

One
Small
CHILD

A Musical for Christmas

REHEARSAL GUIDE

by Dennis Allen

“HE IS BORN, THE DIVINE CHRIST CHILD”

with “Born in Bethlehem”

I love the carols we have in our hymnals, but there are also many great secular carols from the past. This French carol is a fun-to-sing melody, and, with the new lyrics, it is a great opening and closing to the musical. Focus on bringing out the low notes. It is easy to let them disappear as you descend and prepare to take a quick breath (in meas. 18 and 42, for example). In the middle section, beginning in meas. 27, smooth out this SATB statement by paying attention to phrasing. When you return to the exciting opening statement, you will have a nice contrast. The new song, beginning in meas. 52, is a wonderful retelling of the events of Jesus’ birth. Enunciate the words so nothing is unclear. Also, work on dynamics. Let the soft sections be truly soft, so the loud sections will be truly triumphant.

“ONE SMALL CHILD”

This has been one of my favorite Christmas songs since David Meece wrote it in the early 1970s. The haunting minor melody helps to enhance the wonderful text. Let the phrases rise and fall, expressively singing each one. On the second verse, beginning in meas. 15, the men need to lead out, and the ladies need to keep the volume of their “oos” softer. The gorgeous harmonies of the chorus, beginning in meas. 25, need careful attention. Practice these *a cappella* so that every chord is clearly tuned.

“CAROL SING-ALONG”

with “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,” “Angels We Have Heard on High,”
“Joy to the World! The Lord Is Come,” and “The First Noel”

Some all-time favorite carols are combined in this medley. This is a perfect opportunity for the congregation to join the choir in celebration and praise. The choir has a couple of opening and transitional statements (meas. 5-12 and 60-63), but, otherwise, everyone can sing the carols. The harmonies are mostly straight out of the hymnal, so the congregation should have no trouble.

“MARY, DID YOU KNOW?”

Ever since this song was written in the early 1990s, hardly a Christmas season passes without hearing it sung. It is most often sung as a solo, so keep the solo mentality as you rehearse. By that I mean to emphasize the words and establish an emotional connection with the listener. The softer sensitive verses need a hushed energy, which leads to the louder, more demonstrative middle section beginning in meas. 25. Then bring it right back down for the final verse and ending. Dynamics are the key to a great choir, so use them to effectively communicate.

“HOPE WAS BORN THIS NIGHT”

This is a wonderful newer Christmas song. The gentle feel of the 6/8 time signature is fun to sing, but the quicker tempo requires you to clearly pronounce your words. There are mostly eighth notes in the melody, but the occasional appearance of quick 16th notes requires attention to make sure the notes/words don't disappear. In the “Gloria” section, beginning in meas. 61, start very softly and slowly build to the climactic final choruses, beginning in meas. 78 to the end.

“IN THE FIRST LIGHT”

Bob Kauflin has had a profound influence on worship and church music for many years. Each phrase of this song needs a “rise and fall” to clearly communicate. Sing the first part of the arrangement in the middle volume level, then, beginning in meas. 50, add a growing dynamic, headed to the triumphant concluding statements from meas. 67 to the end. Your choir needs to read these words aloud and discuss the power of their meaning. Then when they sing, the power of this thought will communicate even better to your congregation.

“NO ROOM”

with “You Left Your Throne (Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne)”

John Peterson is really the reason we have Christian musicals today. His compositional work, particularly in the 1950-1970 decades, has inspired many choirs and many composers. This easy-to-sing song leads naturally to the Christmas invitational thought “There is room in my heart for You!” Concluding the arrangement is a new worship chorus that simply needs attention on the soft contemporary rhythms. Rehearse them *a cappella* to ensure accuracy. Listen to the demo and match your singing style to the singers you hear. Hopefully this combination of songs will give your worship leaders a chance to invite a response to your presentation.