

SAVIOR OF THE WORLD: His Birth and Resurrection **Producing *Savior of the World* as a Staged Production**

The following guidelines are primarily intended to assist those planning, directing, and producing *Savior of the World: His Birth and Resurrection* as a staged theatrical performance. These principles may also assist those adapting the production to other formats.

Prayerfully select a director and needed production staff.

The type of production chosen will determine to what extent production leaders need a background in theater and whether additional production staff members are necessary. If it is your responsibility to recommend people to fill these positions, prayerfully consider Church members with strong testimonies of the gospel. Counsel with priesthood leaders, and follow their direction.

Prayerfully select cast members.

Prayerfully select cast members from those who have strong testimonies of the Savior, who live in accordance with gospel principles, and who are able and willing to make the necessary time commitment. Where possible, involve families so that bonds are strengthened as family members share experiences. Usually children ages eight years and older are better able to concentrate during rehearsals. Plan for supervision and/or activities for children in the cast as needed. Always follow the guidelines for safeguarding children and youth in Church activities, especially in Church buildings where there are many rooms into which children and youth may wander off or find themselves alone with adults. Guiding children in appropriate behavior backstage as well as onstage will help invite the Spirit into the rehearsal process.

Approach acting from a spiritual perspective.

Fully realizing the spiritual potential of *Savior of the World* requires a unique approach to working with participants. Directors of traditional productions tend to focus primarily on telling the story of the play, the portrayal of characters, the artistry of theatrical elements, etc. Leaders of Church productions should focus primarily on helping members and families spiritually prepare to share the gospel. Therefore, leaders should ensure that all aspects of rehearsals and performances are based on gospel principles of leadership, service, and brotherly love, and should include regular opportunities for gospel teaching and learning, the bearing of testimonies, and expressions of encouragement, support, and appreciation (see *Create opportunities for spiritual experiences* below). The entire production effort should be a demonstration of the gospel in action, encouraging members to strive to “bear one another’s burdens” (Mosiah 18:8) and be “of one heart and one mind” (Moses 7:18).

As leaders plan and execute the production with the spiritual preparation of members and families in mind, the performance will carry the power of the Spirit of the Lord. Inviting this Spirit is essential to achieve the priesthood purposes of the production, for “when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1).

Production leaders should also help participants “think of [their] brethren like unto [them]selves” (Jacob 2:17) and avoid the worldly tendency to view some roles as more important than others. Privileges for prominent roles, such as separate dressing rooms, should be avoided. Participants with large speaking parts should be strongly encouraged to reach out to and serve all members of the cast.

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Plan effective rehearsals.

Respect participants' sacrifices by planning effective rehearsals. Schedule rehearsals to best utilize the time of those involved and to minimize hardships for families, especially those travelling longer distances to participate. Wherever possible, family members in the production should have similar rehearsal schedules. Consider organizing several simultaneous activities during rehearsal so that everyone present is involved.

Create opportunities for spiritual experiences.

Throughout the rehearsal process, there will be occasions to discuss gospel doctrines found in the production. At appropriate times production leaders may wish to testify of the events and concepts presented in the script. He or she may feel to invite the cast to ponder, study, and pray about the events depicted and their respective roles. In doing so, all involved may deepen their spiritual understanding.

At times, production leaders may wish to teach specific doctrines concerning the Savior to all participants. Devotionals may be held at rehearsals and performances for this purpose. The responsibility of preparing devotionals may also be given to other members of the production. The script, scriptures, or other appropriate resources may be used to invite the Spirit into the rehearsal or performance. Devotionals should be short, so they do not unduly lengthen rehearsals or become a burden to prepare.

Present sacred material with sensitivity.

Special care should be taken so that sacred moments, such as angelic visitations and appearances of the resurrected Savior, are depicted with appropriate respect and reverence. In addition, portions of the *Savior of the World* script are based very literally on scriptural references and should be presented as written. The director should review Church guidelines on the portrayal of Deity (see *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, page 279). Additional suggestions are included under Portraying the Savior and Angelic Messengers and Casting. Seeking the guidance of the Spirit will assist the director in staging sacred material.

Utilize missionary opportunities.

Under the guidance of priesthood leaders, you may wish to plan ways to take advantage of missionary opportunities created by the production. In addition to inviting less-active members and friends of other faiths to attend performances, consider involving specific individuals in the production itself, as appropriate. Inspiration and creativity will help you find the best ways to utilize their abilities, including such avenues as acting, stage management, set design, publicity, costuming, helping with children, and so forth.