

# Director's Notes

5 main speaking parts, 11+ minor speaking parts (more if parts are shared), 10-20 non-speaking parts, plus any number of children in the Chorus. The Chorus should be dressed as extra cows, sheep, mice, robins and donkeys. There is plenty for everyone to do, so 'A Way In A Manger' is suitable for a large cast, and yet may be performed by a single class. Minimum cast size 26, with doubling up.

Duration approx 25 minutes.

## CAST LIST in order of appearance:

Narrators (2+)	Scripted for two, but may be more. May be dressed as owls.
Anna	Central character, up to p. 8 and at end. Solo singing in 'Christmas Eve'.
Ben	Central character, up to p. 8 and at end.
Santa } Elves }	<i>'Santa &amp; His Elves' dancers. May double with Nativity characters.</i>
Donkey	Central character.
Cows (2+)	Small speaking part.
Sheep (2+)	Small speaking part.
Mouse (1-2)	Small speaking part.
Robin (1-2)	Small speaking part.
Worms (2)	Small speaking part, mainly mime in 'If You Wanna Teach a Worm'.
Ducks (2)	Mime/movement in 'If You Wanna Teach a Worm'.
Mary & Joseph } 3 Kings } Angels } Shepherds } Grandma }	<i>Nativity only, non-speaking characters. May double up with 'Santa &amp; His Elves' dancers.</i>
	Small speaking part, at the end of the play.

## PROPS

Shovel and broom for Anna and Ben, set Upstage at the start of the play. 'L' plates for worm and duck learners. Doll to be Baby Jesus, manger, crooks and lambs for shepherds, gifts for kings, staff for Joseph.

## STAGING SUGGESTIONS

A stable backdrop, perhaps with a large sign 'HOLLY TREE FARM'. Props may be added to indicate that it's a stable. Raised blocks (or straw bales) are needed upstage centre for Mary, Joseph and manger, ideally with a further raised level behind, on which angels may be positioned. Children forming the choir are seated to each side or below the main performing area, and those involved in scenes return to this base position after their turn.

# Director's Overview

## INSTR.

## OPENING MUSIC

◉ Track 1 / 11

ANNA and BEN arrive home at their farm. They go into the stable, arguing about whose turn it is to muck out. ANNA tells BEN what Grandma has told her: that every Christmas Eve animals can speak, and that they all kneel down at midnight. [This idea comes from old English folklore. See Thomas Hardy's poem 'The Oxen', which is on the subject.] BEN and ANNA argue about whether this could be true.

## SONG

## CHRISTMAS EVE

◉ Track 2 / 12

The children leave, still arguing, and the animals reveal that they can speak! DONKEY says that his great, great, great... grandfather carried Mary to Bethlehem, which everyone agrees is very special. A SHEEP wishes something special would happen in their stable. They go to sleep. Time passes. It's Christmas Eve, and SANTA and his ELVES do a dance while the animals sleep.

## INSTR.

## SANTA AND HIS ELVES - DANCE

◉ Track 3 / 13

The ANIMALS sing 'Away in a manger...' DONKEY asks 'What is a way?' The NARRATORS explain the difference between 'away' and 'a way', and the central notion is introduced: that a 'way of life' is contained in the manger at Bethlehem. The COWS think that God is an old man in the sky with a big white beard. The song presents an alternative picture!

## SONG

## BIGGER THAN THE BIGGEST MOUNTAIN

◉ Track 4 / 14

The SHEEP think God is too hard to understand. The NARRATORS explain: that's why God came to earth as a human, so humans would understand him better. The animals agree that every creature learns best from its own kind.

## SONG

## IF YOU WANNA TEACH A WORM

◉ Track 5 / 15

The NARRATORS explain that humans have a choice – they don't have to follow the way in a manger.

## SONG

## THE WAY IN A MANGER

◉ Track 6 / 16

Donkey is imagining what it must have been like for his very great grandfather, carrying Mary to Bethlehem. Everyone else tries to imagine it too, as during the song the nativity scene is re-enacted, with all the traditional characters and symbolic actions, giving gifts, etc.

## SONG

## DONKEY ON A JOURNEY

◉ Track 7 / 17

## SOUND EFFECT

## BELLS CHIME MIDNIGHT

◉ Track 8 / 18

The children arrive and are amazed to find all the animals kneeling, just as Grandma had said. Right on cue, Grandma arrives.

## SONG

## AWAY IN A MANGER

◉ Track 9 / 19

It's Christmas Day – the best day in December!

## SONG

## BEST DAY IN DECEMBER

◉ Track 10 / 20