

# TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

## A Christmas Musical for Unison Voices

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*Musical Arrangements by Anna Laura Page*

*Recording Orchestrated by Tom Goeman*

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### Foreword

*What are they that are by one?*

*One Faith, One Truth, One God alone, seated on His heavenly throne: God is our True Love.*

For centuries, the period between Christmas and Epiphany has been celebrated in music and literature as the “Twelve Days of Christmas,” beginning with the birth of Christ and culminating in the visit of the three kings (magi). In some cultures, Epiphany is a major feast day on which gifts are exchanged and Christmas decorations removed.

In 1625, a song titled *A New Dial* appeared in a printed collection. This song, also known as *In Those Twelve Days*, ascribes religious significance to each of the twelve days of Christmas. For example, the Fourth Day of Christmas celebrates Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, while the Eighth Day of Christmas signifies the eight beatitudes.

The popular “modern” song, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, has medieval origins. It first appeared in print in 1780 in the children’s book, *Mirth Without Mischief*. A favorite “counting” song for young children, it marks each day of Christmas with a corresponding number of birds, maids, ladies, lords and musicians!

Our story combines both the religious significance of *A New Dial* and the vivid, delightful images of *The Twelve Days of Christmas*. Mary’s riddles are quoted verbatim from *The New Dial*. Their religiously significant answers are adapted from or inspired by the same source.

*Twelve Days of Christmas* is perfect for children’s choirs, Christian schools or Sunday schools, and great as a multi-generation program for performers of all ages. Easy to prepare, it features nine unison songs based upon traditional carols and hymns. The Storyteller can “read” the story, and the thirteen additional speaking parts are simple, short rhymes that are easily memorized.

Directors can expand the cast to accommodate larger groups. For example, one milkmaid or eight milkmaids may be used, one lord or ten, one drummer or twelve! A choir can perform all of the songs, or some can be assigned as solos or trios.

A reproducible audience/congregation program appears on pages 38-39. A fully supportive keyboard accompaniment, costuming, prop and staging suggestions are also included. A fully-orchestrated accompaniment/performance compact disc (CD) recording is also available.

*Performance Time – Approximately 30 Minutes*

## Cast of Characters and Costumes

- **SPEAKING ROLES** (*in order of appearance*): Storyteller, Mary, Mother Partridge, Turtle Dove(s), French Hen(s), Colly Bird(s), Pheasant(s), Goose (or Geese), Swan(s), Milkmaid(s), Lady(s), Lord(s), Piper(s), Drummer(s)
- **NON-SPEAKING ROLES** (*in order of appearance*): Shepherds, Joseph, Dove, Partridge (optional Partridge Chicks), Three Kings
- **SOLO SINGING** (*optional*): Dove
- **TRIOS** (*optional*): Three French Hens; Three Kings
- **STORYTELLER**: An older girl or boy, or an adult, dressed either casually or in a flowing robe.
- **MARY, JOSEPH, SHEPHERDS**: Girls and boys dressed in humble robes or clothes; towels may be used as head coverings
- **BIRDS**: Girls and boys wearing T-shirts that have been screened with the images of their respective birds, OR more elaborate costumes may be used.
  - French Hen(s) wear tiaras
  - Colly Bird(s) wear black
  - Pheasant(s) wear gold neck rings
  - Swan(s) carry trumpets
- **MILKMAID(S)**: Girl(s) wearing simple dresses, preferably shirtwaist, and carrying silver pails
- **LADY(S)**: Girl(s) in fine dresses, jewels and dancing slippers
- **LORD(S)**: Boy(s) in gymnastics uniforms, decorated with “royal” sparkle and short capes, wearing “Peter Pan” hats with feathers
- **PIPER(S) and DRUMMER(S)**: Girl(s) and boy(s) in band uniforms
  - Piper(s) carry flutes, piccolos and/or recorders
  - Drummer(s) carry varying sizes of drums
- **THREE KINGS**: Boys in exotic robes, wearing crowns and carrying wooden boxes representing, respectively, gold, frankincense and myrrh

## Additional Props

- A podium, stand or large chair for Storyteller (optional, a large storybook from which he/she can read the story)
- A manger cradle with a doll representing the baby Jesus
- A “pear tree” adorned with white lights and a shining star
- A “nest” or “stool” for Mother Partridge by the pear tree
- Optional: stools, preferably of different heights, for Mary and Joseph
- Optional: props to enhance the barnyard scene
- Optional: a conductor’s baton for Mother Partridge
- Optional: stool(s) for the milkmaid(s)

# TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

## 1. OVERTURE

INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY/AWAY IN A MANGER/SILENT NIGHT

(UNISON VOICES AND/OR KEYBOARD)

(If Overture is sung, singers enter before music starts. Otherwise, singers enter with the cast during the Overture.)

(♩ = ca. 92-96)

INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

**9** Traditional Polish Carol

*mf* (+ opt. audience/congregation throughout)

6 VOICES

In-fant ho - ly, In-fant low - ly, for His

11

bed a cat-tle stall; Ox-en low - ing, lit-tle know - ing Christ the Babe is Lord of

16

**18**

all. Swift are wing - ing an-gels sing - ing, no - els

20

ring - ing, tid-ings bring - ing: Christ the Babe is Lord of all! Christ the

**AWAY IN A MANGER**

Melody by William J. Kirkpatrick (1838-1921);  
 Words from *Little Children's Books for Schools  
 and Families* (ca. 1885).

24 *poco rit.* *a tempo* *mp*

Babe is Lord of all! A -

*poco rit.* *a tempo* *dim.*

29

way in a man - ger, no crib for His bed, the lit - tle Lord

*mp*

34 38

Je - sus laid down His sweet head. The stars in the

*mp*