them to stand out more to the audience.

All Scripture taken from The King James Version.

1 **Setting:** A family's living room in the midst of being decorated for
 2 Christmas. The room is filled with opened boxes of
 3 decorations and ornaments. The SHEEP character is hidden
 4 behind a few of the boxes. A unique Christmas tree is almost
 5 decorated with children dressed as ornaments. A Nativity
 6 scene is on the piano, and a Christmas music box (Children's
 7 Choir) is on the opposite side of the stage from the tree. A
 8 child dressed as a THANKSGIVING DECORATION is in the
 9 ornament box. (See set design page for further descriptions.)

10

11 *(At Rise: CHRIS is busy putting the finishing touches on the*
 12 *Christmas tree.)*

13 **DAD:** *(Off-stage)* Chris?

14 **CHRIS:** In here, Dad.

15 **DAD:** *(Entering)* Hey, it's looking good!

16 **CHRIS:** Thanks. Oh, when I set out the Nativity scene, I saw
 17 that we had a sheep missing.

18 **DAD:** It must have broken off. It's probably in one of these
 19 boxes around here.

20 **CHRIS:** If I find it, I'll glue it back on. Oh, and Dad, I found
 21 some batteries for the music box. Watch this.

22 **DAD:** *(Exasperated)* Chris, don't — *(CHRIS waves his arms in*
 23 *front of the music box (CHOIR). They automatically stand to*
 24 *sing a Christmas carol and then, with machine-like precision,*
 25 *sit back down. DAD shakes head.)* That's going to drive me
 26 crazy. Well, I'm glad you like decorating for Christmas
 27 so much, because you know that big Christmas tree
 28 Grandma has?

29 **CHRIS:** *(Enthusiastically)* Yeah. A tree that big would look
 30 great in here. We could buy some more lights, and —

31 **DAD:** She wants us to have it.

32 **CHRIS:** She does? Oh, that is so cool.

33 **DAD:** But the catch is, she wants to trade her tree for our
 34 tree.

35 **CHRIS:** That's OK ... *(Slowly looks at tree.)* So I gotta take all

- 1 these decorations off, don't I?
- 2 **DAD:** Afraid so. She just called a few minutes ago. I'm
3 sorry. Listen, when we get back from church, your
4 mom and I will help you. We're going to leave in about
5 fifteen minutes, so be ready.
- 6 **CHRIS:** OK. I'll start putting some of the decorations back
7 in the box. Hey Dad, I found a Thanksgiving decoration
8 that got mixed up with the Christmas stuff. *(Points.)* It's
9 in that box over there.
- 10 **DAD:** I'll get it. *(DAD reaches inside box and pulls out a small*
11 *child wearing a Thanksgiving costume. DAD holds*
12 *THANKSGIVING DECORATION out in front of him.)*
- 13 **THANKSGIVING DECORATION:** Thank you. Thank you so
14 much. I really appreciate that. Thank, thank, thank,
15 you, you, you ...
- 16 **DAD:** *(As the THANKSGIVING DECORATION keeps saying*
17 *"thanks," DAD says his line.)* I'll put it up in the attic.
18 *(DAD and THANKSGIVING DECORATION exit.)*
- 19 **CHRIS:** *(Starts moving some of the boxes around. He/she jumps*
20 *back when the sheep is uncovered.)* Hey, I almost stepped
21 on you!
- 22 **SHEEP:** *(Getting up slowly and looking around)* Don't glue me
23 back yet. I escaped. Yes, I'm what you might call a
24 scapegoat. I'm a sheep on the lam.
- 25 **CHRIS:** Wait a minute — you escaped?
- 26 **SHEEP:** That's right, from the Nativity scene over there on
27 the piano.
- 28 **CHRIS:** Why?
- 29 **SHEEP:** Don't get me wrong. I love celebrating Christmas
30 over there. I mean, it's Jesus' first birthday — duh. But
31 I gotta know — what are you guys celebrating over
32 here?
- 33 **CHRIS:** We're celebrating Christmas too.
- 34 **SHEEP:** Really? So why the tree with the decorations? Why
35 the different music? Why the fruitcake? It seems kind

1 of pagan to me.

2 CHRIS: Pagan? You think this is a pagan celebration?

3 SHEEP: Well, it ain't the same thing we're doing on the piano.

4 CHRIS: Oh, yeah? Then how do you explain that? (*CHRIS*
5 *points to the ANGEL on the top of the tree.*)

6 SHEEP: You've got an angel too? Well, don't I feel sheepish.

7 CHRIS: I'll get her down here so she can tell you. (*CHRIS helps*
8 *the ANGEL off the tree.*)

9 ANGEL: Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of
10 great joy, which shall be to all people (Luke 2:10).

11 SHEEP: Yep, that's the same thing we got over at the piano.

12 Say, would you like to sit for a minute?

13 ANGEL: No thanks. I'll just stand. I've been sitting on that
14 tree for a while now.

15 CHRIS and SHEEP: (*Both look up at tree, then back at ANGEL.*)
16 Oh, yeah.

17 CHRIS: May I help you over to the box? (*CHRIS helps the*
18 *ANGEL get into the box, where she crawls Off-stage and out*
19 *of sight.*)

20 SHEEP: OK, we both got angels ... but look at the things on
21 this tree. It's not like my Christmas. (*Pointing to*
22 *CHRISTIAN ORNAMENT FAMILY*) What are those?

23 CHRIS: They're Christian ornaments. I'll show you. I've got to
24 take them down anyway. (*CHRIS helps the MOM and DAD*
25 *ORNAMENT off the tree. "J," "O," and "Y" stay underneath*
26 *the tree.*)

27 DAD ORNAMENT: Hi, we're the Christian Ornament family.
28 I'd like for you to meet my wife (*MOM moves to his side*)
29 and our children. (*Only "O" and "Y" run out and stand beside*
30 *MOM and DAD ORNAMENT.*)

31 SHEEP: (*Looks at "O" and "Y."*) OY! You're Jewish? Are you
32 sure you got the right tree?

33 DAD ORNAMENT: What? (*Calls out.*) Jay, get out here. (*"J"*
34 *runs out and gets in place to spell the word "JOY" with other*
35 *ornaments.*)

1 **MOM ORNAMENT:** Tell them, children.

2 **“J” ORNAMENT:** Jesus.

3 **“O” ORNAMENT:** Others.

4 **“Y” ORNAMENT:** Yourself.

5 **MOM ORNAMENT:** You see, by loving Jesus first, others
6 second, and yourself last, you find JOY.

7 **CHRIS:** All these ornaments have meanings.

8 **DAD ORNAMENT:** That’s right, Chris. You see me? A “P”
9 on top of an “X”? Those are the Greek letters “chi” and
10 “rho,” and they are the first two letters in the name of
11 Christ. People use this symbol to represent Christ at
12 Christmas.

13 **SHEEP:** (*Looking at MOM ORNAMENT*) I recognize the
14 shepherds’ staff.

15 **MOM ORNAMENT:** That’s right. The combination of the
16 cross with the shepherds’ staffs symbolizes Jesus as the
17 good shepherd who will lay down his life for others.

18 **DAD ORNAMENT:** And where did you come from, kids?

19 **“J” ORNAMENT:** From the Phoenicians. Some say they
20 invented the alphabet.

21 **“O” ORNAMENT:** Yeah, a long time ago, like 1600 BC.

22 **“Y” ORNAMENT:** I thought we came from Wal-Mart.

23 **DAD ORNAMENT:** OK, time to get in the back in the box.
24 (*ALL go to the box except MOM ORNAMENT.*)

25 **MOM ORNAMENT:** (*To CHRIS*) You don’t have to help us.
26 We’ll be done in two shakes of a lamb’s tail.

27 **SHEEP:** (*Looks back at tail.*) I never thought about measuring
28 time that way before. OK, so you got Christmas over
29 here. I can see that. But some of this still looks pretty
30 pagan. (*Points to REINDEER.*) Look at that thing with
31 the horns. What’s that?

32 **CHRIS:** That’s a reindeer.

33 **SHEEP:** (*Beat*) And?

34 **CHRIS:** They pull Santa’s sleigh. You know, the sled full of
35 toys so Santa can deliver presents to all the good little

1 girls and boys.

2 SHEEP: And where exactly in the Bible did you read that?

3 REINDEER: It's not in the Bible, but it's partly grounded in
4 Christian tradition.

5 SHEEP: Oh, do tell.

6 REINDEER: Santa Claus is also known as Saint Nick or
7 Saint Nicholas. He was a Christian who lived many
8 years ago, and he celebrated Christmas by giving gifts
9 to other people.

10 CHRIS: Sometimes it gets out of hand and the retailers have
11 a field day, but it's still good.

12 SHEEP: I can see that. (*To REINDEER*) But how did you
13 and your sled-pulling team get involved with Saint
14 Nicholas?

15 REINDEER: You know how people like to add to a good
16 story. It's like you guys and the Little Drummer Boy. I
17 mean, really — a kid playing a drum while the baby's
18 trying to sleep?

19 SHEEP: Oh, you don't know the half of it. So I guess the
20 gift-giving part relates to the wise men giving gifts to
21 Jesus?

22 REINDEER: That's it. Inspired by Christian tradition.

23 CHRIS: (*To the REINDEER*) Can I put you in the box for a
24 while? We're getting a bigger tree.

25 REINDEER: Sure. Bigger tree? That's great. I'm not afraid
26 of heights. You can put me on the top limb if you want
27 to.

28 CHRIS: Thanks, I'll remember that.

29 REINDEER: (*They start walking toward box, then the
30 REINDEER stops and turns to CHRIS.*) Did you know
31 there's a Thanksgiving decoration in the box?

32 CHRIS: Yeah, but Dad took it out.

33 REINDEER: I'm sure (s)he appreciated that. (*REINDEER
34 starts to impersonate the THANKSGIVING DECORATION
35 as he gets into the box.*) Thank you. Thank you so much.



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P.O. Box 248 - Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-844-841-6387 - Fax (319) 368-8011

customerservice@christianpub.com