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“Three Trees”

A musical retelling of the Swedish folktale about the life of Christ

by
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SYNOPSIS

Three trees near Bethlehem hope to become important. What happens to them is not at all what they imagined, but so much better than they could've dreamed. Use this play at Christmas or Easter (or anytime in between) to tell the story of Jesus, from his birth to his death.

CAST

Narrator
Woolamina
Ewenice
Ramsey
Oak
Cypress
Dogwood
Curly
Woodcutter 1
Woodcutter 2
Woodcutter 3
*Optional cast members
Shepherd
Flock
Spring
Summer
Fall
Winter

PROPS AND COSTUMES

Narrator-dressed all in black

Woolamina-white cardigan sweater to wear plus a ball of yarn and knitting needles with some knitting started on them, white knitted cap.

Ewenice-white shirt with rhinestones, earrings that look like sheep tags but with jewels glued on, blue ribbon for her hair

Ramsey-white muscle shirt, black ball cap with cotton balls and sheep ears glued on

Curly- wears a very long curly wig.

Oak- black shirt and pants, big cardboard cutout (black) that looks like the top part of a tree. Cut out a hole for Oak's face.

Cypress-brown shirt and pants, big cardboard cutout (brown) that looks like the top part of a tree. Cut out a hole for Cypress' face.

Dogwood-grey shirt and pants, big cardboard cutout (gray) that looks like the top part of a tree. Cut out a hole for Dogwood's face.

Shepherd(s) robes, headdresses, and shepherd's crooks

Flock- white shirts, black ball caps with cotton balls and sheep ears glued on

Woodcutters- flannel shirts, blue jeans, cardboard ax for each

Seasons- Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter are dressed according to their season. They each carry a poster with their season spelled out and decorated appropriately.

SET

Stage holds three small 2 ½ foot tall platforms in line, but close to each other, positioned on a larger platform that's at least two feet tall. (ie: three levels--stage floor, big platform, smaller platforms). A small set of risers could be used instead.

In front of the large platform, there should be room for sheep and shepherd to move about on the stage floor. While there are six speaking parts for sheep, these can be combined so that only the four named sheep speak. They can also be split if more sheep want to talk. Shepherds are optional but we found an older shepherd helpful for making sure the smallest sheep landed on their spots each time.

HOW

Curly is on stage whenever the sheep are until he is late arriving in the last scene. If there is a flock, Curly enters and exits with them. Otherwise he enters and exits with the three other sheep. Curly wanders and must be continually brought back to the fold by the shepherd, or the three main sheep.

The trees will give up their tree props, when the woodcutters chop them down, and sit down on their platforms like stumps, for the remainder of the play. When sheep leave stage, they can become the offstage choir or you can have a separate choir.

This can be staged by children, teens, adults or a mixture with room for lots of young children to just be sheep in the flock. The passing seasons can be posters held aloft at the appropriate times, or smaller actors parading across the stage with them.

AT

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Lights up. Narrator addresses the audience.

Narrator: Once upon time, there were three trees. An oak...

Oak enters, steps up onto large platform, and stands on first small platform.

...a cypress...

Cypress enters and stands on second small platform.

...and a dogwood.

Dogwood enters and stands on third small platform.

The trees grew at the top of a large hill where shepherds often brought their flock to graze.

Sheep enter, Ewenice, Woolamina, and Ramsey climb up on the first platform so they are standing at the base of the Trees, while the rest of the sheep sit down on the stage floor.

Thus, it was that the sheep became friends with the trees.

Oak: *(addressing Sheep)* Hey, Ewenice, come over here.

Ewenice: *(moving over to Oak)* Hi ya, big boy. What's up?

Cypress: *(pointing up at Oak's branches)* His branches.

Ewenice: Well paint me pink and call me a pom-pom. You just made a joke, Cypress.

Oak: I hate to interrupt this scintillating conversation but, Ewenice, could you stomp the ground, right here around my roots?

Ewenice: What? Ladies don't stomp. We skip. We dance. We cavort. But we don't stomp. It's not mannerly.

Oak: Okay then, could you please cavort around my roots?

Curly: Why do you want her to do that?

Oak: I want to be the strongest tree in the forest. I need the ground around my roots stirred up a bit so rain will go in. And that lovely fertilizer that you all drop everywhere.

Ramsey: *(flexing muscles)* If you want to be the strongest tree in the forest, then you should eat plenty of grass. Look what it's done for me.

Woolamina: Oak, you look pretty strong to me. Why do you want to grow stronger?

Oak: I want to be made into a big box that will hold the most magnificent treasure in the world.

Ramsey: *(nodding in recognition)* You want to hold my favorite muscle-building supplement: oats and barley. *(flexing arms)* You're gonna be a feed box. Good choice.

Oak: Good grief, NO! I don't want to hold sheep food. I'll be slobbered on and licked for the rest of my life. I want to hold something that can change the world.

Woolamina: *(timidly)* Well, I know three things I DON'T want to be.

Oak: What?

Woolamina: Breakfast, lunch or dinner. That's why I taught myself to knit. Did you know the average sheep can produce over 30 yards of yarn per year? That's enough for two rugs, three sweaters, or four headscarves. Oh dear, so much to do. Knit one, purl two. Knit one, purl two. *(clicking needles together)*

Ramsey: I know what I want to be.

Cypress: What?

Ramsey: Handsome. *(flexing muscles)* What do you think?

Ewenice: *(blinking and gazing adoringly)* Splendid!

Cypress: I get it. You want to impress the girls.

Ramsey: *(winking)* Don't we all? But seriously, the shepherd always chooses the most handsome buck to keep the flock going, if you know what I mean. And if that's me, I won't get sacrificed on no altar for a human's sins.

Cypress: Wow! Sheep sure have a lot to worry about.

SONG: A LAMB'S LAMENT

All Sheep stand to sing with full cast, when the song ends, the sheep on the lower level sit down again.

SING: We are not just wooly meat
Pasture-raised so you can eat.

So dine on chicken, braised or baked
Eat more fish, for goodness sake.

SAY: We just want to grow our wool,
One bag, two bags, three bags full.
Shear our fleeces in the spring
Growing sweaters is our thing.

SING: We don't want to be stand-ins-
Don't want to die to take your sins
No more altars made of stone.
Find some goats. Leave us alone.

We just want to grow our wool
One bag, two bags, three bags full

SAY: Shear our fleeces, in the spring
Growing sweaters is our thing
We just want to grow our wool
One bag, two bags, three bags full.
We just want to grow our wool
One bag, two bags, three bags full

Song ends.

Oak: Ewenice, you never told us what you want to be.

Ewenice: *(tapping the blue bow in her hair)* Honey, I already got it. I was voted
"Sweetest Little Lamb" at the Flock and Fleece Show, so the shepherd
made me part of his show flock. I'm in no danger of being eaten or
sacrificed.

Dogwood: What's a show flock?

Ramsey: *(glaring at Ewenice)* It's a snobby group of sheep that think they're
better than the rest of us.

*Ewenice punches Ramsey and he tries to pull the ribbon out of her hair. They dance
around until Woolamina steps between them.*

Woolamina: If you don't stop this, I'll...I'll...I'll— *(at a loss for words)*

Ramsey: You'll knit one of us and purl the other?

Woolamina: Don't tempt me. *(turning to Cypress)* So, Cypress, what are your
dreams?

Cypress: *(waving limbs back and forth)* I'm really flexible. I think I'd make a
great ship. And, I want to carry the most important man in the world.

Curly: Shepherds are the most important men in the world, but they don't ride around in boats, so how are you going to make that happen?

Cypress: I'm not going to carry a shepherd. I'm going to carry a king.

Ramsey: I'll be king of my flock one day. But, I ain't going on no boats.

Ewenice: No, you're going to stay here and be my kingy-wingy, and I'll be your queen-weeny. *(batting eyes and swooning at Ramsey)*

Woolamina: Ewenice, sometimes I worry about you. *(turning to Dogwood)* We haven't heard from you, yet. What do you want to be?

Dogwood: I don't ever want to leave this hill. I'm going to grow tall enough so that people will lift their eyes up to heaven when they look at me and think of God.

Ramsey: Well, then maybe you should ask Ewenice to cavort *(air quotes)* around your roots. You're pretty short.

Ewenice: Ignore him honey. You're the only one with a sensible dream. If Cypress and Oak want their dreams to come true, they're gonna to have to find a way to leave the forest. Like that's ever gonna happen.

SONG: NEVER SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

Flock stands to sing; Trees have solos; Flock exits either to choir loft or front row when the song is over.

Oak: My auntie holds up pyramids,
My grandpa points to Rome,
My cousin is a chariot,
But, I'm still stuck at home.

Cast: There's a bigger life out there,
We hear it on the breeze,
But if you stay, you'll never see
the forest for the trees.

Cypress: My mother is a wagon wheel,
My father is a spear,
My uncle is a castle roof,
But I'm still stuck right here.

Cast: There's a bigger life out there,
We hear it on the breeze,
But if you stay, you'll never see
the forest for the trees.

Dogwood: My brother was some charcoal
He burned up long ago.
My sister is an outhouse, so
I never want to go.

Cast: There's a bigger life out there,
We hear it on the breeze,
But it's ok for you to stay
in the forest with the trees.
There's a bigger life out there
But if you go or stay
Dreams can happen anywhere
God can make a way.
Yes, there's a bigger life out there
Where all your dreams might grow.
But good can come from anywhere.
God's love makes it so.
Yes, good can come from all of us
God's love makes it so.

Song ends.

Narrator: Winter came, and the shepherds took the sheep back to town.

*Sheep leave. As they are leaving **Curly** lags behind*

Curly: *(to **Trees**)* We'll be baaaaaa-ck.

Trees: We'll stay here.

Curly leaves.

Narrator: The next spring, three woodcutters climbed the hill (woodcutters enter and walk up to the trees).

Woodcutter1: *(at **Oak**)* I pick this one. It's so tall and strong.

Oak: *(to other trees with excitement)* This is it. I can feel it in my roots. I'm going to be made into a strong box and hold the most wonderful treasure in the world.

Woodcutter2: *(at **Cypress** who bends and sways as the woodcutter approaches)*
What a perfectly flexible tree.

Cypress: *(with excitement)* And I'm going to be made into a mighty ship. I can see it now. I will carry the world's most important man.

Woodcutter3: *(walks around **Dogwood** who straightens and points to the sky)* I guess you're better than nothing.

Dogwood: Oh no! All I wanted was to stay here and grow tall enough so people would look up to heaven and see God. If the woodcutter chops me down, I will never do that.

SONG: 1,2,3 CHOP

*Flock joins song from seats in front row or choir loft. In the last verse, **Woodcutters** cut tops and trunks of trees down. At the end of the song, they drag them off stage, leaving the now seated stumps behind.*

Choir is divided into Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3.

Optional- this song could be solos for the **Woodcutters.*

Part A

Group 1: This tree is super beautiful,
Beautiful,
Beautiful,
This tree is super beautiful
1,2,3
CHOP

Part B

Group 2: This tree is really flexible,
With no knots detectable,
This tree is so collectible
1,2,3 CHOP

Part C

Group 3: One little tree
In front of me
No guarantee
What it will be
One little tree
Not much to see
1,2,3 CHOP

Sung as a round.

Group 1 sings PART A

Group 1 sings PART A, Group 2 sings PART B

Group 1 sings PART A, Group 2 sings PART B, Group 3 sings PART C

Group 1 sings PART A, Group 2 sings PART B, Group 3 sings PART C

Woodcutters begin chopping.

CHOP CHOP CHOP...

Song ends.

Narrator: That summer when the sheep returned, they found three stumps where the trees had been.

Sheep re-enter with shepherd.

Woolamina: *(walks up to Oak, clicking needles nervously and then turns and speaks to Ewenice)* You tell him.

Ewenice: I'm not gonna tell him. You tell him.

Woolamina: I'm not gonna tell him. Let's get Ramsey. He'll say anything.

Oak: Tell me what.

Ramsey: Tell you that we heard a carpenter bragging about making a very strong oak tree into a bee-you-ti-full box.

Oak: That's okay. That's what I wanted.

Woolamina: The box is...

Oak: *(confidently)* A treasure chest!

Ewenice: ...a feed box.

Oak: NOOOO! Are you pulling my roots? The carpenter made me into a feed box? I'll never be important, now.

Ramsey: HEY! Feeding oats to sheep is pretty important.

Oak: Only to muscle-bound sheep.

Cypress: I hope I've been turned into a mighty ship.

Ramsey: You got one part of it right.

Cypress: Which part.

Ramsey: You are a kind of a boat.

Cypress: So, my wish has come true?

Woolamina: Oh, dear! It has if you wanted to be a fishing boat.

Cypress: Nooooo! Slime...guts...fish heads! My worst nightmare.

Dogwood: Do you know what my wood has been turned into?

Cypress: It couldn't be worse than being a leaky, stinky, low class boat.

Ewenice: *(walking over and draping arm over Dogwood's shoulders)* Well, sugar plum, actually, it could.

Dogwood: I'm an outhouse?

Ewenice: No. You're a nothing. The carpenter left you behind his shed. He wouldn't even pay the woodcutter for you. He said you'd never be good for anything.

Woolamina: *(knitting furiously)* Are you cold without your leaves? I could knit each of you a hat.

Oak: *(sadly)* I don't think that's gonna help Woolamina, but thanks for the offer.

Cypress: *(addressing Sheep)* Please leave. We need to be alone.

After Sheep are gone.

Oak: I can't believe I'm going to be used to hold hay for hungry animals. I'll be covered in cow slobber the rest of my life.

Cypress: It's worse for me. I've been built into a fishing boat. What a stinky job. Imagine it. Dead fish everywhere.

Dogwood: At least you were each turned into something useful. The carpenter said I was worthless.

Trees singing sadly to tune of "I'm a Little Teapot"

Oak: *(singing)* I'm a little feed box in a stall, I hold hay and oats, no treasures at all. I thought I'd be important, but I'm not. When I am gone, I'll be forgot.

Cypress: *(singing)* I'm a little boat with tiny sails, covered in fish guts, slime and tails. I thought I'd be important, but I'm not. When I am gone, I'll be forgot.

Dogwood: *(singing)* I'm a lonely log behind a shed. One day I'll be sawdust, *(spoken, not sung, sadly)* then I'll be dead. I thought I'd be important, but I'm not. When I am gone, I'll be forgot.

Trees slump down in their platforms on stage.

Narrator: That summer when the sheep returned to the hill, they were baa-ing with excitement.

Sheep return with Shepherd.

Ewenice: *(addressing Oak)* You will never believe what happened this winter. One night, there was a huge light in the sky. And then there was lots of singing and shouting.

Ramsey: After the light disappeared, the shepherds started running as fast as they could. We followed... *(turns to other sheep)* Of course I ran faster than the rest of you *(flexes arms)*.

Woolamina: Only because I got tangled up in my yarn...

Ewenice: And because I didn't want to sweat. Sweating makes my wool droopy. Anyway, we ended up at a tiny stable behind an inn.

Ramsey: And that's when we saw it. We saw you. *(points at Oak)*

Oak: *(dejected)* Was I full of slobber?

Ramsey: I don't know. You were full of hay, and you were cradling a baby. The baby might have been slobbering. They do that, don't they?

Woolamina: We heard the shepherds say the baby was the Messiah. God's son.

Cypress: Did you hear that, Oak? You were cradling *(with reverence)* God's son!

Dogwood: I can't think of a more wonderful treasure than that.

Cypress: You did it. I'd high five you, if I had any branches left. You got your wish. I'm glad at least one of us did something important.

Narrator: That winter, the sheep returned to the fold.

Sheep leave but Curly lags behind.

Curly: We'll be baaaa-ck.

Trees: We'll stay here.

Sheep exit.

Oak: *(to other trees)* In all my imaginings about what I might become, I never could have imagined this. *(in awe)* I held God's son.

SONG: SAFELY TUCKED AWAY

Oak solo plus full cast singing from seats in first row or choir loft

Oak: Once a little baby
snuggled in the hay
in simple manger
not too far away.
A tiny little treasure
In a cattle stall
I have cradled God's own son,
The savior of us all.

Cast: You have held a treasure
sent by God above
You, a simple manger
held God's gift of love.
A tiny little treasure
A place for love to start
God's own son slept through the night
Tucked against your heart.

Oak: God's own son slept through the night
Tucked against my heart.

Song ends.

Seasons enter, holding up their signs in a wave as Narrator says the next part, then exit.

Narrator: Years passed and the sheep had no more news about the three trees.
Then one summer, when the sheep returned, they had a new story to tell.

Sheep enter baa-ing excitedly among themselves.

Ewenice: *(as they approach the Trees but speaking to the other Sheep)* Did you hear all that ruckus in the village as we were leaving? So many people ran to hear it, that they messed up my curls. *(pats hair)*

Woolamina: Yeah, one of them tripped over my yarn and unraveled almost a whole sweater. The guy who untangled him said something about a storm and a little fishing boat that was caught in it.

Ramsey: I heard that everyone on the boat almost drowned.

Ewenice: *(turning to Cypress, pointing and saying with emphasis)* That little fishing boat was you.

Cypress: I knew it. From fish slime to a wreck at the bottom of the sea. I never achieved my dream of carrying the world's most important man.

Curly: *(turning to Cypress)* The boat didn't sink.

Cypress: It didn't?

Ramsey: It was a miracle. The way I heard it, it happened like this:

Flock mimics rainstorm starting by rubbing hands together.

Ewenice: *(very dramatically with gestures)* The wind rose, the rain fell, the boat rocked and rolled.

Flock snaps fingers or pats thighs.

Ramsey: *(loudly)* The waves crashed, the rudder smashed, the captain lost control!

Flock starts clapping hands, softly at first but rising in sound.

Woolamina: Thunder roared, foam soared, the wind was loud and shrill!

Flock stomp feet, to mimic thunder and Ewenice shouts...

Ewenice: A mighty man raised up his hand and shouted...

Flock jump up and landing together on one loud stomp.

Flock: PEACE BE STILL!

Flock is now quiet and there is a momentary moment of silence.

Woolamina: *(in awe)* The storm stopped. The boat sailed back to the harbor. Everyone in the village is calling it a miracle.

Oak: *(turning to Cypress)* You did it. I bet he was the world's most powerful man and he was in your boat.

Ramsey: As the world's most powerful sheep *(flexes arms)* I can say with confidence that he was the world's most powerful man. The villagers are calling him the Messiah. God's son.

Cypress: Wait! *(turning to Oak)* God's son is the treasure that YOU cradled.

Dogwood: It's just not fair. You've both done something really important. I've probably been turned into an outhouse. Or worse, nothing at all.

Ewenice: Don't give up hope, honeybee. I was a bald baby, but just look at me now. *(she fluffs her hair as Ramsey wolf whistles)*

Ramsey: Yeah Baby! (*turning to Dogwood*) I mean, yeah, don't stop believing in yourself. I've seen pictures. Ewenice didn't have any wool when she was born, but now she's a grown-up gorgeous ball of fluff. Anything is possible.

Narrator: When winter came, the shepherds took the sheep back to the fold.

Sheep leave but Curly turns to speak before they go.

Black Sheep: We'll be baaaa-ck.

Trees: We'll stay here.

Sheep leave for seats in audience or choir loft.

Oak: I still can't believe that I cradled God's son.

Cypress: Or that God's son sailed in my tiny little fishing boat.

Dogwood: I'm the one who wanted to point the way to God, but you two actually got to do it. A couple of years from now, I'll be nothing but a rotten pile of sawdust.

SONG: WHAT WILL BECOME OF ME

Sung acapella and solo by Dogwood. Should be very sad and tentative.

Dogwood: What will become of me, now.
What will I ever be?
'Cause now I'll never become
All that I dreamed I'd be.
I will never point the way to God for all the world to see.

Pause

What will become of me?

Narrator: That summer, the sheep returned.

Sheep enter excitedly. Black Sheep remains off-stage.

Ewenice: (*addressing Dogwood*) What a crazy spring. The carpenter finally shaped you into two beams.

Dogwood: (*dismayed*) Annnd... I'm holding up an outhouse.

Woolamina: (*knitting nervously*) Even worse.

Dogwood: What's worse than an outhouse?

Ramsey: *(quietly)* A cross.
Trees gasp and put hands up to mouths.

Dogwood: *(in horror)* They turned me into a cross? But crosses are used for killing murderers and thieves.

Oak: I'm so sorry, Dogwood. Of all of us you were the only one who wanted something bigger than yourself. You wanted to help people look up and see God,

Cypress: ...and instead you were used to help people look up at thieves and murderers.

Dogwood: I am so ashamed.

Ewenice: That's not even the worst part, sweetie pie.

Dogwood: How could it get any worse?

Ewenice: *(delicately)* I don't know how to tell you this, but the man they hung on your cross was—

Woolamina: *(interrupting)* ...the sweet little baby that you cradled— *(points to Oak with knitting needle)*

Ramsey: *(interrupting)* ...and the dude that *(throws out arms importantly)* stopped the storm when he sailed in you. *(points at Cypress)*

Trees: *(gasping as they say together)* THE SON OF GOD?
Beat as Sheep nod.

Dogwood: *(mortified)* Are you telling me that I was used to kill the son of God? Why would people even do that? That's the most awful thing I've ever heard. Hangs head in shame

Everyone is silent.

Suddenly Curly comes running in.

Curly: *(out of breath)* Hey, why did you leave me behind?

Ramsey: Sorry, dude. We didn't mean to. I guess we weren't thinking very clearly.

Woolamina: *(almost whispering)* It was so awful.

Curly: Well, you should have stuck around. You missed the most wonderful thing!

Woolamina: What could possibly have been wonderful about watching the Son of God die?

Curly: He rose again!

Ewenice: What?

Curly: He rose again!

Ramsey: You're making that up. Trying to pull the wool over our eyes.

Curly: No, it's true.

Woolamina: How do you know?

Curly: When I got separated from all of you, I wandered around for three days trying to find you. Then I got tired, so I found a nice soft spot in a garden for a nap. I had just closed my eyes when the ground started shaking *(jumps up and down a bit)* and there was a bright light *(hands up as if shielding eyes)*. I jumped up, because, well, it was really scary. That's when I saw it! *(stops speaking and looks at sheep expectantly)*

All Sheep: What? What did you see? Tell us.

Curly: *(importantly)* I saw...a big stone roll away from a hole in a rock and *(long pause for effect)* the Son of God walked out!

Dogwood: So, I didn't help kill the Son of God?

Curly: No! Turns out, you can't kill the Son of God! Instead, you proved how powerful he is! When people look at your cross now, they will be reminded that God's Son is more powerful than death!

Oak: *(with great excitement)* You did it!

Cypress: Dogwood, you achieved your dream.

Dogwood: *(humbly)* I did it.

Ewenice: Silly Trees! You all did what you hoped to do. And then God took it one step further.

SONG: HE IS ALIVE (full cast)

Wait 8 beats then CHANT

All: He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive
He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive
He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive
He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive

SING

All: He is alive
He was born in a stable

Oak: My box was his bed.
He is alive

Cypress: The storm could have sunk me
He stopped it instead.

Dogwood: Nailed to my cross
Then placed in a grave

All: He rose up from death and
He walked away.
He is Alive
He is Alive

CHANT

All: He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive
He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive
He is a LIVE, He is A live, He IS alive.

Song ends.

Ewenice: God sure works in funny ways.

Ramsey: I wish sheep could have been part of the story.

Woolamina: Not me, I'm just glad I'm not a lamb chop or burger, although, at this point, I guess I could still be a mutton roast. *(picks knitting back up and starts knitting nervously)* Must knit more...knit one, purl two, knit one, purl two...

Oak: What do you mean you wish you could have been a part of the story.
You were.

Cypress: Because you told it to us.

Ewenice: I have a feeling that when people look at a cross, they will keep telling it.

Ramsey:

Because it points the way to God's love...in a better way than YOU
(*points to Dogwood*) could ever have dreamed.

THE END

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