

True meaning of Christmas on stage

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Correspondent

In the material world of today, it's becoming increasingly difficult to convey the true meaning of Christmas, this year, Jenny Bowen is heading up a production at Christ Church Anglican in Stouffville which emphasizes the special message of Christmas in and original way.

Star Child is a completely original production with words and music by Jenny, a talented musician and member of the congregation. She showed great musical promise as a child in England, where she admits to being an extremely reluctant piano student at the insistence of her parents.

"I never practised and it was a fight to get me to go," she recalls. "The teacher would say to mum, 'That child has so

much talent but she refuses to use it. Finally my parents gave in and I stopped going." Her musical abilities lay dormant until about three years ago, she says.

Lay dormant

"It was very much through the Christ Church family that I started again. I had been going to Bible study classes led by (Minister Paul Scuse's wife) Betty." The group would meet in each other's houses and on their first gathering at Jenny's home, Betty noticed a guitar propped up in the corner of the room and told Jenny she was the answer to her prayer.

"She told me she'd been praying for someone to come into the group who could play a guitar. I said I wasn't the person she wanted and the guitar

was just an ornament, although I'd taught myself to play folk guitar as a teenager." Betty's answer was that if Jenny had played as a teenager, she could do it again.

"She wouldn't take no for an answer. She said she'd come up one day and we'd get the guitar out, that was the start of it." The group started off just singing and playing various songs, "then when I wrote my first song I sang it to them. I felt very worried and anxious about how they'd react, but they thought it was great, so I went from there."

Something secular

Jenny has only written one song that was not based on religion and, strangely enough, that was something she was asked to write for the Christian

Women's Club. "They wanted two songs, and one had to be something secular." The result was a poignant reminder for people to take the time they have and use it well, because life is fleeting.

Three of her songs were used in worship services last Christmas and, by then, she was working on this year's pageant. To her delight, writing comes easily to her. "I don't struggle with it for hours, I'll sit down, pick up the guitar under the guise of practising and within a few minutes my fingers have found a new melody."

She estimates it takes a total of two hours to write both the words and music for her songs. In the past three years she has written 40 songs, nine of which will be used in Star Child. Says Jenny: "The story is based on a modern family which is heading into Christmas with all the normal hassles most people have, and which we have too, even as a Christian family."

Child's doll

The youngest child has seen one of the year's biggest sellers, a doll called a star child, in a store catalogue, and decides she must have it for Christmas. "When the family's aunt and uncle come in with their three children, the uncle says 'don't you know there really was a star child once?'" "Then he talks about the Christmas story."

With haunting music and a strong, clear message, Star Child explains what Christmas is really about. It has a particular relevance for Jenny, who admits, "God was never really important to me until my first husband became sick. That was 10 years ago, when he

and Jenny and their two small children had been in Canada only a few months.

"He came home from work that July and he couldn't move his arms or legs. He was taken to hospital and died there just over two months later."

It was a time of tremendous emotional upheaval and, to complicate matters, Jenny was pregnant with her third child. "If I hadn't been expecting Kate, I probably would have gone back to England," she reflects. "But I felt so tired, and the thought of moving was more than I could cope with at the time."

Angry at God

She felt angry with God to begin with, she says. I turned to Him and prayed for a miracle when my husband got sick. When he didn't get better I was angry for a while. Then it came to me that God had given me lots of miracles and blessings and had answered my prayers."

Jenny eventually remarried and now has five children, the youngest of whom is two-year-old Matthew.

Now she's in the throes of organizing the Christmas pageant, but not without a few misgivings. "I'd hoped to be able to pass the whole thing over and have someone else do it," she admits. "Then if things went wrong, they could take the blame! But they wouldn't let me do that. Bob Croft is directing and I'm the producer."

Judging from a sample of the score which has already been taped, Jenny will have very little to worry about when Star Child is unveiled for its debut at Christ Church on the morning of Sunday, Dec. 17.

Regional clinic

Injured workers now treated in Newmarket

Workplace injuries suffered by York Region residents are now being treated at a Newmarket clinic.

Under provincial reforms being implemented by the Workers' Compensation Board, workers suffering from "soft tissue injuries, muscle strains, sprains and back injuries" will be treated at the York County Physiotherapy and Sports Injuries Clinic at 1100 Davis Dr., Units 14 and 15.

According to a WCB press release, the new treatment model was based on experience gained with 12 pilot projects which operated in conjunction with the WCB across the province.

STOUFFVILLE DISTRICT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

NOTICE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Interim midterm reports were given to the students on Thursday, Oct. 26, 1989.

All parents/guardians are invited to meet with the teachers on Parent's Night, Thurs., Nov. 2, 1989 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

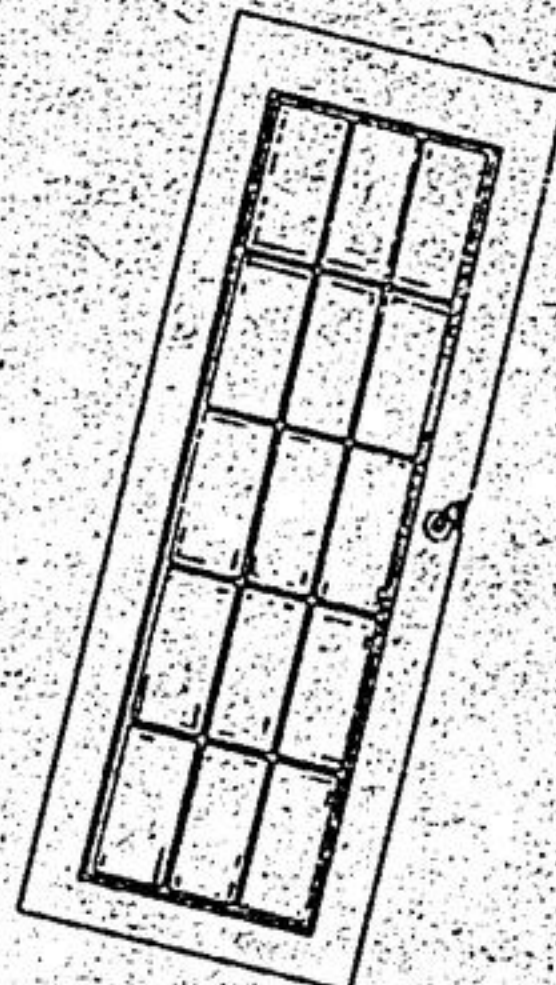
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