

# SILENT NIGHT

**Theme:** Silent Night primarily focuses on events and characters surrounding the Christmas story, such as the innkeeper's wife and the shepherd. However, the inclusion of the soldier reminds us that the words associated with Jesus' birth are synonymous with peace throughout the world and throughout time.

**Theme:** Christmas

**Cast:**



Composer



Innkeeper's  
Wife



Shepherd



Soldier



Carol  
Singers

## Performance directions:

This can be performed as a series of monologues separated by carol singers singing a verse from 'Silent Night'; or you could select just one of the monologues as a stand-alone piece.

If all of the monologues are being performed, all four characters should be positioned on the stage from the beginning. Each character should stay frozen in a suitable position until it is their time to talk, as this will create an effective visual throughout. These monologues will work well with traditional costumes.

## The Silent Night - Character Scripts

Written by Stephen Burns

Four monologues based on the idea of a 'Silent Night'.



### Composer

The 'Silent Night' carol was born out of necessity. There have been many fanciful stories that have accompanied my most famous composition; allow me to put some of them to rest. It was Christmas Eve, the year was 1818, and my friend Josef Mohr came to me with a six-stanza poem he had written two years previously. I was a mere elementary school teacher, who happened also to be choirmaster and organist at my local church. Josef was the priest who had been asked to prepare a new carol for the Christmas Eve mass. People tell me that there are now legendary anecdotes about the circumstances of that evening. For example, that a crazed mouse had eaten through the bellows of the church organ, and had only left the specific notes used in 'Silent Night' playable; that the organ itself had been damaged causing me to have to find an alternate instrument. I am certainly a humble musician, and therefore I'm not surprised to hear that this carol has been credited to the great composers of the time like Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. They would all have been most pleased with my simple efforts.

The truth is this: it was in my small apartment above the school house that I composed the carol which now has spread worldwide and become a lot of people's favourite Christmas carol. It was written for a guitar upon request; it was performed that very evening by myself and the church choir repeating the last two lines of each verse. I hold no claims to musical greatness; you will not hear any great masterworks from my pen. I do know, however, that in that upper room something very special happened. Through words and

melody came the retelling in song of the most glorious night in history. 'Silent Night' became my gift to the world, and it was inspired by our Heavenly Father who gave the greatest gift of all. Christ the Saviour is born!



### Innkeeper's Wife

The 'Silent Night!' Well it wasn't that silent for me - it was one of the busiest nights of the year! When you're married to Bethlehem's self-proclaimed commercial real estate star and entrepreneur of the year, there's never a dull moment. My husband thinks he could sell sand to the nomads of the Sahara! In truth he owns one hotel, a stable, and his mother's house... when eventually she 'moves on!' (Points upwards and pulls a grimace).

You may or may not have heard of his latest invention. It's a type of sandal which is moulded from some sort of strange new oily material he found in the Red Sea, and the sandals have holes all over to allow the feet to breathe! He wants to call them 'Alligators'; I've told him he's wasting his time - it'll never catch on!

Anyway, let's get back to the night in question. As soon as my husband heard about the census, he was so excited. Never have I seen him work so hard to make every single room in our hotel liveable, and he'd over-booked the place two times over. We even had to stay at his mother's house ourselves because he'd rented our rooms to the paying customers.

Don likes to tell people that Bethlehem is going to be the next Babylon, with tourists flooding in to taste the cultural quintessence of this capital of class! The truth is that anyone born in Bethlehem can't wait to get out of the place. That's why we're the only real hotel! But to his credit, on the night before the census took place we were packed. He was eventually turning people away - with a tear in his eye, may I add, not because of their discomfort, but the fact that he was watching the money walk

away!

Well, in the early hours of the morning a young couple knocked at our door. They told us about their long journey, and they couldn't hide the fact that the young lady was also very pregnant. How could we turn them away? Ever the problem-solver, my husband came up with a solution: he would allow them to use the stable for free. Free! Now that was a miracle in itself! However, he would charge them if he had to move the animals! They accepted so gratefully that we both felt terrible. Obviously we eventually heard about the boy that was born in our stable. The King of kings and Lord of lords, they said! Don is so excited about plans for that stable now, with a theme park planned for 12 AD; and yet I like to remember that our Saviour was born to this earth not in a palace, but in our lowly stable.

That 'Silent Night' was one of the busiest of our lives, and yet from all of the confusion came the Saviour of all mankind.



### Shepherd

The 'Silent Night' was just that - silent... that was, until a heavenly throng arrived and shook the very foundations of the hill where we were minding our own business! We shepherds always seem to get poor representation at this time of year, and I'm here to put that right. I am not some dullard who was after a career as a sheep caregiver. This idea that every single shepherd eats with his hands like some sort of savage, grunts because he doesn't have the mental capacity to speak, and signs his name with an 'X' because the mystery of writing might blow his pea-sized brain, is unfounded! NO! Surely some of you have been forced into the family business, or maybe delivered the daily news scroll for a while whilst studying at the synagogue? That does not make you into a caveman shepherd herder!

Unfortunately there are far too many of my work

colleagues who reinforce the stereotype. Jacob – or ‘Tiny’ as we call him – is an excellent example of your cliché. He mainly enjoys sleeping, eating, and seeing how many sheep he can carry at one time (his record is 27, by the way). Yet even Tiny couldn’t miss what was going on that evening.

That night the sheep did as they always did – ate whatever grass they could find, slept and waited to be picked up by Tiny. I was off on my own studying the Scriptures when everything changed. To be visited by one angel is unique, but when you also get the full choir to back it up, that’s something even Tiny will never forget... and he thinks his real name actually is ‘Tiny’! After some discussion, the general consensus was that it had really just happened and we should probably go and check out this baby. Some thought the choir might return but this time with lightning bolts, so we hurried down the hill. I was astounded that the Messiah I had read about in Isaiah could be born here amongst us.

I have been known to be rather sarcastic and sceptical. However, the scene of serenity I saw in that stable removed any of the questions that I may have had. All I could do was kneel and worship the child who would go on to be our Saviour. I doubted the logic in Christ being revealed to such commoners as shepherds, that we should be the first to see him in all of his glory and then be charged with sharing the good news – it seemed comical at first. And yet it was for us that God sent his Son, for the ‘whosoever’.

The ‘Silent Night’ will forever be with me, and I am proud to say that I am a lowly shepherd who knelt at the feet of Christ.



### Soldier

The ‘Silent Night’ was never meant to happen. It wasn’t approved by those who were commanding officers, and yet anyone who was there will tell you that it was the most sensible act in what had been

an unbelievably stressful few months.

It was Christmas Eve, 1914, and the British troops had been dug in their trenches for three weeks. A stalemate had ensued with neither the British nor the Germans making any headway in what was turning out to be a bloody encounter. Morale was low and the end of the war seemed to be an awfully long way off. Those of us on duty that night in the cold, damp and rotten trench couldn’t help but think of Christmas at home.

The first sign of what was to come came from the German side of the trenches. Across ‘no man’s land’ there could be seen small areas of light. There were strict instructions about the black-outs during the night, as any erroneous light would usually be followed by aggressive gunfire to that area, and yet tonight that wasn’t on anyone’s mind. Along with the candlelight came the voices of the German soldiers singing ‘Stille Nacht’. We immediately recognised the carol ‘Silent Night’, and joined in with the beautiful melody. That sound was the most foreign thing to hear in the desolate and war-torn land. The carol singing lasted throughout much of the night.

In the morning, Christmas morning, both sides left their trenches and exchanged gifts with one another in the middle of ‘no man’s land’. It was a time of sharing on both sides, a release of the great tension of the past few months and a chance to look into the eyes of the enemy and to see if they were just normal men like us. A football was produced and a game started, and I promise you I was never offside for that goal!

The ‘Silent Night’ will forever be a light shining in the darkness, like those candles across ‘no man’s land’. In the midst of the war that should have ended all wars, Christ’s birth was celebrated by two foes. He is and always will be my Wonderful Counsellor and Prince of Peace.