PRODUCTION NOTES

The Great Christmas Giveaway!

by
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The Great Christmas Giveaway reminds us all that "every good and perfect gift is from the Father above" (James 1:17). In this production we take a good look at how God gave to us so we can learn how to give "good gifts" to others. The simple truth is that all the gadgets and gizmos this world has to offer cannot give us the joy that is found when we give ourselves away in Jesus' name.

These production notes offer a few ideas to help you stage the musical, keeping in mind your own performance space, budget, time available, and production staff. As Deborah Craig-Claar says, "There is always more than one way to stage a musical." Every production of *The Great Christmas Giveaway* will be unique and will bear the creative mark of each director.

Instructional DVD

WORD Music has once again provided an instructional DVD ("IVD") to help directors and choreographers visualize how *The Great Christmas Giveaway* can be staged. The DVD contains a fully-staged performance by my friend, Maureen Rickman, at Pacific Christian Center in Santa Maria, CA. She did an outstanding job that will no doubt be a great resource for you.

To further assist you, we have uploaded a segment to www.wordmusic.com/item/080689746178 where Maureen and her production team explain exactly how they constructed the set, along with information about where they purchased props and costumes.

Production Team

To start out, I'd advise you to assemble a small group of creative people who can help brainstorm about how to best mount your production of *The Great Christmas Giveaway.* Give each team member a CD and book, and ask them to listen to it before you gather for your first creative meeting. Watch the instructional DVD together, then share ideas of how you could put on this musical in a fresh, creative way at your church or school.

Set

The Great Christmas Giveaway all takes place within a shopping mall. One of the first decisions you'll need to make is where the choir (stationary) will stand on **risers.** Looking at your stage area, will the group be divided in two, with space in the middle for part of the drama; placed all together in the middle; or all to one side

of the stage? In my opinion, the children who sing in your choir should be your top priority. Make sure everyone is visible by the audience. The spiritual "meat" of this work is found in the messages of the songs, and the choir carries 90% of that.

In the story, the drama cast travels to different inside locations (the food court; kiosk with a lighted make-up mirror; Tiff's Gifts store; and the middle of the mall, where the Christmas pageant takes place), so your next production decision will be determining how and where to stage the various stations. The acting scenes could all be played in the same spot, blocking the drama cast to look like they traveled to a new location during the songs; or, they could travel Stage Left for one storefront and Stage Right for the next storefront, etc. Please know that it's not necessary to design an elaborate set for each location. Set changes may be accomplished with just a few props (for example, the food court scene could have Samantha, the 'sample' girl, dressed in a hat and apron, carrying a chicken nugget tray; or for the kiosk, a lighted makeup mirror on a small table could suffice). Oftentimes, fewer props and more imagination can very effective!

If you decide to create one **backdrop** to frame the production, consider making it of Tiff's Gifts store. Many people choose to make a facsimile of the book cover artwork their main backdrop, and the cover of *The Great Christmas Giveaway* would be no exception. Some may choose to create their own picture of a mall as backdrop. The most common way to construct one is by stretching a dyed piece of muslin between two mounted poles. Another option is to use foam insulation boards purchased from a hardware store. The boards come in 8' by 4' sheets, and are available in several widths. On the DVD you will notice that Maureen's team made a countertop that lights up, reading "Tiff's Gifts." This worked great and looked terrific!

Props

* Colorful shopping bags for choir members to carry around in the opening
* A lighted makeup mirror on a small table
* Chicken nugget tray
* Wrapped Christmas gifts (use these to decorate the stage; Tiff will need two to hand out.
* Five Christmas gifts with bows on one side and the following words on the other (Father, Son, Spirit, Life, and a picture of a heart for the word Love). **[See Staging Ideas…"The Gift Goes On"]*
* Christmas tree with gift tags
* Brightly colored ribbons (if you decide to choreograph a ribbon dance for "I Give You Me," as the DVD demonstrates).
* On the video you can see that Maureen Rickman made each child a sign that said Joy. These signs were used in the choreography for the finale. Consider doing something like this if you have the time and volunteers.

Costumes

Choir members have the option of wearing T-shirts with the logo of the musical on it. These are available from WORD at a reasonable price. Another option is to have the children wear brightly colored Christmas sweaters. Adding a few scarves and hats would be festive and fun, too.
*Mall Cop–police officer outfit
*Samantha–fast food-looking apron and hat
*Tiff–Brightly colored Christmas dress
*Mr. Lancaster–Christmas sweater and slacks
*Nativity clothes for the manger scene.
*The drama cast (Brody, Ashley, Haley, Stella, Dylan, Addison and Tyler) should wear a variety of bright Christmas colors (solids look best).

Lighting

Lighting requirements for *The Great Christmas Giveaway* are fairly simple; just make sure the children are fully lit when they are singing. You may choose to dim the lights and bring them up again at each new store. Consider softening the lights for the ballad, "Where's the Line to See Jesus?".

Staging Ideas

"Shop 'Til You Drop"

During the opening song, have lots of excited shoppers with tons of bags scurrying into place. Haley and Ashley enter down the center of the aisle during the musical interlude and Brody pops up behind them.

"It's Better to Give"

Consider casting a few kids who are pitching temper fits during the beginning of this song. The mall cop can enter on a bike or scooter down the center aisle for his rap solo.

"It's Better To Give (Reprise)"

This is traveling music to Tiff's Gifts for the main cast. Have them boogie down the aisle or around the church. It's skipping music.

"The Gift Goes On"

This is a great place to feature several girls holding wrapped gifts with bows on one side, words on the other **[See Props].* The words should read Father, Son, Spirit, Life, with a big red heart on the fifth package for the word Love. Watch the DVD to see how my friend Maureen staged this.

"The Perfect Present"

Feature the choir on this upbeat song.

"Gold, Incense and Myrrh"

WORD music has created a DVD-illustrated media moment that will add a new dimension to your performance. It is included on the instructional DVD (IVD).

"I Give You Me"

Think about showing in silhouette the Bible characters mentioned in the lyrics (widow with coins, boy with fish and loaves, lady with perfume, someone carrying a cross). This would also be a beautiful song for a ballet or a choreographed ribbon dance.

"Where's The Line to See Jesus?"

Dim the lighting for this wonderful moment.

"Manger Song"

Your nativity children may slowly enter down the center aisle and take their places center stage. Have them exit the same way as the song comes to an end.

"The Gift of Joy!"

On the DVD you will see that Maureen Rickman made every child a sign that says Joy. They choreographed the entire song using these signs and it was so effective! Consider making Joy signs for your choir members if you have enough time and volunteers.

"The Gift of Joy! (Bows)"

Organize your participants so that the smaller cast members bow together first. Next have your lead characters bow together. Instruct the drama cast to split in the middle, pointing to the choir for them to take their final bows.