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TYPES OF PRODUCTIONS

PLANNING & SCHEDULING

AUDITIONING

COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE

BUDGETING

PRODUCTION LEADERSHIP

AND MORE!

# Christmas PRODUCTION

IDEA KIT

YOUR ALL-IN-ONE

## COMPLETE GUIDE TO PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTMAS PRODUCTION

# Christmas Production
## Idea Kit

## Guest Contributor



**Ralph Gudeman**
Worship Arts Minister
**Christ United Methodist Church, Mobile, AL**
Full-time Ministry Experience: 35 years
M.M., Vocal Performance, Boston University

**Philosophy of Church Music Leadership:**
"To touch people's hearts through music, and all arts, in ways that enhance their relationship with Jesus. I am not there to teach people what "good" music they should use to worship. To provide a wide variety of musical styles, all done with excellence. To love God, love people, and serve the senior pastor. You can't keep everyone happy, so support the pastor and keep them happy!"

**Ministry Goal:**
"To have at least one new creative element each week in worship (in traditional and contemporary worship)."

**AUTHORS:**
Susan Fontaine Godwin
Ralph Gudeman
Jason Whatley

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# INTRODUCTION

With the promise that summer's blistering 3-digit temps will soon fade into cooler shades of fall, the pace quickens for church leaders planning creative Christmas programs. Easter and Christmas offer churches a rare outreach opportunity to their surrounding community, as well as a holy and joyous time of celebration for their church family.

But let's be honest. It can also be the most challenging, frustrating and exhausting season for music ministers and creative arts directors. With that in mind, we present the "Christmas Production Idea Kit," featuring practical guidelines, tips, resources, and information on how to plan for a successful and stress-free Christmas celebration. We include information on:

1) finding the right production
2) matching your congregation
3) matching your musical abilities
4) selecting media
5) planning and scheduling
6) rehearsals
7) auditioning
8) budgeting

This is an ideal time to address how to incorporate copyright clearances into your program planning.

More and more churches are wisely planning events to allow for timely copyright clearances. We've included a "Keeping It Legal" section at the beginning with an overview of legal topics to consider, as well as some practical tips throughout the "Idea Kit" on how to make sure all your copyrighted material is cleared before your Christmas production events.



# PART ONE:
# KEEPING IT LEGAL

As a pastor, worship leader or creative arts director, you probably remember scrambling last year at the 11th hour trying to obtain copyright clearances for rehearsal copies, CD records, DVD videos, and custom arrangements. You may have found it very difficult, if not impossible, to get clearances prior to your production and may have even faced denials, extremely high royalty rates, or even infringement fines.

*The more creative your program, the more complex copyright issues can surface.*

## The Key to a copyright compliant Christmas program is remembering to P.L.A.N.

**P**repare a list of all the details for each copyrighted work.

**L**earn the basics of the Copyright Law or let a copyright professional help you with research and licenses.

**A**llow enough time to research and obtain permission.

**N**ever use copyright material without permission or exemption.

In the course of planning your program, you may want to use a variety of types of copyrighted material. There are eight works of authorship that can be copyrighted, and here are some of the common ones that are often incorporated in Christmas events.

**Music**
Songs, including arrangements of public domain songs

**Sound Recordings**
Audio recordings of music, speeches, tracks

**Dramatic Works**
Such as a screenplay, play or other script, a pantomime, or a choreographic work.

**Visual Arts**
Include two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of fine, graphic, and applied art, photographs, prints and art reproductions, maps, technical drawings and architectural works.

**Literary Works**
Wide variety of works: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, textbooks, reference works, directories, catalogs, advertising copy, compilations of information

**Choreography and Pantomime**
Specifics steps and moves that are recorded.

**Audiovisual**
A feature film, documentary film, animated film, television show, video, video game, or other audiovisual work

Keep in mind that copyright owners need complete details about the copyright and how you want to use it in order to issue licenses or grant permission. If you provide thorough information in your initial request, the license will be processed much more quickly. If not, your request may sit on someone's desk for weeks or months. Also remember that copyright owners do not automatically grant permission for use of their copyright. Don't assume you have the right to use it until you have received written or verbal permission. There are some companies that do not license their master recordings for any reason, and some publishers may deny your request for photocopying print music or synchronizing their song to a video.

Christian copyright owners' minimum fees often range from $20-$40. Secular copyright owners have much higher minimum licensing fees, ranging from $150-$300 per song. This is also true for sound recordings.

FREE DOWNLOAD **Royalty Estimator Fact Sheet**

The processing time for Christian copyrights is typically 6-8 weeks, while secular copyrights may take up to 12 weeks.

Please note there is a large portion of Christmas copyrights controlled by secular copyright owners; be sure to allow time for licensing to be processed.

**Special Notes:**

- *Additional licensing may be necessary to use the song "Frosty The Snowman" in conjunction with any snowman character.*
- *The "Presley Clause" requires that you must have permission from the Elvis Presley estate for use of the name, likeness or biography of Elvis Presley or any member of the Presley family.*

## When requesting license for Music copyrights, you need to include:

- Song title
- Songwriters' names
- Catalog / publisher

### For sound recordings:

- Title of album
- Artist name
- Recording label
- Product #/UPC

### For photo or visual images:

- Title
- Source
- Artist name

Note: Google images (or similar web image searches) is not sufficient for the source because the contributor cannot be tracked; however, if you purchased the image from iStockPhoto or Igniter Media that will be sufficient for the source. An ID number from the source is necessary.

## Preparing and Rehearsing Your Performers

You can avoid the hassle of obtaining many copyright licenses by purchasing enough music, drama and media material for each performer. Here are some great resources:

**Praise Charts**
Download chord charts and orchestrations

**CCLI SongSelect**
Chord charts, lyrics and SATB parts

**CCLI Rehearsal License**
Allows making rehearsal copies only of select recordings

**Retail Purchases**
Lifeway Resources, Word, Integrity Direct, Brentwood-Benson

**Igniter Media**
Short films, backgrounds, visuals

## Licensing New Products (Photocopies)

Product that has been on the market for less than 12 months will typically not be available for licensing. In addition please note that Prestonwood product is not available for licensing at any time. We recommend you check with the source for special bulk pricing of product.

## Custom Arrangements

Scoring and creating your own custom arrangements may often require obtaining a print and arrangement license from the song publisher, if it is not permitted through your CCLI license. The publisher will require the name of the arranger and the instrumentation/voicing of the arrangement.

## Public Domain vs. Copyrighted Carols

Christmas Carols, which you may think are the Public Domain, may in fact be a copyrighted arrangement of the song. Please check your source copy for the copyright notice.

FREE DOWNLOAD **PUBLIC DOMAIN CHRISTMAS SONGS Fact Sheet**

FREE DOWNLOAD **COPYRIGHTED SECULAR SONGS Fact Sheet**

## Medleys

Licensing is required for each song contained within the medley. The copyright information for the song is usually found in the music on the page where the song changes. On occasion copyright owners will grant a reduced rate for songs contained in a medley based upon the percentage of the song used.

## At the Church or Venue

If your program is not a religious service, it is not exempt from requiring performance licensing. The CCS **PERFORMmusic License** allows churches and non-profit ministries to legally play or perform more than 17 million songs from ASCAP, BMI and SESAC for non-exempt activities such as special programs, concerts, social and youth events, funerals, conferences and seminars, music-on-hold, exercise classes, and playing music throughout church facilities. No reporting is required. The license covers church premises, which may include satellite or campus locations that are under the licensee's legal and financial umbrella. If it is a ticketed event, an additional performance event license is required and can be easily obtained at **Christian Copyright Solutions**.

If you want to stream your program, **WORSHIPcast** is the only church streaming license that covers internet performance rights for 17 million Christian and secular songs from the catalogs of ASCAP, BMI and SESAC.

If you plan on broadcasting your program on TV or radio, the broadcasting station is responsible for the appropriate broadcast performance licenses from ASCAP, BMI and SESAC.

## Remembering Your Event

Capturing the memory of your Christmas program is a wonderful way to share your event with your congregation, family and friends. Today's easy and accessible technology makes it simple to record and create audio recordings, videos and digital media.

**Click below on the particular format for more details on obtaining licensing.**



**CDs**

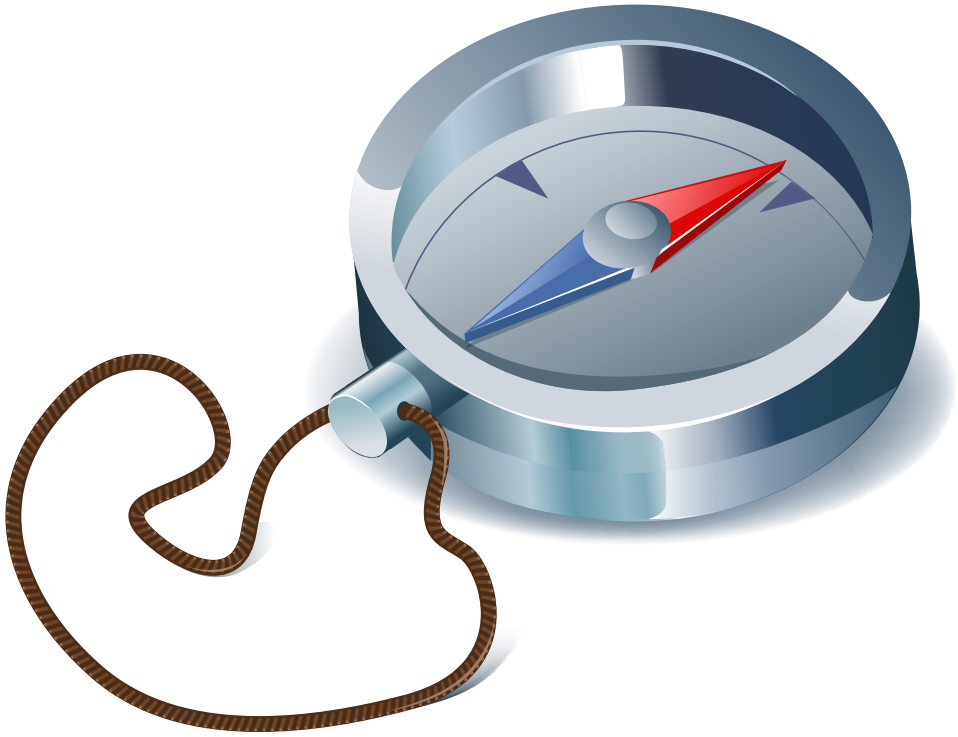


**DVDs**




**Digital Memories**
Archived Streaming & Digital Downloads

Make sure that your church owns all of the rights to any copyrighted material created by your staff, volunteers, consultants or contractors. This could include music, photographs, dramatic material, literary works, videos, recordings and graphic designs. To assure ownership and the right to use material, be certain that you have work-made-for-hire agreements in place, or a license or letter of permission signed. It is reasonable to ask staff members or volunteers to grant gratis permission for specific uses.



# PART TWO:
# FINDING THE RIGHT PRODUCTION

## Overview

It's the time of year to think about the annual Christmas production….a time to think of mangers, shepherds, angels, and baby Jesus. It's the time of year to find the perfect production to help your congregation celebrate the Christmas season and to embrace and invite your surrounding community to experience the true spirit of Christmas. You know that time of year—July. If you're a little past that, don't worry; we're going to cover everything you need to pull off a select a Christmas production that will impact your church and community.

Every year the daunting task of finding the perfect Christmas production for your church falls on you, the music or creative director. Finding the right Christmas production will equip your worship arts team to help others enter into the spirit of Christmas. The right fit for your church is a program that requires earnest thought and prayer. You will primarily need to focus on your target audience, time commitment and skills. The perfect production for your church may not be the most elaborate, but it will be a reflection of your congregation's culture and style. You want a production that is accessible, uplifting and accurately portrays Christmas as the celebration of our Savior's birth.

## Types of Productions

### *Full-Length Dramas*

**PROS:**

A drama can be a very moving and rewarding production to perform. A proper dramatic program can appeal to a wide range of tastes while offering a special chance to connect with those in the audience who are not believers.

**CONS:**

A full-length dramatic production can run from 45 minutes to well over an hour. Many music directors don't have the same level of organization experience in dramatic productions as they do with musicals and concerts. Don't make the mistake of believing that a drama or play is just a "musical without the music." Full-length dramas also require a lot of lead time (three to four months of rehearsals), set building, costume designing and special lighting. If your church has not done a production near this magnitude before, we suggest taking a step back and reassessing your progress. Alternatively, it may be an opportunity to partner with another church that does have experience in pulling off large productions.

**Special Considerations:**

- Lots of rehearsals
- Special lighting
- Ample stage space
- Multiple performances

### *Musicals*

**PROS:**

If you have a seasoned team of musicians and singers, a musical can be a great entry point into dramatic performances. The right musical can stir a wide, dynamic range of emotions that non-musical performances cannot. For instance, in a purely dramatic work, you have to move people from emotional extremes very slowly or it may come across as abrupt. The majority of the rehearsal time could be done during your normal practices. If you already have a thriving and dedicated worship team, you won't have to look far to field a full cast.

**Special Considerations:**

- Does it fit your church?
- Musicians and vocal depth

### *Traditional Music Performances*

**PROS:**

A traditional performance of Christmas sacred music is one of the larger and more challenging undertakings for a church. However, they tend to draw large audiences from the entire community which is a great way to start relationships outside your home church. If you lead worship in a larger and more traditional church, a sacred music performance could be the perfect fit, if you have the time, budget, and experience to do it with excellence.

**CONS:**

A popular piece for Christmastime is Handel's "Messiah." To perform this piece you would need at least 12-18 orchestral instruments, a 50-voice choir (for non-professional vocalists) and an experienced conductor. The majority of churches will not have the staff or budget to perform a piece like this and perform it well. Another downside is going to be the cost. Professional orchestral musicians typically charge rates of $50-$100 per rehearsal and a $200-$300 sitting fee for the concert. A production budget could easily run $10,000 and up.

**Special Considerations:**

- Classical background required
- Experience conducting
- Hiring professional musicians
- Stage space for orchestra and choir
- Challenging repertoire

### *Christmas Concerts*

**PROS:**

This can be a great option for congregations of all shapes and sizes. A concert with traditional and contemporary Christmas songs is a favorite for all ages, budget-friendly and almost guaranteed to have a great deal of audience participation. Your usual musicians and singers can be used, and the repertoire for the concert can be rehearsed during your normal practice times. A Christmas concert can also be a great opportunity to include those in the congregation who are not usually a part of the worship team.

**CONS:**

For larger or more traditional churches accustomed to more elaborate productions, a concert might not be the right format.

**Special Considerations:**

- Selection of music for all age groups
- Have at least one complete rehearsal
- Special lighting
- Dress code

### *Interpretive Works (Hybrid Concerts)*

**PROS:**

An interpretive or "hybrid" concert/drama is essentially a collection of seasonal songs with spoken word passages between songs or portions of songs. There are many programs available for purchase or you can add your own flair to the process and put together a collection of songs and write spoken word passages (or simply read directly from scripture). This approach really is the best of both worlds. You have the celebratory spirit and involvement of a Christmas concert with the added depth and story of a dramatic work. Many churches are choosing to go this route as it can be quite moving while simplifying logistics and budgeting issues. It also gives those who can not usually participate a chance to join in.

**CONS:**

One of the few drawbacks to this format is the ease in which people can become involved. You're probably asking yourself, "Why is that a problem?" Even if you have eight or nine different spoken word passages in your program, you may have 40 or 50 people in the congregation interested in participating. This is where your tact and discretion as a leader is required. Use this as an opportunity to include new faces on the platform.

**Special Considerations:**

- Timing is everything—your program will run longer live than your original plan provides!
- Don't force everyone to memorize their lines or Scripture verses. Fluid delivery is more important than memorization.
- Position those with speaking parts in the front row and always have the next two speakers just off stage. Dead space (nothing happening on stage while you wait for someone) is a definite mood killer.

***Live Nativity***

**PROS:**

If you get the word out, much of the surrounding community will come to see it. Most churches will do a live nativity on multiple nights which gives your church the chance to rotate a lot of different people in and out of the nativity. It's also a wonderful opportunity to involve young children or youth. Here's an idea: for a portion of time you have the live nativity up, do a children's-only cast.

**CONS:**

In many parts of the country, a live nativity outside during December is going to be a no-go. The cost of building an outdoor nativity, plus costumes, can be prohibitive if you're not creative with the materials you have. Weather can wreck this outdoor event in a hurry. Although a live nativity will attract visitors from around your community, they will mostly be "drive by" visitors.

**Special Considerations:**

- Livestock rental (if necessary)
- Weather (dress warm underneath outfits)
- Power for lighting (extensions or generator)
- Outdoor PA system if playing music
- Local police assistance with traffic routing

## Where to Find the Right Program

If you're looking for ideas to put on a Christmas production in your church, there are several publishers that offer a wide range of formats and themes to choose from.

- Word Music
- Brentwood-Benson
- JW Pepper
- Kempke Music
- Music Mart
- Lifeway Christian Resources

## Matching Your Congregation

Select a program that will "fit" your congregation. For example, if your congregation typically sings out of a traditional hymnal, "Christmas Rock Extravaganza" is probably not a great choice. You want to reflect the style and culture of your group and not just your personal preferences. Be respectful and flexible when it comes to recognizing different age groups and cultures within your church. It is often possible to modify productions to be more appealing to a wide range of individuals. Be aware also that some productions are written in a way that works best with large audiences, while some are appropriate for smaller audiences. It is important to recognize these dynamics and how they affect group performance.

## Matching Your Abilities as a Music / Creative Arts Director

It's imperative to be honest with yourself regarding your abilities and experience in choosing the right Christmas production. If you have been a music director for all of six months and have a choir of five, this is not the year to perform Handel's Messiah. This means that your team needs a realistic view of their skills and time to dedicate towards practice. As the director, it is your job to coach and encourage your team to perform at their best. Nothing kills the Christmas spirit quicker than realizing you have bitten off more than you can chew. Enjoy the Christmas season by picking a production that is moving yet accessible. If you are a smaller congregation look for simpler productions, focus on the story from the perspective of a disciple or v character. These can be incredibly moving without requiring the high budget high commitment aspects of larger and more ornate productions.



**Ralph says:**
"A Christmas production is not an opportunity to sway the congregation's tastes in theater or teach them "what good music is;" that's not our role as music directors. It's an opportunity to complement the congregation's tastes in a way that celebrates the birth of Christ. An opportunity to allow the people to dive deeper without necessarily changing directions."

**Don't bite off more than you can chew.**

## Selection Criteria

When selecting your program, congregational tastes and your experience isn't your only limiting factor. It takes a cohesive team of passionate volunteers to pull off a successful Christmas program and all teams have their strengths and weaknesses. It's important to step back and take an objective inventory of your team's abilities.

***Skill of Vocalists***

- How many vocalists do you have?
- How many are capable of carrying a solo?
- Are your singers able to sing three or four-part harmonies? How well?
- Can they read or be taught SATB parts?
- Will the program you select be a welcome challenge or simply too much pressure?
- Will your vocalists dedicate the time necessary for at-home practice as well as committing to rehearsals?
- Will they enjoy and "invest" in the program you're selecting?

***Skill of Musicians***

- Do you have all the required instrumental parts in-house?
- Are your musicians dedicated enough to devote extra time above-and-beyond their typical practice load from services?
- Can all of your musicians read chord chords or Nashville numbers?
- Can your keyboard, horns, and strings players sight-read scored music?

***Technical Requirements***

- Do you have all the required microphones?
- Do you have enough channels available in your stage snake or mixing console?
- Does your technical staff have the experience to run all the A/V effects the program requires?
- Are they dedicated to putting in extra time for setting up the set/stage/lighting configuration and joining you for all dress rehearsals?

***Equipment Requirements***

- Do you require any extra lighting?
- Do you require any special sound needs?
- Do you require special effects like a fog machine?

***Budgetary Requirements***

- Do you currently have a budget for your production?
- If your budget is less than the required, can your production still be done with excellence?

***Time Requirements***

- Does the program you've selected allow enough rehearsal/planning time before your performance date?
- Have you informed all volunteers about the time requirements and have they agreed to them?

## Selecting Media to Complement Your Production

Visual media is a powerful tool for churches when used correctly. It can help tell old truths in new ways and traditional stories in an original, creative manner. For example, in 2011 **Igniter Media** produced a video entitled ***A Social Network Christmas***. This video simply chronicled the birth of Jesus, a story that many of us have heard hundreds of times. However, by turning the nativity event into a mini movie as if it unfolded over Facebook, they were able to capture the emotion of the different people (for example, Mary, Joseph, etc.) in a way that viewers could relate to the wonder and amazement of Christ's birth. This video connected audiences to this moment in a way that a spoken message, song or any other medium simply could not.

And that's the challenge you have as a church when selecting media to use. Pick a resource that tells a biblical truth in a way that can only be expressed best through video. Through it all, be careful to pick videos that are excellently made but are also true to Scripture. Also, remember that videos are to help set up your service or your message. They are not intended to replace either. Thus, videos that are open-ended or leave the viewer with questions are great to use as lead-ins to a pastor's sermon. And if you need a place to start, **here** are a few suggestions from **Igniter Media**.




# PART THREE:
# PLANNING & SCHEDULING

## Picking the Right Date

In order to honor the hours of practice your team will invest, it is imperative to choose the right production date. If you schedule your production during the big football game or another event, you are setting yourself up for low audience attendance. Low audience attendance not only limits your production's potential impact, but also may discourage team members who have put in months of practice and hard work. Make the sacrifices of you and your team count! Be aware of potential local, regional, or even national scheduling conflicts. Your goal is to maximize your production's impact and honor your team members' dedication. With conservative planning, you will maximize your impact.

## Rehearsal / Practice Schedule

### Check for conflicts!

- For large drama performances, schedule at least two dress rehearsals
- Hold separate music and dramatic practices initially
- Be clear to all participants from the beginning which practices are mandatory and how many of the others should be required

The key for all practices is clarity. It is very important to ensure that team members understand what they are committing to. "I cannot come to the dress rehearsal, because I'm spending the night away at a buddy's house" is not an excuse to miss practice. Be sure that everyone is aware of the time commitment involved before trying out to play a lead role. It is phenomenal that little Suzie runs track, plays soccer, cheerleads, sings in the choir, is studying for the ACT, participates in Model UN AND holds down a part-time job, but all of those commitments might not make her a great candidate for playing Mary! Those who want to be involved but cannot commit all the time required may enjoy helping with other behind-the-scenes aspects of the production.



**Ralph says:**
Include local/large national sporting events in your excluded dates. A lot of people converted to football long before converting to Christianity! Don't get upset if no one shows up to your event if it's during the big game.

It is also important to not waste your team's time. At first, you should separate drama practice from the musical side as much as possible. This allows for efficiency and prevents one group from potentially distracting another. Only when both groups have "owned" the material will combined practices be beneficial. Lastly, do at least two dress rehearsals of your production. Use the information gained from the dress rehearsals and modify any aspects as needed (especially timing).

## Backups

For key parts in larger productions, it's important to have multiple performers available. If you're doing several performances, try to use different leads for the performances. If an illness or emergency arises for one, the other can handle both performances. This is most important for leads and those with difficult vocal passages.

This is also very important for certain instruments. Drummers and pianists can be difficult to replace at the last minutes and in many programs they'll drive the music portions of the program. Have an additional drummer and pianist familiar with the music in advance!



# PART FOUR: AUDITIONS



**Ralph says:**
"Don't audition." Try having a "general audition" at the beginning of the season (not specifically related to the production) for anyone interested in music / drama ministry. When a specific solo/drama part comes up, you request the person you want. This avoids disappointing five people in order to select one.

### You'll Need:

- List of Vocal solos with requirements (SATB, male/female, age range)
- If you think many people will try out for one role, use a uniform audition rubric sheet to rate the auditions (keep this private for your selection purposes only)
- List of Drama leads with requirements (gender, age range, abilities)
- A quiet and private audition space. Tip: Main sanctuaries are normally a bad place, try a classroom or smaller room

## Scheduling

Give more than one audition time if you're expecting a large turnout. One after Wednesday night services and one after Sunday services should allow those with scheduling conflicts to still be involved. Recognize red flags early! There are many people who have the best of intentions when signing up, but don't have the stability in their schedules to fully contribute to your team. If you see they're not able to come to pre-audition meetings or have to re-schedule their audition times, be aware that the issue will probably not be solved by giving them more responsibility, pressure and obligations.

## Posting Parts

***Where***

If you are posting parts and auditions, a great place to start (if your service format and pastor allows) is to make an announcement during several of your services. Make sure the visuals team has the details to prominently display them on announcement slides and the church bulletin.

***When***

Give your congregation at least a 2 week notice for the auditions and have hand-outs available that outlines time requirements, responsibilities, and rehearsal dates before you members audition for roles.

## Pre-Audition

For auditions to go smoothly, you must be prepared, begin on-time, and set an example for how you'd like the entire production to go. Auditions should be kept short and to the point. Five or ten minutes per person should be more than enough time to run through key parts several times. Also, prepare a statement to read to ensure that everyone understands what the time requirements and responsibilities will be. It's also important that everyone agrees to these requirements before the audition begins.

For many, it may be their first audition in any setting. Let them know that it's okay to be nervous and that perfection is not a requirement! If time allows, spend a few moments talking with and getting to know the person auditioning. This will give you some brief insight into their personality and communication style, but more importantly, it can help relax someone who's nervous.

# The Audition

## *Vocal Parts*

### New Vocalists

For those who have not previously been a part of the worship team, your audition should serve to familiarize yourself with his or her overall skill level. There are countless different approaches to vocal appraisal but here are a few specific skills to look for:

- Matching pitches
- Simple scales
- Find ranges
- Mimicking simple melodic lines
- Ask for their "small voice" and their "big voice."
- Sing a verse or chorus from a worship song they know (a cappella)

Finally, have them sing selections or the more difficult parts of the role they're auditioning for.

### Seasoned Vocalists

If you're already familiar with a vocalist's abilities, don't waste time matching pitches or running through scales. Jump straight into the parts they're trying out for and then decide whether or not they'll make a good fit.

## *Musicians*

### Orchestral Instruments

Many churches that will be performing a sacred work ("high church") will need to retain professional musicians to complement their current team. If this is the case, nearly any professional orchestral player from a local or regional symphony orchestra (most every town has one nearby) will more than qualified for a Christmas production. If they're professionals, they've probably played your sacred works before! It would be considered inappropriate to require a live audition for a professional orchestral musician. If you are concerned about a difficult part, send them a copy before speaking with them.



**Ralph says:**
Don't be afraid to coach people while they're auditioning. If they're struggling with a part, take this opportunity to develop them. If they're performing something wrong, gently correct it. It's also a great time to observe how well someone takes your leadership, advice, and constructive criticism.

For non-professional players or younger members, the following is a checklist for auditioning.

- Sight-reading
- Have them play the same passage several times, listen for consistency
- Tone / Clarity / Pitch Stability
- Play any difficult solos or passages from the program's musical

### Praise Band Instruments

#### *Drums*

A great "pocket" drummer can smooth out a lot of wrinkles in a music performance, but picking the wrong drummer can wreak havoc throughout the entire production. Below is a checklist of some important things to look for in a drummer (in order of importance):

1. Steady tempo.
2. Tasteful fills/turnarounds (check that they're not dragging fills)
3. Ability to change dynamics (ability to play volume from 1-10, not 10-10)

**A light-handed, soft-playing drummer is a confident and comfortable drummer!**

### *Rhythm Section (Bass, Guitars, Keyboards)*

When auditioning for these positions, "tastefulness" is the golden ticket. Take time to explain what you're looking for in a bass, guitar, or keyboard player. Let them know the goal is a team environment and a team sound. It's a big advantage if a musician has experience playing in a group and not just solo. Here are a few things you should check for when auditioning rhythm players:

1. Ability to sight read chord charts
2. Comfort level with their instrument
3. Any difficult solos or passages from the program

### *Drama / Acting Roles*

If you're short on experience in the realm of theater, consult with other colleagues in your area. It's very common for music and creative arts directors to bring in outside help (judges) for the audition process. No matter how discerning you are, having another set of eyes and ears will always bring a broader perspective on a performance.

**Here are some tips for running a smooth drama audition:**

- Have all actors for a role audition the same parts for comparison (compare apples to apples)
- Allow actors to select an additional passage that they feel resonated with them personally (optional)
- Don't be afraid to coach during the audition. If a performer needs to change something in his/her delivery, don't be afraid to teach them. This will also show you their ability to take advice and follow instructions. It'll also show you how quickly they can change/improve aspects of their performance.
- If you think they would be a better fit for another part, give them a chance to read lines for that character/part (even if they have to read from the script).

## Ending the Audition

If done poorly, the end of the audition can be an awkward and disappointing experience for all. If someone is obviously not a good fit from the beginning, don't stop them early or cut their audition short. Show courtesy and love to see it through to completion. Always thank them for their time, but don't feel obligated to embellish their abilities or performances as this can lead to unfairly high expectations.



**Ralph says:**

"Thanks for taking the time to come and sing/play/tryout for me. I choose soloists or actors based on who has the best fit for the particular song or part. If you are not chosen, it does not mean you don't have a great voice/ability/skill set. It just means someone else was chosen for this specific time, and you may be chosen the next time. Often there are other factors involved beyond the vocal/playing/skill quality (giving someone new a chance; feeling led by God's spirit that a person needs this solo for their spiritual growth or encouragement). Again, thanks for coming. You sounded great. I'll notify you by **DATE**."




# PART FIVE: BUDGETING

## Overview

No matter what your limitations are with staff, experience and time constraints, the biggest hurdle you'll face will be overcoming the Christmas budget blues. Regardless how big or small your budget, you can always find something to add that you can't afford! Whether your budget is $100 or $100,000, with proper planning, realistic goals and some creativity, your church can deliver a special experience.

*We've created a Budgeting Checklist Fact Sheet so you won't leave anything out!*




**BUDGETING CHECKLIST Fact Sheet**

## Creating a List of Budget Items

Start with the script! While the sheer number of requirements for a performance can be overwhelming, start by writing down requirements as you follow the script. This may take a bit of imagination, but picture the entire performance in your head. Line by line, scene by scene, song by song—what's being said, where is the audience's focus? As you read through the script (it may take some time to do this properly), list every need that comes to mind. Every time a different character speaks ask yourself: "What costume should they be wearing," "what lighting, audio, and video will I need, along with the proper permissions to use them," and "what type of lighting is required."

Many prepared production packages include examples/suggestions for costumes and set designs. Start there. If your church has a men's group, a church production is a great time to ask them to spearhead the construction of a set and props.

### *Set Design*

Read through the script and note any scene/set changes throughout the performance. Outline your initial ideas for design and then decide which elements you can build and which ones you'll need to purchase.

#### Questions to Ask Yourself

- Who can build these?
- If I build it, can I reuse/repurpose it?
- Can I delegate budget estimates / construction?

#### Budget Items

- Bill of Materials
- Labor

### *Wardrobe*

Make a list of all parts that require special costumes; outline what the costumes will look like, then detail what can be pieced together, store bought, specially ordered, or made from scratch. Although many parts won't require costumes, they might require a dress code (band wearing all black, choir wearing red shirts, etc.). Even though these items may not have an impact on your budget, this is a good time to make note of the requirements for planning purposes.

#### Questions to Ask Yourself

- Buy pre-made costumes or tailor make yourself?
- Types of fabric, colors, etc.
- If we want to design costumes, do we have competent seamstresses in the church?

#### Budget Items

- Costume or material costs (for all parts)
- Costs for fittings, hemming, etc.

### *Professional Musicians*

If your production includes orchestral music or might require additional musicians, be sure to include them in your planning and budget accordingly. If you're hiring professional musicians, they'll probably only need to attend one dress rehearsal. Include rehearsal sittings when asking about fees.

**Typical Sitting Fee ranges:**
$75 for typical service, $225-$300 for concert (including one rehearsal)



**Ralph says:** Check with your local musicians' union to find out the rates in your area. The church should support musicians and I choose, if possible, to pay a little above the union scale. Generosity creates great community outreach. At our church, we typically pay $75 per service and $225-$300 for a concert with one rehearsal. If you use a contractor/musician to source, organize and distribute music to your players, they receive double pay. It's well worth the money to have one of the musicians oversee the scheduling and hiring of the other musicians. When I have a church member who is a professional musician, I still pay them and they have the option of returning the pay as a donation to the church.

### *Media*

Don't overlook production-required media like videos, music tracks, split trax, etc. These can add up quickly so include them towards the top of your budget list.

**Igniter Media** has a large selection of high-quality visual resources available for purchase online. We highly recommend its products for the quality, value, and customer support.

**Budget Items**

- Video Clips
- Stock Photos / Images
- Background Music Tracks
- Split Trax

### *Copyrights / Licenses / Royalties*

Be sure to remember to add in the cost of licensing that will be required for copyrighted materials you use in your production.

**Budget Items**

- Performance Licenses
- Video Licenses
- Streaming License (if webcasting)
- Ticketed Event License
- Duplication Licenses (printed materials)
- Mechanical License (for CDs, DVDs)
- Synchronization License (for DVDs)

FREE DOWNLOAD **Royalty Estimator Fact Sheet**

### *Production Scripts / Packages / Sheet Music / Director's Scores*

Order everything you need before you have your first audition! Don't wait until you're missing a set of scores or scripts before you order them. **Pro tip: Order an extra director's score.** If the product allows duplication, be sure to honor the author's copyrighted work by obtaining the proper licensing for duplicating music and choir books (See **copyright section** for notes on photocopy licenses).

**Budget Items**

- Orchestrations
- Director's Score
- Choir Books / Music
- Scripts
- Choreography Videos
- Sample Performance Videos
- Sample Performance Audio

***Equipment***

Equipment rentals and purchases for a Christmas production can really break the bank. If you're not well-versed in the area of sound equipment, you should consult with your church's sound engineer.

### Lighting Equipment Purchase / Rentals

Followspots, ellipsoidals, fresnels, par units, and wash lighting are all common lighting fixtures for theatrical applications. If you need a few extra par units or ellipsoidals, it may be wise to purchase for use later. However, it's usually better to rent specialty lighting like followspots, wash lights, or moving lights.

### Sound Equipment

#### *Wireless Microphones*

Rule #1: Don't skimp on a cheap wireless microphone. If you purchase, use a reputable dealer that can guide you through your options and be available for assistance after the sale has been made (we suggest **Sweetwater**).

#### *Specialty Instrument Microphones*

Unless you're rocking a cello every Sunday, it probably doesn't make sense to purchase a specialty mic or pickup bridge for a single production. Specialty microphones can run several hundred dollars apiece and they're not very versatile. This is another area where it pays to be creative. Try a general purpose condenser for miking strings or horn sections. If you have a solo orchestral instrument, a trusty ol' Shure 57 (with the right EQ) will do the trick.

#### *Video Recording Equipment (if taping)*

If you plan on doing a video recording of your performance for promotional uses, then this is one area to put budget dollars to good use. Quality videography is a very complicated job and takes a lot of experience to deliver high-quality results. If you don't have the equipment or experienced staff available in-house, it can make a lot of sense to hire a professional videographer.

#### *Extra Seating*

If you expect a larger than capacity crowd, you'll need to rent additional seating. Check with other churches in the community to see if you can rent some of their seating for your performance. You'll find that many pastors will charge very little or nothing at all to help out another church in the community. **Warning:** it is imperative that you check your venue's posted capacity and adhere to it. This is not an exercise in the hypothetical. Exceeding the rated capacity of a building is dangerous, illegal, and a visit from the fire marshal could get your performance shut down or force you to ask some attendees to leave.

## Dollars and Cents

Now that you have a list of requirements, begin quoting and attaching dollar amounts to each item. If you see that you're initially over budget (and you probably will be), then you have a starting point to begin dropping or reducing unnecessary items.

***Common Savings Areas:***

- Wardrobe (simplifying costume or rely on cast members to piece together their own costumes)
- Video recording: eliminate or simplify to a one camera setup
- Set design
  + Reduce the number of features
  + Reuse props from previous productions
  + Other churches may lend you props



# PART SIX:
# LEADERSHIP

## Preparation

Few things can build a team's respect like being prepared through every step of your production organization. Likewise, there are few things that can be done to overcome a lack of preparation and planning. Walk though rehearsals in your mind before you meet and plan for "what if" scenarios. For example, "What do I do if the lead can't hit the high parts of his or her song?" Plan your practices and rehearsals out to 5 minute increments, and stick to the schedule. Begin practice on time and end on time (this shows respect for those who are prepared and honors participants' commitments by not running late).

## Expectations

For the most part, people tend to do what's expected of them. If you're clear from the beginning what your expectations are, it can eliminate conflict later. Start strong; it's difficult to play catch up late if you get off to a poor start.

## Difficult Topics

If your one of your volunteers is having trouble with a part or you feel that there is a performance issue, be gentle but direct. Remember, "praise in public, correct in private."

When utilizing young performers, it's important to keep their parents involved throughout the entire process. Have parents attend the informational meetings and make sure they receive copies of rehearsal schedules and volunteer expectations. If there becomes an issue with a younger performer, it's always best to include the parent in any discussion.



**Ralph says:**
Always keep the pastor informed and seek their advice. In this way, no one can go around you and create a conflict between you and the pastor.

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