

OFFENDING THE NEIGHBORS

by JOHN COSPER

GENRE: Comedy

SYNOPSIS: A “concerned” neighbor warns his Christian friend that his nativity display may be offensive to those who are not Christian.

DIRECTOR'S TIP: Not So Quiet Time portrays three people in similar situations, but that doesn't mean the three roles have to be played in identical ways. Explore the ‘shades of grey’ that will keep each character distinct, and allow your actors plenty of freedom to make these characters their own. The three characters should also function as a single unit, so be sure to run them all together during rehearsals to ensure that each character meshes seamlessly with the other two.

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 2

TOPIC: Christmas

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Jeremiah 6:10

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Christmas

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon/discussion Starter

CHARACTERS:

ERIC—a Christian

CHAD—Eric's neighbor

PROPS: A lawn nativity set

COSTUMES: Winter clothes

SOUND: Two wireless microphones

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: Neighborhood sidewalk

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DIRECTOR'S TIP:

Blocking: The term “upstaging” originated when actors would stand so far upstage that all other actors on-stage would have to turn their backs to the audience to look at them. This obviously creates a problem for the rest of the characters, as they have to choose whether to let their scene partner see them or the rest of the audience. While you want to create “depth” in a scene, beware of getting a character trapped so far upstage that the other actors have to look upstage and turn their faces away from the audience to speak with them naturally. Even if a person is still perfectly audible, if the audience can’t see their face, they’ll tend to ‘tune them out’. The blocking for *Offending the Neighbors* calls for interaction not only between Chad and Eric, but also between Chad and the Christmas figures. To avoid upstaging, it may be wise to place the figures between Chad and Eric, so that Chad can raise each figure while still looking Eric in the eye.

P.O.V.: A good rule in building a character is to have a strong point of view about absolutely everything. Chad clearly has strong feelings about his friend’s choice of Christmas decoration, so make sure your actor plays it to the fullest. Point of view can (and should) be communicated by more than just the lines: make every bit of blocking, every gesture, every facial expression be an instrument for communicating how strongly Chad feels.

Make It Big!!: A few high-energy exercises between your actors would probably be a good idea before they hit the stage. Jumping jacks, speed-throughs, or fast-paced warm-up game may be in order to make sure Chad and Eric are ready for the audience.

Costumes: Some winter wear may be appropriate for Chad and Eric. If the two men are dressed for cold weather, it helps sell the impression that they’re outdoors; this not only makes the actors’ job that much easier, but also spares the need for anything else in the way of set.

Finding Props: Check with members of the congregation to see if they might have the lawn ornaments in question. If not, you might check with local stores and see if they’d be willing to let you use a set for a Sunday morning as a favor to their local church. Store managers are often open to creative ideas to spread good will to their community, and it never hurts to ask!

ERIC is setting up a light-up Mary, Joseph, and Jesus nativity set in his front yard. The figures are lying down so you can’t tell what they are.

CHAD happens to be walking by.

ERIC: Morning, Chad.