

Free Online Production Notes

These production notes will be helpful as you plan and prepare your performance of *Arrest These Merry Gentlemen*. But this is just one small part of the great resource material that has been created for you! These pages are just a small sampling of what is available in the Director's Resource Kit (892028002216 retail \$69.99) The Director's Resource Kit is a "gold mine" of planning, preparation, teaching, and devotional tools that will help you and your team make for an unforgettable experience with your children.

Here is what is contained in the full Director's Resource Kit:

One CD-ROM containing nearly 200 pages of invaluable resource material, including:

- Production Notes (set, casting, costuming, prop directions, planning calendar)
- Lesson Plans (complete flexible lesson plans with musical, spiritual, mission activities, games, verse memory activities, audition materials, blocking plan)
- Devotional Book (reproducible interactive student Devotional Book for small group or take-home use)
- Movement Script (complete move-by-move description of choreography)
- Running Script (entire script with complete dialog, song lyrics and stage directions for use by tech and production staff)

The entire set of resources is reproducible, and because it is all stored in pdf files on the CD-ROM, you will always be able to print a pristine copy of anything in the kit.

One DVD containing video demonstration of all the choreography, along with costume and prop demonstrations.

Contact any of the Little Big Stuff Music Authorized Dealers and ask for:
892028002216 *Arrest These Merry Gentlemen* Director's Resource Kit \$69.95

ARREST THESE MERRY GENTLEMEN



a Christmas musical caper for kids
created by steve moore ★ rob howard ★ david guthrie

Script.....Steve Moore
CreatorsRob Howard and David Guthrie
Lessons and ActivitiesSarah Harris
DevotionalsNancy Guthrie
Graphic Design Kirsten Howard
ChoreographyAndy Pearson

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Isaiah 43:1

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However, pdf files are not easy to edit or customize before printing.

We recognize that for much of this material, you will simply print the pages “as-is,” and they will work perfectly for you. However, we also know that there may be sections that you will want to edit, alter, change, or customize. For example, you may wish to:

- Customize audition forms with specific date and location information
- Adapt lesson plans, adding here and subtracting there
- Fill in “lessons-to-go” with track and page number information
- Alter certain of the student activity pages according to preference
- And more . . .

To facilitate these edits and alterations, many of the sections of this Kit are available in .doc file format, which can be easily edited in Microsoft Word or other word processing programs. If you have purchased this Kit, these .doc files are available to you by request, free of charge. Simply contact us at resources@littlebigstuff.com, specifying which musical you are using, and letting us know which sections you would like to receive in .doc file format.

Not all sections are available in this format, but most are.

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director/teacher planning

To experience a positive, organized practice,
PLANNING
is important, vital, critical!

So, whether you are a veteran or a beginning teacher, do not leave this out.

BEFORE PLANNING with your team/staff:

- PRAY!
- DECIDE how many weeks you have from the start date _____ to performance date _____.

That will probably include:

- One week for kick-off _____ Date: _____
- Last 2-4 weeks for blocking _____ Dates: _____

To accommodate different styles of teaching and experience, we have provided two methods of lesson planning. One is a Flexi-plan for those of you who prefer to pick and choose songs, activities, etc. The other is a Lesson-to-Go that gives specific ideas and suggestions for teaching and reviewing songs, along with activity suggestions.

- Choose the style that best fits you. If you choose the Lesson-to-Go, remember that these are just suggestions. Look for the Lesson-to-Go section. There will be one lesson for each song.
- Read through the suggested activities in the Activities section. There are the singing (teach-the-song) activities, rhythm activities and small group/early arriver activities. You might have teachers that you can delegate these activities to.
- Set a date, time, and place to meet with your teachers. Be flexible. It might mean phone calls, emails or meeting with teachers individually.

AN ADDITIONAL RESOURCE: Check out the Music Basics Resource (MBR) for additional ideas on teaching the songs or rhythms.

production notes

The following information is provided to help you customize Arrest These Merry Gentlemen to perfectly fit the needs of your ministry. We have sought to supply you with several options in casting, set design, and overall production ideas. Feel free to make adjustments as needed for your kids. Check out our website for even more information at www.littlebigstuff.com.

Most importantly our desire is to help you spread the “Share the News” about Jesus Christ to your audience and to your children. As you plan this program and direct your kids, the most important thing to remember is to consistently try to reflect Christ no matter what may happen. Perfection is a great goal to work toward, but things do not always go as planned, and that’s okay. Prayer and a willing heart are all God needs to use your ministry to His glory. So have fun, prepare, plan and then sit back and be ready to be blessed!

Production Timeline

3 months prior to performance

- Have a meeting with some of your creative workers and discuss ideas for parts, sets, props, costumes and specialty groups or dancers. This should include 3 to 4 people along with yourself.
- Prepare audition packets and have audition signups before and after choir.
- Set up rehearsal schedules and reserve rooms needed for your rehearsal. Be sure to book your Worship Center or other performance space for the main performance and rehearsals that week.
- Hold auditions and post the results
- Enlist some creative people to help with costumes, sets, makeup and choreography.
- Work to learn the songs and become familiar with all the tunes.
- Hand information to kids about all the upcoming extra rehearsals for the whole choir.
- Find a volunteer that might help send email reminders to the kids about their special rehearsals if they are in a part.

2 months prior

- Begin rehearsals with your main cast.
- Begin to plan the blocking of the stage, where everything will be placed.
- If costumes need to be made, begin to get materials and measure kids that will wear the costumes.
- Remind the kids to start now praying for those people they might invite or people that will be at the program.
- Encourage the kids to be committed to rehearsals and honor the Lord with their work.
- Finalize plans for the set and begin the process of making those or giving instruction to volunteers on what is needed.
- Order any props needed from online companies you might use.
- If possible, create a website online. Set up a calendar and information for parents to conveniently look at for answers to their questions about the musical.
- Slowly stop using the choral books and start singing from memory. Teach the movement for a couple of the songs during choir as a large group.
- Begin to have small group choreography rehearsals.

- Talk to the media staff or volunteers if there are any videos you might want to create (contact Little Big Stuff at www.littlebigstuff.com to obtain the simple licenses needed to duplicate DVDs of your performance, whether for sale or giveaway).
- If ordering t-shirts, begin to get shirt sizes to place the order. Visit www.littlebigstuff.com to place your t-shirt order. If wearing biblical robes, inform the kids as to what they will need for their costumes. Ready-made biblical costumes can be ordered for your musical as well. If ordering this should be done right away. (See website for suggestions on ordering costumes).

4 weeks prior

- Have your solo rehearsal for all soloists and ensembles.
- If you have not done so already, begin small group rehearsals.
- Set construction should be happening. Costumes should be finalized and purchased or begun to be made.
- Work on putting together a printed program.
- Begin to ask for volunteers to help backstage during the program...costumes, makeup, set changes.
- Finalize the prop list and make sure everything has been planned out for these items, whether purchasing or making.
- Complete stage design and make sure choreographers and actors know where everything will be placed.

3 weeks prior

- Meet with audio/tech people to finalize needs for mics, lighting and video. How many soloists per song, how many main cast/speaking parts, etc.
- Finalize copy for program.
- Put together costume needs for any special parts, what shoes to wear, how to wear their hair, if they need to provide anything for their costumes.

2 weeks prior

- Remind kids of upcoming rehearsals.
- Ask kids to come to the front and pray for the upcoming program.
- Hand out simple printed tickets that have the information about the program and make sure they say "Free Admission." Encourage the kids to hand these out to family, friends and people at school.
- Finish construction of sets and props.
- Make sure you have a clean-up plan for after the musical is performed.
- Enlist someone to take pictures of the program. You could even have a photographer take a large group picture for the parents to order later.

1 week prior

- Keep your cool at all times. Kids see Jesus as we lead with patience and kindness.
- Let the kids know they have worked hard and prepared and now they need to focus on showing this audience what they know. As they sing their faces should show how much they love the Lord.
- Make final preparations for props, set pieces and costumes. Get these set-up as soon as possible for your rehearsals.
- Hand out costumes for choir (t-shirts or biblical costumes) and send home any last minute instructions.

Performance Night

- Have fun and let them know that perfection is a great goal, but mistakes might happen and that's okay. Just keep on doing your part, smile and do your best.
- Remind them that the ultimate goal of the evening is to honor the Lord and show his love on their faces.
- Afterwards, sit back and relax. (After you clean up, of course!)

Party

- If you took photos/videos of the performance, make those available to be ordered or purchased at the party (don't forget to contact Little Big Stuff for permission to record or video the program).
- Remind the kids when you will start back up.
- Compliment the kids and, regardless of what happened, let them know they were awesome!
- Thank workers that helped with the program.
- Love on your kids and provide some time of laughter.
- Watch parts of the video if you have one.
- Ask trivia questions about the musical for fun.

Cast of Characters

SPEAKING ROLES:

JOE SABBATH:	The sergeant set on keeping the peace in Bethlehem.
ROOKIE:	Joe's peace-keeping sidekick.
SCOOP:	A reporter for the Bethlehem Examiner.
CUB:	Scoop's assistant reporter.
TRAVELER:	Local witness to the events.
SEAMSTRESS:	Local witness to the events.
GOAT-NAPPER:	Local witness to the events.
SOURCE 1:	News source for Scoop and Cub.
SOURCE 2:	News source for Scoop and Cub.
SOURCE 3:	News source for Scoop and Cub.
CD:	Camel driver on the road from Baghdad to Jerusalem.
HERB:	Shepherd.
FRANK:	Shepherd.
VINCE:	Shepherd.
MERV:	Shepherd.
SHEP:	Shepherd.
GABRIEL:	Angel at the Nativity.
PERSON 1:	Local witness to the events.
PERSON 2:	Local witness to the events.
PERSON 3:	Local witness to the events.

Audition Preparations

Audition Introduction

As you get ready to hold the auditions, you will need to prepare an audition packet and provide information about the characters and parts available and give the dates of the auditions. The very first time you meet with your kids discuss the different characters in the musical and some descriptions. Encourage them to memorize their parts. Play some of the songs and let the kids hear a sample of the solos. Be enthusiastic about the options available! If possible, give the date you will post the audition results. Allow two weeks for audition signups.

Audition Packets

In your audition packets you will give options for parts and solos that they may try out for in the audition. Give a couple of options for the girls and the boys. Pick one or two songs they can choose from to sing for the tryouts. You will also need to list important dates, such as the performance and major rehearsals the week of the musical. Encourage the kids to be ready to commit to a higher level if they are chosen for a main part. It is also helpful to provide an information sheet (a sample is provided in this Resource Kit) for them to fill out and turn in at the audition that indicates dance experience, costume sizes and even a place for them to commit to the extra rehearsals if chosen for a part.

The week before auditions, have your directors give some tips on auditioning and how to prepare -- some do's and don'ts of how to have a successful audition. (A list of tips for kids and judges is included on the following pages.)

Audition Process

Enlist the help of some of your workers to sit in on the auditions. Provide audition sheets for your judges and a simple guideline as to grading the tryout. Using a point system is a good way to judge with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. You may want to have callbacks for the main parts and if so, make note on the audition sheets as you go if you think they might be candidates for a callback. Once the auditions are over, then the decision can be made about how many to actually call back if you choose to do this.

Normally callbacks are one week after the original auditions were held. This may not be something you need to do, but it is fun for the kids to have another opportunity to try out. If you choose to have callbacks, you can even suggest that they try out for another part that you might be considering them for. (Your callback sheets are a little different and there is a sample page for that as well).

The audition process is a great time for kids to learn the value being prepared and working toward a goal. It is also a moment to teach about trusting God to lead us in the path he wants for us. The night you post results, let the kids know that you prayed about this and you believe that God has led you to put each child where they belong. This is a great opportunity to go over parts again and explain what they might be doing in the part they receive. Be excited about every part and they will too! Let them know it is okay to be disappointed, but then they need to be ready to do whatever they have been assigned. Their work in this musical should be a chance for them to honor the Lord with their talent. Every child is important whether singing in the choir or performing a special part. Everyone is needed to make this work!

The audition process is exciting and yet difficult at the same time. We would love to offer everyone the part they desire, we would love to give everyone a solo that tried out, but that is not always possible. No one wants to disappoint their children, but I firmly believe this is a great opportunity for them to grow. They need to learn to deal with successes and also with what they might perceive as "failure." The fact that they tried out makes them winners and I always let them know this as we discuss auditions. There are lessons to be learned both in and out of the spotlight.

Audition Tips for Judges/Directors

- Start the age for auditions at 2nd grade level. If your program is for 1st – 6th (or 5th) this gives the 1st graders a chance to get used to the program for a year before they actually audition.
- If possible, give a part to everyone who auditions. This can be done by creating simple non-speaking (honorable mention) parts that can be rehearsed in one short session.
- Encourage them to memorize their parts for the audition. This helps each child to learn to go the extra mile if they really desire something in their life. Explain that they are a lot less likely to get a part if they read from their script during the audition, rather than recite lines from memory.
- After every audition find something positive to say. Do not give false hope, but compliment them on having the part memorized, what a nice smile they have, or how few mistakes they made.
- If they are extremely nervous and mess up, offer to let them start over.
- Try to give them your full attention as they audition and then make notes once they leave. It might make them more nervous if you are constantly writing while they perform.
- Give them a date that you will post audition results. This will help ease their concern as to how long until they find out the results.
- When you post audition results, plan to hand out books, CDs and rehearsal schedules for their part.
- Most of all, have fun. This is a great opportunity to get to know your kids a little better.

Audition Tips for Kids

(You could have one of your teachers pretend to be auditioning and show the right & wrong way of doing things)

- Be prepared...memorize your part.
- When singing, don't fidget/grab shirt, twist back and forth.
- Raise your eyebrows and sing with energy...it will help you stay on pitch.
- Think about the words of the song and express those words on your face.
- When speaking, make sure your hands and feet are following the acting coming out of your mouth. Put your whole self into the part.
- Do not look down the whole time.
- Smile & relax as best you can.
- If you mess up, know that you can try again.
- Wear clothes that fit the part. The more you put into it, the better.
- Be creative. Give your part a new personality, you never know, we might like your way better.
- Know where you are going before you get here.
- Have fun and enjoy the experience.
- Be on time. Running late will make you more nervous.
- You will do much better if you know your part from memory.

Main Cast Rehearsals

Week 1 rehearsal should last 1 hour. All other rehearsals should be scheduled as 1 ½ hours. The more rehearsals you have, the more confident the kids become.

Tips for Week 2 – 10 rehearsals

- Constantly remind them to face the audience, slow down their talking.
- Stay in character.
- Be careful not to stand in a straight line, try to stagger their placement for each scene.
- Make sure they not only memorize their lines, but where they enter, where they stand each scene and what movements they make with their hands, arms, head, etc.
- They need to bring a pencil to every rehearsal and make notes of any instruction they receive. Even after their script is memorized it should be brought to rehearsal each week.
- Remind them to allow for laughter in the pacing of their lines. They can even repeat a line if the laughter happened as they started to speak.

Week 1 – Script read through with every speaking part. Discuss each person’s character and their personalities. Read entire script through. Help them with lines and interpretations. No movement takes place at this rehearsal.

Week 2 – First time to act out the parts using scripts. Begin to block where the kids stand, where their entrances are and movements they will make with their hands. You may not get through the entire script as you will stop and start a lot. Assign the first 3 scenes to be memorized by the next rehearsal.

Week 3 – Rehearse the first 3 scenes from memory and be sure to work on any scenes you did not get to the week before. Once scenes are memorized they can really begin to act out their part with more freedom. Ask them to memorize scenes 4 – 6 by the next rehearsal.

Week 4 – Rehearse all scenes if possible. Make sure they begin to be aware of where the audience is sitting and facing that direction as much as possible. Instruct them to use the hand away from the audience for motions. Assign the remaining scenes to be memorized. (Scenes 7-9).

Week 5 – First week they do not use a script. They need to always bring their scripts to make notes on about instruction. Remind them to review their scripts every week. This week you give a lot of help with cues. Be forgiving if it is not completely memorized. Offer a prize the following week if they can say their parts completely from memory with a bare minimum of help on their lines. You can reward with shakes, candy or anything that is appealing to them as an incentive.

Week 6 – Begin to practice all scenes in order. Between scenes allow them to review the next scene for 1 minute. Make sure they are conscious of where the audience is located, and facing them when speaking. Discuss what song follows the scene, make sure they know if they are supposed to start a scene.

Week 7-10 – Start to use the music that follows the scene. Play each song as they come to it in a scene. You may practice the beginning of the song, then skip to the end of the song. They can practice starting the next scene once the song ends. This helps them get used to the flow of the program.

NON-SPEAKING REHEARSALS:

1 rehearsal

This rehearsal can be the week of the musical or the week before. These time slots are usually about 30 mins. per group.

This rehearsal takes place on the stage. You will explain when they enter, where they will stand and where they will exit. Give them direction as to their facial expressions and any movement they will make or act out.

Explain what they will need for costuming and if they will leave to change into a costume, let them know when they need to leave in the program.

Make sure to have any props they will use at this rehearsal.

Ideas for Songs

A PEACEFUL LITTLE TOWN

- Choir can be dressed as townspeople. Merchants can carry baskets, rolled-up rugs, pots or other vessels. Some can be children playing games together. The scene should depict an active, but peaceful town. People are friendly to each other, waving, smiling, but all very “calm.” Someone can put up a sign that reads: “Bethlehem – Quiet Please!”

ARREST THESE MERRY GENTLEMEN

- There can be a small group dressed in trench-coats with collars up, or other “suspicious looking” disguises that moves around the stage during this song as if they are up to no good. A child can ride piggy-back on a larger child, with an extra-large trench coat covering both like it is one large man. Second person can be revealed for dramatic effect. Sleeping goat can be either a stuffed animal, or someone in a goat costume and/or mask. Goat-napper can hold a rope tied to the goat. Man (or woman) chewing with mouth open should be eating something large and visible, like a giant loaf of bread, pretzel, etc. Optional choir props: brooms or whisk brooms (“what we need is a clean sweep”), pillows (“so we can get some good sleep”), sunglasses (“these shepherds are beginning to sound a little shady”). As each line is sung, appropriate props are pulled out and used by each group. Can pantomime other “crimes” mentioned, like woman wearing white after Labor Day, not holding a door open for a lady.

CHRIST IS BORN

- This song is a new treatment of Hark, the Herald Angels Sing (with a bit of Angels from the Realms of Glory). It is best to save any pantomime of angels appearing to shepherds for the later song: No Fear, which features the shepherds telling their story as a “flashback.” Therefore, on this song, it may be best to simply utilize the choreography supplied in the choreography script during the song. Optionally, dancers can be featured with streamers to enhance the celebratory tone of the song.

HE IS THE ONE

- To tie to the scene preceding this song, the “Sources” who presented information using the scrolls can continue on stage during the song. As each of the lines in the song which relate specifically to their prophecies are sung, the source can make a show of unrolling their scroll very dramatically. Oversized “scrolls” can also be created with paper or rolled fabric, and each unveiled by several kids.
- Optional choir prop: #1 fan finger (could be made of poster board or custom foam fingers can be ordered from an online supplier) Prop suggestion: Give the foam hands to children scattered throughout the choir and divide into two groups. Each time the choir says “He is the One, yes, He is the One!” have group 1 raise the foam hand for the first (underlined) portion of the phrase, followed by group 2. Can also be done with large numeral “1” on cards.

LOOK FOR THE LIGHT

- Magi enter at downbeat of the song. Have a lit star shape displayed above the area where scene 6 will take place. Have Magi gradually walk in its direction, doing so dramatically in time with the music.
- Option: As choir sings “We Three Kings,” the Magi suddenly pause, stand together facing the audience and lip-sync this portion of the song. For comical effect, direct them to be very animated with facial expressions and movements similar to a “boy band” singing a love song.
- Alternate option for star: For a comical effect, a child is dressed in a star costume. Direct the “star” to be overly animated, waving his arms signaling the Magi to come and pointing in the direction of the nativity scene while leading them across the stage.
- Optional choir props: Magnifying glasses—The magnifying glasses could be given to children to look through in a different direction each time they sing the word “look,” then focus in the direction of the star each time they sing the word “light.” These props could be made by cutting the shape of a magnifying glass out of black poster board. Cut a circle where the glass part would be. Flashlights—During the chorus, bring stage lights down and have some or all children use flashlights as searchlights, moving to the beat of the music. On final word of chorus, have all lights land on the star.

NO FEAR

- This fun song is both serious, but also provides a great opportunity for your “band of shepherds” (large or small) to “ham it up.” The dialog preceding sets the stage for one of the shepherds (Frank) to have been particularly frightened by the angels. During the song, the shepherds can pantomime all of the action being described (complete with Frank falling back in a cold faint, with the other shepherds catching him). You need not have angels in the scene – the shepherds can look toward and above the audience, and it is implied that the angels are there in the sky.
- Optional staging: When the choir begins to sing, have a group of children appear center stage dressed as angels with wings and/or halos. Angels should do the choreography with the choir as well, or could perform a separate form of choreography. Optionally, the angels can be cute adorable preschoolers, giving an ironic and fun twist to the notion that the shepherds were frightened. When the line “a voice like thunder spoke the words . . .” is sung, the smallest angel can step forward as if speaking, and the shepherds can react in great fear.

PEACE IS HERE FOR YOU

- This is a tender moment at the scene of the nativity. All attention should be directed toward the nativity with the characters in the scene all admiring and worshipping baby Jesus as Joe and the others look on. If one or more children in your group know sign language, this might be a perfect time to include that.
- Optional staging: The scene before has Joe “placing” the various characters in the nativity scene into place, so they are there at the beginning of the song. You may want to expand the nativity during the song, perhaps using younger children in many costumes, even including animals, which are often a part of the nativity scene.

SHARE THE NEWS

- Optional staging: Have several children dressed as newsboys/newsgirls (with the hat), passing out newspapers to other children walking by dressed as townspeople. Have them appear right before the song when rookie speaks the line “Hey! Don’t you have an extra to get out? The presses are stopped. You gotta get the news out!” You can add a line from Scoop in reaction, like, “wow, that was fast!” During the musical introduction of the song, the newsboys may sporadically call out, “Extra, extra! Read all about it!” End the song with children standing in order turning their papers around to reveal the following words each printed largely on separate newspapers “CHRIST IS BORN!” The newsboys/newsgirls can even spread into the audience, handing out a “news sheet” that says “GOOD NEWS! CHRIST IS BORN!” that they possibly created during a class activity.
- Optional props: rolled up newspapers for all choir singers. Some or all with megaphones.

SILENT NIGHT UNDERSCORE/SCENE 8

- Joe’s final scene takes place over 30 years later. You may want to add a gray beard on him before this scene, or give some other visual indication that this is years later. In fact, giving him a shepherd’s staff as a can would be a nice touch. He should now be on the other side of the stage, or use lighting to “take him out of the manger” setting. During Joe’s climactic underscore monologue, you may want to use video or a slideshow behind him, depicting scenes from Jesus’ birth/life/ministry/death/resurrection. Joe will need to speak slowly in those sections, leaving room for each image to register. His final instruction is spoken directly to the audience.

CURTAIN CALLS

- Have cast members come out and bow center stage during this song.