

DoveTale

By Ted Swartz, Lee Eshleman and Ingrid De Sanctis

THE BARNYARD CHORUS

Characters: Gabriel, Mary, Joseph

Props: Knitting needles, door, 2 crates

Length: 9-10 minutes

(GABRIEL speaks directly to the audience as he works hard to create the barnyard scene. He wants them to understand the miracle of the night and is enthusiastic as he builds the scene with their help. Very important for the actor to be in control of the chaos in this scene.)

GABRIEL: You know, I anticipated that moment with the shepherds, the behold moment, for a very long time, but I have to say I didn't picture it unspooling quite the way that it did. But you know, I think it was better than I pictured it. I don't know if you noticed this, but those two, Maggie and Egan, I think they must be about the most kind-hearted, generous souls that I've ever met. Now, they're up here, just kind of eking out a living on the hillside, you know, making catch as catch can or what have you. And yet when they got the news, they ran straightaway and took the one gift they had to bring to lay before the king. Pa rumpa pum pum. *(Singing)* Oh, little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie. Silent night, holy night, all is calm...

You know, let me see if I can't paint a slightly more accurate picture of how things were that night in the barn. It was anything but silent, calm, and still in the barn, 'cause it was a barn, filled with creatures that had no idea that this was an unusual night. And when they threw their voices into that starry, starry night, it was anything but calm. It was more like, well, perhaps we could re-create it. You people right over here in this section, you know how the cattle are lowing. Do you think on three, could you low for me? Here we go, one, two, three. *(The audience begins their lowing)*

That certainly was low! What we'd really like to hear is together a nice, big unison moo. Okay, on three, here we go. One, two, three ... *(Mooing)* All right, not bad, but see if you can beef it up a little. One, two, three... *(They begin mooing)*

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That's what I'm talking about. You folks over here are pigs. Sorry, what I mean to say is, I'd like you to mimic pigs. Okay, on three, here we go. One, two, three... *(The audience begins to oink, oink.)*

Somebody threw their sinus out of joint, I'm sure of it. *(GABRIEL focuses on another section.)* You folks over in this section, I would like you to be chickens. Okay, are you ready? One, two, three, hit it! *(The audience begins squawking.)*

Very nice. I can just see the eggs rolling down the aisle over there. You folks on the far left here, I would like you to be lambs, that's maaaaa ... okay, one, two, three, go! *(The audience begins to Maaaa.)*

All right, now I don't think I covered the people right down the center here. You ... the center and then the center back there, I would like you folks to be horses, neigh. Okay, one, two, three, go! *(The audience begins neighing.)*

We have one professional horse over here. Someone in the equestrian arts has joined us this evening. Okay, you folks in the far corners and you folks in the balcony, bless you there, I'd like you to be stray, oh, also anybody who's dissatisfied with your animal, you can be stray cats and dogs. Hit it, here you go, now. *(Barking and meows from the audience.)*

Wonderful. All right. Thank you. Oh, oh, one more thing. We do, of course, need a bullfrog. Now, if you're capable of making a bullfrog noise, don't do it now, but put your hand up and let me know that you'd be willing to do that. Don't be shy. Right there, okay, wonderful. *(GABRIEL finds one person in the audience and speaks directly to him/her.)*

Listen, when your moment comes, I'm gonna point right at you, and then I want your best bullfrog, okay. All right, now folks, here's how it's gonna work. I'm gonna point to your section and I want you to make your animal noise, with a great deal of fervor, and continue to make it until we've brought all the animals in. Get louder and louder, until with one big swooping motion I will cut all of you off. And if we do it crisply and cleanly and silently, it'll be an amazing effect. So, but make the animal noises nice and loud and then we'll have our little coda there at the end. Wait 'til I point to your section.

(GABRIEL leads this orchestra of animals with the knitting needles as if a conductor of a fabulous orchestra. There is lots of noise. Then he stops the noise. Silence. He points to the audience member who volunteered to be the bullfrog. During the audience reaction to the bullfrog noise, GABRIEL turns the door around to show the manger side. GABRIEL

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changes the mood of the moment and MARY and JOSEPH enter, carrying the baby and sit on the two crates in front of the door.)

I nearly forgot. There was one other voice there that night, one singular voice. It was the voice of a little boy, who had just been born, and he had little tiny fists and he was wrinkled up and writhing around and let me tell you, the kid could cry. He cried like his lungs were forever. He cried like a spurned lover who'd just been kicked off the back porch, onto very hard earth. But, it was a beautiful night and a holy night. All nights in God's universe are.

(GABRIEL exits.)

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