

THE
GREATEST
STORY
EVER TOLD

A Musical for Christmas

REHEARSAL GUIDE

by Dennis Allen

“FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN”

with “Open the Eyes of My Heart”

Handel’s *Messiah* is very familiar music for the Christmas and Easter seasons. Paul Baloche masterfully weaves a brief theme from this classic with his own classic worship song, “Open the Eyes of My Heart.” Your congregation will know both selections well, so invite them to sing along with the choir. Contrast the softer “Holy, holy, holy” middle section with the energetic opening statements.

“HEAVEN SINGS GLORY”

“Glory to God in the highest” is one of the greatest texts in Scripture, so add the energy needed for this fun-to-sing new song. The 6/8 time signature should lead your choir to a joyful “lilt” in their singing. However, since this is a new song, work on clear diction and rhythmic accuracy. On the chorus, practice cutting off the word “glory” cleanly and together. To ensure accuracy, rehearse the vocal parts *a cappella*, and then add accompaniment.

“ANGELS, FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY (EMMANUEL)”

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory” is a very familiar Christmas carol that Paul Baloche added to his own very familiar worship song, “Emmanuel.” Invite the congregation to sing along. The theme of “come and worship” is present in both songs, so emphasize this during your choir’s preparation for Christmas. Remember that the service you are getting ready to share is not a “concert,” it is a service of worship to the Lord.

“A STRANGE WAY TO SAVE THE WORLD”

The lyrics of this great song pose one of the great questions about the Christmas story: Why did God choose Mary, Joseph, Bethlehem, a stable, and so forth? Make sure your rehearsal includes extra time on correct rhythms and clear words. Record your choir during rehearsal, and then play the recording. Ask the choir if they can understand the words. You can use a solo for even more of the verse sections if desired, and then have the choir join on the chorus. You may also present the entire song as a duet, with the male soloist singing the tenor part.

“ONE KING”

with “We Three Kings of Orient Are”

This is a great song made popular several years ago by Point of Grace. The 6/8 time signature will lead the choir to a gentle loping feel, so let that increase the emotion of your singing. This arrangement has several places that call for dynamic contrast. Encourage choir members to circle the dynamic markings in the music. (They should always have a pencil in rehearsal!) Spend time rehearsing the louder and softer portions. Record rehearsal, and then ask the choir to determine how well they adjusted to the dynamics.

“IT’S STILL THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD”

This title song is a great Gaither classic. Encourage the soloist on the opening verse to be very expressive as he/she sings this great story. On both the first and second verses, work on good diction so that the message is clear. In meas. 43-46, spend extra rehearsal time on blending the ladies divided voices, and then adding the men. In meas. 58, you sing the final key-change chorus. This is perhaps one of the highest emotional points in the entire musical, so let your volume, energy, and heart explode with love and worship to the Lord for this great gift of Jesus.

“IT’S ABOUT THE CROSS”

Christmas without Easter is not a complete story. This simple song makes this message very clear, so rehearsal on matching correct rhythms and crisp diction is critical. Encourage your choir to spend time thinking about the message of this song. Sharing testimonies about what this song lyric means will be powerful to your group. Adding the personal emotion that this song demands will make your presentation more effective.

“GO TELL!”

with “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

It’s one thing to know the truth; it’s another thing to share it. One of the greatest gifts your choir can give to your congregation is an energetic encouragement to “Go Tell!” This popular song from The Martins is just the ticket. Encourage your choir to sing with “soulful, gospel” attitude. Don’t be shy about following the style of the song. In fact, I encourage you to listen to the demo several times and match what you hear. There are several spots with “punchy” rhythms, so work on those syncopated sections. A *cappella* singing will again be a great tool to expose the places that need extra work. Invite your congregation to stand and join the choir during the “Go, Tell It on the Mountain” middle section. Hopefully by then they are already clapping along with your energetic singing!