

THE WHISPER OF ADVENT

by Carmel Garvin Hearn

GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: How do we prepare for Christmas? Is it all about hustle and bustle or is there something we're missing? Have we stopped to listen to the whisper of Advent?

TIME: Under 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 14

TOPIC: Christmas, Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Matthew 3:3, Luke 3:4

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Christmas

SUGGESTED USE: The five occasions of the lighting of the Advent candles.

CHARACTERS:

In each scene there is a narrator and a child acolyte, plus:

Scene 1: two men, one woman, one child

Scene 2: one PA voice, one woman, one teen girl

Scene 3: one man, one female child, two women

Scene 4: two women, one teen boy

Scene 5: one woman, one man, one child

PROPS: Advent wreath, candle lighter

COSTUMES: All black; Acolyte should wear a traditional garment.

SOUND: General stage; SFX of a busy street, department store, TV football game, clock ticking. Music cues are necessary in scene five.

LIGHTING: General spot that dims; spotlight on Advent wreath.

SETTING: The Advent wreath in its natural church setting.

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Director's Tip:

Like *In Defense of Saint Nick*, this script requires precise timing. But this time it's not comedic timing we're after; it's stylized, musical, reader's theater timing. The author gives us some good clues. The central "character" here is the Advent wreath. Right away, we know that the actors aren't the focus. That's an important concept for them to understand. Everything they are saying is in direct contrast to the meaning of the Advent wreath. The author also tells us that the actors should be off to the side—ideally opposite the Advent wreath—or offstage entirely. That's your call as a director. Look at your space. Is it more dramatic and effective to have your actors dressed in black, in a group with scripts, reader's theater style? Will your audience respond better and focus more on the Advent wreath if the actors are offstage or in a balcony, out of view? If your audience is familiar with reader's theater, that might be an effective choice for them. If they aren't, trying it for the first time with this script might be distracting.

In his own right, Dad also has the right idea, if a little dimly. He, at least, is focusing on Jesus, even if it is a small plastic one. But he, too, is missing the point. He's so consumed with finding a plastic figurine that he's forgotten about preparing his home for guests and thereby welcoming the real Jesus to his home and heart.

First Advent Candle—a candle of hope

SFX street noise...cars honking, buses, trucks, car radio, etc., which fades under as voices begin. Lights begin to dim as voices begin. The first voice says a line (or two) before the next voice begins, and so forth, until there appears to be a cacophony of sound. However, when each new voice begins, the others should pause momentarily to allow the new voice to be established, and the voice cues should be woven together in such a way that key phrases from each voice are heard and distinguished throughout the scene.

Radio Announcer: It's the sounds of the season all day long and all night long here on the "Z," your E-Z listening station for nonstop holiday favorites all the way through Christmas day! Our request line is open, and here's one of our top-requested Christmas songs, "Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer..."

WoMan: *(Talking to husband on phone)* I've got to work until at least five today, then pick up the girls after chorus rehearsal...yes, it's my turn to drive. No, I can't switch again... did it last week. The concert's next week, and they have to attend. It's the Christmas concert, and you need to make plans to be there. Friday night. Seven PM. *(Aside, to child)* Honey, be quiet, please, Mommy's on the phone. *(To husband)* What do you mean, you can't make it? This is non-negotiable...