

One Night in Bethlehem

Book, Music and Lyrics
by John Ludwig

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DEDICATION

"Thank you" all starts with God and it ends there too. I don't know why I got to be the one to tell your story in this way...it starts with a baby one night in Bethlehem and ends with a Lord and Savior risen from a tomb. Hallelujah!

Peace on earth, goodwill and blessings to all, John

STORY OF THE PLAY

"One night in Bethlehem, and the world was not the same." This is how God's redemptive love story begins and ends in this 13-song musical. This biblically accurate show unpacks the events up to and including the birth of Jesus as told in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. God's plan for humanity's salvation begins with unexpected people the world wouldn't choose, but who are called to these eternally remembered roles. The approachable angel Gabriel (Gabe) brings God's messages to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the Wise Men. He shares the good news that John and Jesus are going to be born and warns of impending danger from the corrupt powers of the world. In the Grammy-considered song, "I'll Give My All," Joseph's emotional connection to the audience is evident as the music ebbs and flows over this question that every human seems to ask when God gives us something to do: "Why me?" The Shepherds song, "Glory Was the Word," joyously rocks out with unbridled emotion that these guys must have felt when they got the news first. The Devil's character (Lucifer) tries to make sure things don't go according to the Lord's plan, but the Devil fails, and God is victorious, as represented by the finale number "One Night in Bethlehem."

The well-known (and not-so-well-known) characters sing songs that will enlighten you, lift you up, make you laugh, and perhaps even cry. The musical ends with a challenge for all of us, which is to carry the story forward. Approximate running time: 90 minutes, about 50 minutes of music and 40 minutes of dialog.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

*13 males (doubling possible), 3 females (doubling to 2)
3-12 minor characters and extras (captain of the guard, shepherds,
Wise Men, priests, courtiers, and crowds)*

In order of appearance, their themes, songs:

Character	Key words	Songs	Notes
Zechariah	Humorous	<i>A Little Past Old Rejoice</i>	Character provides some comic relief
Gabe	Key role in play; an unassuming and down-to-earth angel, cool messenger	<i>News Room at the Inn</i>	Representative of God to the other characters, tries to not overwhelm people with his "angelness," but be a friendly (and somewhat cool) messenger; plays a harmonica not a horn.
Mary	Love	<i>Yes to Love Amazed, Certain, Sure and Believing Kicking Mommy in the Tummy</i>	Beautiful ballad Stirring duet of 2 special parents Pregnant fun!
Elizabeth	Girlish fun	<i>Kicking Mommy in the Tummy Rejoice</i>	An old lady made young again by her pregnancy
Joseph	Faithfulness	<i>I'll Give My All Amazed, Certain, Sure and Believing</i>	This song has moved people to tears. Joseph wonders how he can possibly be a father to Jesus, but vows to "give his all"
Lu(cifer)	Deceit	<i>Love, Hate, Ambition, and Power</i>	Grungy evil at work, a somewhat mysterious character, Lu(cifer) tries to plant doubt in God's people and thwart God's plan
Innkeeper	Compassion	<i>Room at the Inn</i>	Though historically doubtful, role of innkeeper is included for a moving song that leads the audience to have "room in their heart" and have a role in bringing peace on earth. Extra inn patrons.

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Shepherds	Joy	<i>Glory Was the Word</i>	Guys having the angel-inspired time of their lives; 4 shepherds plus one boy required
Herod	Pure evil	<i>Love, Hate, Ambition, and Power</i>	Herod is definitely Lu's man - delusional, paranoid, a revolting and heartless killer living for his own self-interest. The audience should feel contempt and disgust at what he is. Done well, this actor will get a hearty hand during the curtain call. Extras needed include 1 to 3 priests, captain of the guard, and 3-6 courtiers who are in the palace with Herod.
Wise Men	Wisdom and following God's lead	<i>Some Call Us Wise</i>	Haunting and melodic 3 required; several background extras as servants, attendants
Simeon and Anna	Peace	<i>Pure Peace</i>	A peaceful duet Two aged servants of the Lord given a great blessing
Entire cast	Triumph	<i>One Night in Bethlehem</i>	Upbeat Americana for the cast finale - everyone on stage for taking bows/curtain call

Staging: The play is designed to require relatively minimal staging to present it effectively.

Language: The language is intentionally not period specific. Although some cultural references are made, it attempts to avoid trendy or stilted speaking. The main characters are accessible and relatable. Audience members should be able to visualize themselves as Mary or Joseph, for instance. A producer could rather easily modify lines and roles to suit the particular cast or feel they are going for.

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SONG LIST

ACT I

- Song #1: One Night in Bethlehem
(*Cast except Mary, Zechariah and Gabe*)
Song #2: A Little Past Old (*Zechariah and Gabe*)
Song #3: News (*Gabe*)
Song #4: Yes to Love (*Mary*)
Song #5: Kicking Mommy in the Tummy
(*Elizabeth and Mary*)
Song #6: I'll Give My All (*Joseph*)
Song #7: Rejoice (*Zechariah and Elizabeth*)

ACT II

- Song #8: Room at the Inn (*Innkeeper*)
Song #9: Glory Was the Word (*Shepherds*)
Song #10: Love, Hate, Ambition, and Power (*Lu and Herod*)
Song #11: Amazed, Certain, Sure, and Believing
(*Mary and Joseph*)
Song #12: Some Call Us Wise (*Wise Men*)
Song #13: Reprise of Love, Hate, Ambition and Power
(*Lu and Herod*)
Song #14: Pure Peace (*Simeon and Anna*)
Song #15: One Night in Bethlehem (*Cast*)

Music/Musical styles: A number of musical styles are present and designed to highlight and emphasize the characters singing them and the point of each song. Typically, each song has a key word that reflects that character's role in the storyline. Music is varied in style – ranging from tender, emotionally moving ballads to upbeat, inspiring numbers to full-out rockers (Herod/ Shepherds).

The music on the CD was recorded at Trinity Music City (TMC) Studios, which is affiliated with Trinity Broadcast Network (TBN) in Hendersonville TN. Top flight musicians and vocalists brought the music to life. The Grammy-considered CD (Theatrical Musical category) has been released as the original cast recording. Soundtrack versions are also mixed that remove the lead vocals (leaving in background vocals).

ACT I

Scene 1: Biblical reference - Luke 1:5-22

(AT RISE: "One Night in Bethlehem" intro MUSIC is playing with CAST singing offstage while GABE and ZECHARIAH are silently on stage.)

Song #1: One Night in Bethlehem

CAST:

ONE NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM
AND HISTORY WAS CHANGED.
ONE NIGHT IN BETHLEHEM
AND THE WORLD WAS NOT THE SAME.
SALVATION MADE A BEACHHEAD
IN A COLD AND FALLEN WORLD.
THE STORY BEGAN WITH AN ANGEL AND A GIRL.
OH.... OH... OH...

(LIGHTS up. MUSIC: A background harmonica is playing. ZECHARIAH is kneeling by incense and candles. He tilts ear as he thinks he hears something. The harmonica stops. GABE is standing on an elevated perch far SR, observing. LU enters DSL, dressed identically as Gabe, and disapprovingly observing. Gabe comes down and approaches Zechariah who is startled and stands up.)

ZECHARIAH: What's this!? Who, who are you? No one else is supposed to be in here with me! (*Faces audience with Yiddish accent.*) One day of my life I'm finally in the holiest part of the temple at the hour of incense and some stranger bursts in and—

GABE: Zechariah! Stop! I am not a man.

ZECHARIAH: (*Quizzical.*) What do you mean you're not a man? You're—

GABE: An angel, a messenger from God, with awesome news for you.

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ZECHARIAH: *(Falls prostrate before GABE.)* I'm sorry!
Please don't strike me down! I never expected to see an
angel.

GABE: In the inner sanctum of the Lord's house? Crazy, isn't
it? Now, stand up, calm down, and listen.

ZECHARIAH: Who are you then? Wh—What's your name?

GABE: *(Helping ZECHARIAH up.)* Gabriel to be official, but
you can call me Gabe. Now, here's what's going on: The
God of your fathers sent me to tell you that your prayers
have been answered. You and Elizabeth will have a son.
(Blank response from ZECHARIAH.) Name him John.

ZECHARIAH: *(Uncertain.)* Well, umm, Gabe, this is great, but
we are about 25 years past that prayer. Maybe you don't
have to be a spring chicken to be a parent, but Elizabeth
and I are...are like...winter chickens!

GABE: Enough! Accept the joy given you. Many will rejoice at
John's birth. He will not grow up to be a drinker or lead a
self-centered life. Instead he will be filled with the Holy Spirit
from the beginning. Your child will lead many in Israel to turn
back to the Lord their God. Much like the prophet Elijah, he
will speak with power. Fathers will renew their love for their
children, and even the ignorant will see the virtue of the
righteous. He is the one who will prepare the hearts of the
people for the arrival of the One who follows. Got it?

ZECHARIAH: Umm, yes, and no.

Song #2: A Little Past Old

ZECHARIAH:

I'VE PRAYED A LOT OF PRAYERS,
BURNED MY SHARE OF INCENSE.
GABE, THIS NEWS YOU'RE TELLING ME...
IT JUST MAKES NO SENSE.
IN OUR TWENTIES, THIRTIES, FORTIES,
WE WOULD PRAY FOR A SON,
BUT ELIZABETH'S MAMA YEARS ARE DECADES PAST DONE.

End of Freeview

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