

AUNTIE LUV and the CHRISTMAS ORPHANS

By Thelma Pawloski

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STORY

Auntie Luv struggles without complaint to provide a home for a dozen orphans of all ages and nationalities. She is helped by the beautiful Merry Star, an orphaned Huron Indian, who is hopelessly in love with Peter, the young school master. Church services are being held at the orphanage this Christmas Eve (*early 1800s.*) when Peter's mother, waving a deed, announces she is turning the orphanage into the town schoolhouse for her son. Everyone's shocked but what follows is a display of human goodness rarely experienced. This play is guaranteed to warm the cockles of every heart in the audience.

SYNOPSIS OF PLAY

ACT I The Orphanage of Bethlehem
ACT II The People of Bethlehem
ACT III The Miracle of Bethlehem

TIME

The early 1800s - Christmas Eve. THE PLACE: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. SETTING: The large congregating room of the local orphanage.

COSTUMES

Should be in keeping with this time period. All members of the chorus should also be costumed.

THE CAST

Adults

2 m, 3w, principals

(plus 12 m and 12 w smaller parts)

Children

6 b, 6 g, principals

(Plus any number of adults and children in the chorus who will be the walk-on townspeople.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MERRY STAR: (*A Huron Indian girl.*) Orphaned at birth, she has been reared by Auntie Luv. Now in her late teens, she is hopelessly in love with Peter Von Zinzendorf.

MASTER PETER VON ZINZENDORF: (*The school master.*) A handsome, young man in love with Merry Star and unable to do anything about it because of prejudice from a domineering mother.

AUNTE LUV: (*Head of the orphanage.*) A loving woman who struggles without complaint to provide a home for orphans of all ages and nationalities.

MISTRESS CHARITY: (*Wife of Dr. Von Zinzendorf.*) A social snob, endured by all only because of admiration for her husband and son.

DR. ZINNY: (*Dr. Von Zinzendorf.*) A kind man, esteemed by the people of Bethlehem and adored by the children of the orphanage but henpecked by his wife.

CHILDREN OF THE ORPHANAGE

ANNA: Polish girl, 11 years old

ANTHONY: An Italian boy, 9

CHRISTINA: A Norwegian girl, 11

ELSA: A Bohemian girl, 10

HANS: A Danish boy, 12

HELGA: A German girl, 10

IVAN: A Romanian boy, 8

JON: A Dutch boy, 13

LUCIA: A Swedish girl, 8

MARIE: A French girl, 10

RICHARD: An English boy, 11

RUDOLPH: A Swiss boy, 9

PEOPLE OF THE TOWN

(In order of appearance)

- MR. & MRS. MARTINELLI:** The Italian tailor *(No children.)*
MR. & MRS. HASTINGS: The English general storekeeper
(2 children.)
MR. & MRS. VON WEILAND: The Dutch shoemaker
(2 children.)
MR. & MRS. CARLSON: The Swedish candlestick
maker *(2 children.)*
MR. & MRS. LEISER: The Swiss watchmaker
(2 children.)
MR. & MRS. RICHTER: The German carpenter *(boys
only.)*
MR. & MRS. EGENTOVITCH: The Romanian
vegetablefarmer *(boys only.)*
MR. & MRS. NOVACEK: The Bohemian baker *(2 children.)*
MR. & MRS. NIELSEN: The Danish poultry farmer *(2
children.)*
MR. & MRS. LARSEN: The Norwegian dairy farmer *(1 girl,
12 yrs. old.)*
MR. & MRS. POPULSKI: The Polish sausage maker *(7
children.)*
MR. & MRS. CHATEL: The French hotel and cafeowner *(2
children.)*

STAGE DESIGN

The exit to kitchen door is USR. Exit to side door is DSR.
There is a window USL and an exit to front doorway is DSL.

SET PROPS

Long wooden table with patched table cloth as the dining table in Act I. Use table alone to hold a sparse-looking tree and wooden stand, USC, for Acts II and III. Four long wooden benches set up on both sides and both ends of dining table in Act I. Move anywhere on stage for seating of guests in Acts II and III. Twelve chairs or stools; scatter against walls in Acts I and II and line up in front of table for Act III. Odd assortment of wooden chairs, stools, crates, and benches for guests including one for Auntie Luv, Charity, and the Doctor in Act III.

PERSONAL PROPS

ACT I: Colored leaves (*plastic or paper.*) little card with poem written on it; feathers; drawing of the Holy Family; gourds; tiny rocking horse; tiny flags made from shirt materials; clusters of nuts (*plastic ones are lighter in weight.*) pair of tiny skates; handmade star; pinwheels (*made of wood.*); apples (*plastic ones.*); doll clothes; candle stubs; small dinner bell. (*Note: The above are tree decorations and must have fasteners attached.*) Also, strings of popcorn and cranberries, paper chains, straw, bright-colored hair ribbons, small doll, and woman's hat (*outlandish design.*).

ACTS II and III: Charity's old-fashioned, drawstring handbag holding Doctor's speech, her speech and fancy handkerchief, and a deed; Charity's fan with a ribbon; Luv's plain handkerchief; two small candy boxes; candy canes for tree; and an old-fashioned carrying case holding Peter's Bible, speech, and the children's drawings of items named in the "Twelve Days of Christmas."

To simplify the props needed in the gifts from the townspeople to the orphans, use a wide variety of boxes, sacks, and wrapped packages. Some of the more easily obtainable gifts you may wish to show. Walk-on townspeople should also carry packages.

SUGGESTED MUSIC

INTRODUCTION: "O, CHRISTMAS TREE"
ACT I: "GOOD KING WENCELAUS"
ACT II: "GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN, REJOICE"
ACT III: "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM"
"AWAY IN A MANGER"
"THE FRIENDLY BEASTS"
"JOY TO THE WORLD"
"HURON INDIAN CAROL"
"THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"
"THE BELLS" (*recording of chimes.*)
"I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY"
"WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS" (*finale.*)

ACT I

(AT RISE: MERRY STAR enters from the kitchen, hearing the excited voices of BOYS offstage L. She crosses DS to greet them as They enter through front doorway, [DSL.] They are dragging in a very scrawny Christmas tree which They have cut down in the forest outside of town.)

RICHARD: (Excited.) We found one! We found one, Merry Star.

RUDOLPH: (Wearily; much expression.) We walked a million miles!

JON: We did not! Auntie Luv said we couldn't go beyond the old bridge.

RUDOLPH: Well, it felt like a million miles!

IVAN: Brrr ... I'm cold.

MERRY STAR: (Pointing USC.) Set the tree up over there, boys, and then you can go into the kitchen for some hot tea.

RUDOLPH: (Whining.) I hate tea! I want hot cocoa!

MERRY STAR: Now, Rudolph, you know Auntie Luv can't afford the fixings for hot cocoa.

RUDOLPH: But I still wish ...

MERRY STAR: (Pacifying RUDOLPH.) I know you wish and Christmas is the time for wishing, isn't it? (Pats HIM on head and turns to other BOYS who are setting up tree USC.) I'll get the popcorn strings for the tree. (Exits USC; BOYS step back to survey their work.)

ANTHONY: (Disgruntled; always emphatic about HIS description of the tree.) That's the ugliest Christmas tree I ever saw!

IVAN: 'Tis not!

ANTHONY: 'Tis too! That tree is ugly. (Makes a face at IVAN as MERRY STAR enters with popcorn strings from USC. MARIE follows her with doll clothes and more popcorn strings. MERRY STAR overhears ANTHONY.) It's ugly ... ugly ... ugly!

MERRY STAR: Now, what seems to be the trouble?

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