

Director's Notes

OUTLINE

Cast 30+, duration approx. 35 mins.

This powerful short musical for Christmas reminds us of the need to care for the poorest in our society, and points to the love and hope that Christmas brings.

Based on Hans Christian Andersen's tale 'The Little Match Girl', the musical is set at a Victorian Christmas Fair. Everyone is excited! It's nearly Christmas and time for the annual Nativity play. At the fair, Old Tom the chestnut seller is telling a group of children the story of the Little Match Girl. As her story unfolds, the Nativity play is also taking place. As Old Tom tells his story the Match Girl herself seems to appear at the fair, barefoot, grubby and poor. Sadly, no-one buys her matches, and no-one helps her. Her hope lies in heaven, where she is welcomed by the angels, while – back at the fair – everyone is reminded to 'please put a penny in the old man's hat'.

CAST

Christmas Fair

Town Crier	Small speaking part, opening scene.
Mr. Jones	Small speaking part, opening scene.
Mayor	Small speaking part, opening scene.
Narrator(s)	Small speaking part.
Poor Children	Any number, involved throughout. (+ group singing p.14)
Rich Children	Any number, involved throughout.
Child 1, 2, 3, 4	Group to whom Old Tom tells Match Girl's story (+ group singing p.12).
Old Tom	Chestnut seller, story teller.
Match Girl	Solo singing.
Pie Boy	Mince pie seller.
Sellers	(optional) May sell Christmas cards, decorations, mince pies, holly, etc.

Nativity Play

Mary & Joseph	Mime throughout Nativity play. Mary also has solo singing (p.13).
Innkeepers 1, 2, 3	Taken from chorus – solo singing (p.9).
Shepherds 1, 2, 3	Taken from chorus.
Kings 1, 2, 3	Taken from chorus – group singing (p.13).
Angels	At least 4, plus any number of additional angels (+ group singing p.15).
Animals	(optional) Cows, donkeys for the stable, sheep to accompany shepherds.
Stars	(optional)

PROPS & COSTUMES

Narrator(s)	School uniform or smart, modern clothes.
Poor Children	<u>Boys</u> : white shirts (dirtied, collars cut off), dark trousers cut to three quarter length, bare feet. Untidy hair. <u>Girls</u> : plain dark dresses, some with mop caps. Bare feet.
Rich Children	<u>Boys</u> : shirt/tie, waistcoat, long socks pulled over trousers. Neat hair. <u>Girls</u> : Victorian style long dresses, ribbons in hair. Short socks.
Child 1, 2, 3, 4	As Poor Children but distinguished by e.g. flat caps / shawls.
Town Crier	Hand bell, black cloak, long socks over trousers, white ruff, tricorn hat.
Mayor	As town crier but with red robe and large gold chain.
Sellers	Trays for wares, hung around necks. White shirt, dark trousers/skirts.
Old Tom	Shirt with 'grandad' collar, sleeves rolled up, waistcoat, dark trousers, flat cap, fingerless gloves. Brazier (see next page) and low stool.
Match Girl	Knee length dress (ragged & dull), shawl, bare feet. Tray hung around neck with 'matches' (made of card or use battery-powered 'candles').
Pie Boy	White shirt, black trousers, striped apron.
Nativity Cast	Trad. costumes. Baby doll wrapped in cloth, manger. Crooks (opt.), Shepherd 1 - lamb to present at manger. Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh.

STAGING SUGGESTIONS

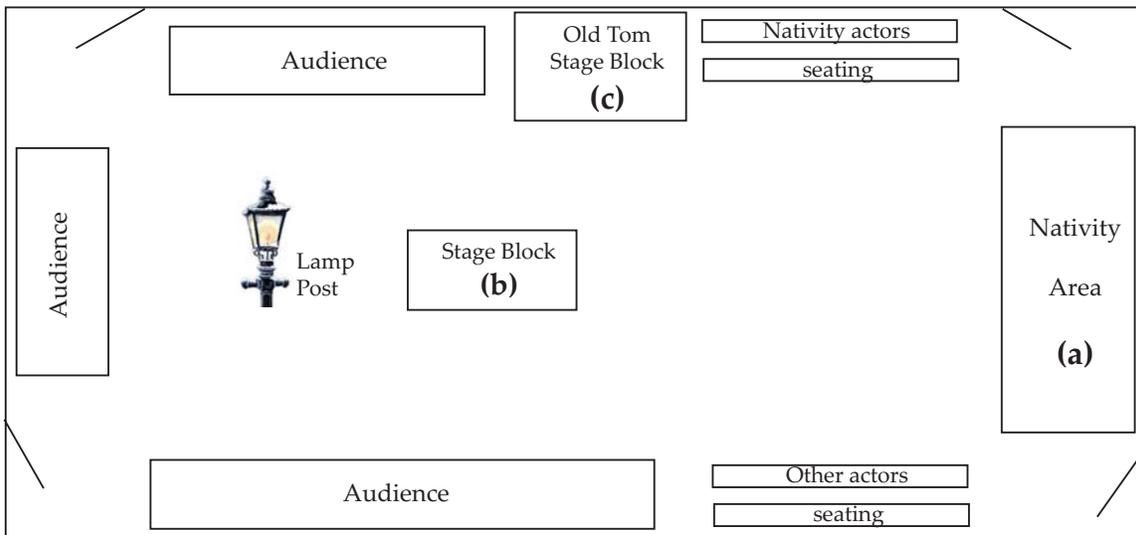
The original performance was set 'in the round' with audience seating on three sides (see below). This is probably the most effective approach, as it allows the audience to be more involved with the action. However, the piece works equally well with a conventional 'one-end' performance. Whichever way the play is presented, there should be distinctly separate areas for:

a) the Nativity play, b) the Match Girl's lamp post, c) Old Tom's story-telling, represented by:

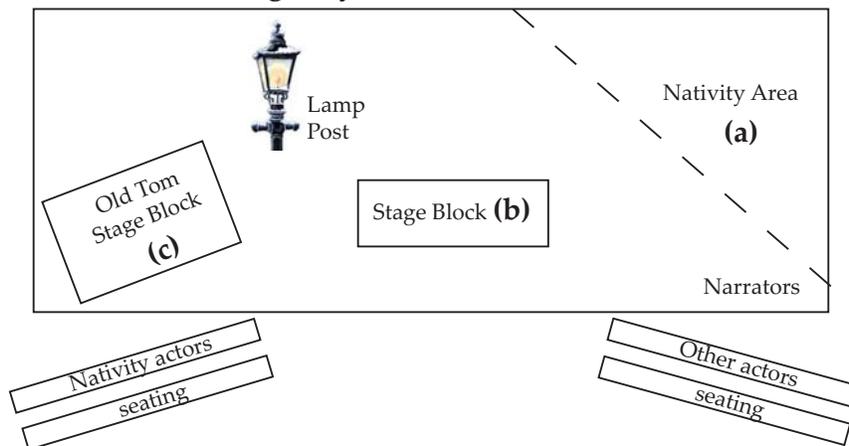
- a) a manger, b) a Victorian lamp post, c) Old Tom's Platform.
- a) Nativity area: set as a stable in traditional way, perhaps with hay bales or painted backdrop.
- b) Lamp post: netball post or standard lamp with black crepe paper wrapped around, lamp shape made from card/wood, unless one can be bought. Ideally the lamp should light up!
- c) Old Tom's platform: set with a mesh wastepaper basket filled with orange/red/yellow tissue paper for Brazier, and a small wheelbarrow or trolley as a chestnut cart for Old Tom.

Performing 'in the round' a) Nativity stage at one end of the rectangle; b) Lamp post (on small block) positioned at the opposite end; c) Old Tom and Child 1-4, who help tell the Match Girl's story, set on raised blocks to one side of the audience seating area. Additional stage block in centre of floor allows for shepherds, angels etc. to be clearly visible, as well as giving different levels for Mary, Joseph and Kings as they travel to the stable. Actors seated either side of the Nativity stage until needed, as shown. After Rich and Poor Children enter they remain on main floor area, in pairs or in small groups. N.B. Ensure that emergency exits remain easily accessible.

Suggested Performance Layout (in the round)



Conventional Stage Layout



Director's Overview

For teaching purposes, 'The Match Girl's Christmas' is divided into four scenes; however the action runs continuously during the performance.

Scene 1 The Christmas Fair

Sellers 'sell' their wares during the music. Nativity cast go to chorus position.

INSTR. BRASS BAND CAROLS Ⓞ **Track 1 / 11**

The Christmas Fair is opened. Poor/Rich Children enter, form groups.

SONG CHRISTMAS IS COMING Ⓞ **Track 2 / 12**

Old Tom enters, followed by Child 1, 2, 3 & 4.

INCID. CHRISTMAS IS COMING Ⓞ **Track 3 / 13**

Scene 2 Two Stories Begin 'The Little Match Girl' M.G. & The Nativity NAT.

M.G. The Match Girl's story begins; she sits down under the lamp post.

NAT. A Narrator begins the Christmas story.

SONG O LITTLE TOWN... (V. 1) / MATCHES Ⓞ **Track 4 / 14**

NAT. Mary & Joseph enter, knock on innkeepers' doors, looking for a place to stay.

M.G. The Match Girl tries to sell matches but is ignored by the crowd.

SONG RAT, TAT, RAT-A-TA-TAT Ⓞ **Track 5 / 15**

Scene 3 No-One Buys Any Matches

M.G. The Match Girl lights matches to keep warm.

NAT. Angels bring good news to the shepherds, who go to the stable.

M.G. The Match Girl strikes more matches to keep warm and appeals for help.

SONG WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED* (V. 1 & 4) Ⓞ **Track 6 / 16**
PLEASE WILL YOU HELP ME?

NAT. Kings make their way to the stable and present their gifts to the baby.

SONG THREE KINGS HAVE JOURNEYED FAR Ⓞ **Track 7 / 17**

Scene 4 The Match Girl Goes To The Stable

NAT. Mary sings a lullaby to her baby.

SONG BABY JESUS BORN TONIGHT Ⓞ **Track 8 / 18**

M.G. The Match Girl approaches the stable and makes one last plea for help.

SONG THE MATCH GIRL'S CHRISTMAS * (medley) Ⓞ **Track 9 / 19**
IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER (v. 1 & 2)
PLEASE WILL YOU LISTEN?
SILENT NIGHT (v.1)

M.G. Everyone watches as the Angels take the Match Girl into the stable.
Old Tom explains that the Match Girl has found somewhere safe at last.

A BRIGHT NEW STAR / HEAVEN'S DOOR IS OPEN

Everyone joins in singing the final song.

SONG CHRISTMAS IS COMING (finale) Ⓞ **Track 10 / 20**

* **N.B.** The asterisked items above contain different musical sections. The track numbers shown are the unbroken tracks for performance purposes. **The help with teaching and rehearsal, there are separate tracks** (see *Index of Musical Items page ?*) to save you searching for the different sections.