

DRAMA COMPANION/ PRODUCTION GUIDE

By Mark Cabaniss

GOD CAME NEAR

The Miracle and Majesty of Christmas

BY
TOM FETTKE AND MAX LUCADO

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Alfred Sacred

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This Drama Companion/Production Guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the Christmas musical, *God Came Near* by Tom Fettke and Max Lucado. The drama contained does not take the place of the narration in the *God Came Near* choral book, but is intended to complement the narrative. Adding the dramatic portions contained in this Guide should extend the work only by about 5 – 7 minutes to the existing length of 35 minutes, resulting in an approximately 40 – 42 minute total presentation.

Every attempt has been made to keep the dramatization within reach of churches and schools with limited resources. For those with greater resources and desirous of a larger production, there is ample room for imaginative staging enlargement upon the more basic staging presented here. Please know, however, that any desired changes to the dialog requires permission from the publisher.

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We wish you blessings and success in your performance of *God Came Near*.

– *The Publisher*

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PRODUCTION SUGGESTIONS

CAST

HOSTS 1 & 2: *Narrators who address the audience directly.*

ANGEL: *Delivers news to Zechariah.*

ZECHARIAH: *Hebrew prophet.*

ELIZABETH: *Wife of Zechariah; cousin of Mary.*

MAGI 1, 2, 3: *Wise men from the East.*

HEROD: *Corrupt king.*

MARY and JOSEPH: *Optional non-speaking roles.*

STAGING

Ideally, the dramatic version of this musical should be staged using three main playing areas (even of which the smallest churches generally have): “Center Stage” (the pulpit area in front of the choir); “Stage Right” (the area to the right of Center Stage when facing the audience in front of the choir) and “Stage Left” (the area to the left of Center Stage when facing the audience in front of the choir). However, by moving the simple suggested set pieces quickly and efficiently between scenes, the dramatic portions can be performed effectively solely in the pulpit area in front of the choir.

Another approach to staging the musical is “Reader’s Theatre” style. With this approach, the actors are seated on stools with music stands and they read their lines dramatically and in character. The stools and stands are placed either to the left or right of the choir, or could be divided up on both sides of the choir.

SET

No constructed set is needed to produce this musical. However, this dramatization certainly lends itself to that approach for those organizations wishing a larger production.

For the scene with the ANGEL and ZECHARIAH, a small, simple pedestal for the ANGEL to stand on. For the scene with HEROD and the MAGI, a decorated (though easily moved) chair to represent a throne. Also, a simple manger scene can be set up at Stage Left or Stage Right for the Magi to present their gifts to the Christ Child.

DRAMA SCRIPT

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1. OVERTURE

Following the OVERTURE (and before ADVENT CELEBRATION begins), HOSTS 1 and 2 and an ANGEL enter. One HOST stands Downstage Right and the other Downstage Left. The ANGEL stands Upstage Center, preferably on a small pedestal. ZECHARIAH also enters and stands center stage. Spotlight on each HOST as they speak.

HOST 1: In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

HOST 2: Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

HOST 1: Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him:

Spotlight up on ANGEL. The ANGEL speaks looking directly ahead, ZECHARIAH does not face the ANGEL as the ANGEL speaks from behind him.

ANGEL: Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

ZECHARIAH: (looking up, but not behind him) How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.

ANGEL: I am Gabriel and I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words.

Spotlight fades on the ANGEL, who exits.

HOST 2: Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.