

In the Image

A children's musical for unison/two-part voices and piano,
with optional oboe (or C instrument) and percussion

by
Mark Burrows

*Dedicated to the wonder-beautiful children of the Texas Conference Choir Clinic 2016,
David Henry, Dean.*

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Foreword

This is *not* the musical I meant to write. My original idea was to write a musical revue based on The Creation. Nice and straightforward, right? I mean, the form is already pretty obvious – one song and a little dialogue for each day of Creation. Maybe a short reprise of the opening number. I had it all figured out!

But someone, or rather some-One, had other plans. “Go deeper,” the voice said. “Do more.” It seems my task was to offer children something beyond a simple retelling of a story they could easily read for themselves.

In the Image features a group of children who have just experienced the story of the Creation. And now they’re starting to wonder what it really means to be created *in the image* of God. Through humorous, earnest exploration, the children discover that being created in the image of God isn’t about physical appearance.

It’s about creativity, faithfulness, responsibility, community, and the ability to find the good in things.

This musical isn’t simply about events that happened a long time ago. It’s about the children in your very church right now. It’s about you. And it’s about the One who created this whole wonder-beautiful world. You and the children under your care are going to do a beautiful job! You can do amazing things. Never forget - you are created *In the Image*.

Mark Burrows

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The Cast of Characters

All roles may be played by either male or female performers. For this reason, each character is named for a prominent personality trait. Some of the names may seem a bit unique, but since none of the characters are actually referred to by name, there was no real reason to give them some arbitrary, place-holder name.

Roles are listed in order from most lines to fewest.

CATALYST – a natural, inspirational leader, with just a hint of bossiness. Ideally played by an older child or youth.

ENVIRONMENTALIST – passionate about nature and very conscious of how our actions affect the environment.

ARTSY – believes glitter glue makes everything better. The character most likely to own a kitten poster. Often overexcited.

LITERALIST – represents the mind of the young child – a concrete thinker, who takes things literally. Asks a lot of questions.

CRAFTSY – *see* ARTSY. The two feed off of one another’s energy.

MUCK 1 – fascinated by the unusual and even the gross. If it’s a creature the rest of the world views as disgusting, MUCK 1 sees the beauty in it. Has a duet with MUCK 2 in *All Things*.

MUCK 2 – *see* MUCK 1. As with ARTSY and CRAFTSY, MUCK 1 and MUCK 2 feed off one another’s energy.

DRUMMER – has a great sense of rhythm, probably always tapping a toe under the desk at school. A bit more verbally understated than the others.

POET – a total dreamer. Every line feels like a poem. Maybe takes self a bit too seriously.

YOU KNOW – the know-it-all of the bunch, and proud of it.

DANCER – needs to express using the entire body. Each line is grand and involves physical movement. Everywhere feels *center stage* to this character.

SLEEPY – sleeps through most of the show...and sees no problem with that.

WOW – the eternal optimist. Has a heightened sense of wonder.

Casting Options

That’s thirteen distinct roles. But what if you have more than thirteen children who want speaking roles? Here are some things you can do:

- ARTSY and CRAFTSY could be divided into four total roles.
- MUCK 1 and MUCK 2 could be divided into four total roles.
- Some children may very well want a singing role but *not* a speaking role. Create additional SOLOIST characters for these children. You can even give them character names to list in the program. There are so many opportunities for soloists, especially in songs with a verse-refrain form. You can assign soloists to different verses and have the entire cast sing the refrain.
- If you have enough children for two full casts, then double-cast the show and do two performances. One can be at your church and another can be out somewhere in the community, such as a retirement center, nursing home, or VA hospital.

On the other hand, if you have a smaller group, you can condense a few roles.

- ARTSY and CRAFTSY can be combined into one role. In the dialogue, make sure to change all the “we” and “us” language to “I” and “me.”
- ENVIRONMENTALIST and YOU KNOW can be combined into one role. If you go this route, I recommend cutting one of YOU KNOW’s lines – “You know, I could use more straws for my double helix.” (p. 49) – otherwise it will seem like ENVIRONMENTALIST is negating himself/herself.

Set

The setting is a typical children's Sunday school room. A few long tables can be set up on either side of the stage with chairs behind the tables (facing the audience/congregation) – aka Sitcom Seating. On the tables can be standard Sunday school supplies and materials – boxes of crayons, glue sticks, construction paper, cardboard tubes, a few Bibles, etc.

The walls/backdrop can feature posters depicting Bible stories – The Creation, Noah, Jesus Calming the Storm, etc. There can also be a few Bible verses written in large letters scattered here and there.

God saw all that God had made, and indeed it was very good. Genesis 1:31
O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Psalm 8:1
No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another God lives in us. 1 John 4:12a

If you have a CHORUS in addition to the speaking roles, this group of children can stand/sit on choral risers upstage.

Remember: while the basic set needs to depict a children's Sunday school room, there should still be lots of open space on stage, especially center stage. In other words, less is probably more.

Costumes and Props

Since the setting is a typical Sunday school room, the costumes will not be elaborate. I recommend very basic attire – black/dark pants and solid color shirts. If there are enough children for a CHORUS in addition to the speaking roles and solos, have those in the CHORUS wear the same color shirt. AND make sure the colors worn by the other cast members are different than the CHORUS shirt color.

Additionally, many of the characters can have a prop or costume item to help differentiate them from the other characters.

ENVIRONMENTALIST – can wear green, *lots* of green. Perhaps a “Save the Manatees” t-shirt or something similar

ARTSY and CRAFTSY – can wear sparkly (bedazzled!) attire

MUCK 1 and MUCK 2 – can wear baseball caps, backward or sideways so as not to shade their faces

DRUMMER – can wear a t-shirt of a favorite rock band

POET – can carry a pen and a writing journal

YOU KNOW – the big, black-rimmed glasses seem a bit cliché, but then again...

DANCER – can wear any kind of dance attire

SLEEPY – can carry around a pillow or blanket

WOW – can wear a bright colored shirt, yellow or orange, or something with a big star

LITERALIST – can carry a Bible, or wear a shirt with a big “?” on it

CATALYST – can carry a clipboard

Aside from the Handmade Parade (more on that in a moment), there are very few props needed in the script. Here is the short props list:

- A cell phone (for CATALYST at the very beginning)
- An empty five-gallon water bottle (for DRUMMER)
- Assorted art supplies – ribbons, glue, paint brushes (for all the cast when they are “creating” things for the Handmade Parade)

The Songs

It Was Good – The entire cast is onstage as the music begins. The solemn, mysterious opening gives way to the rhythmic energy of the celebration of creation. This song goes through the seven days of creation, devoting lines to each day. Days 2-5 can be sung as solos. Optional *divisi*.

Created to Create – This gospel/rock song begins with a solo. People can get stuck thinking that you have to be Shakespeare or Mozart to be considered “creative.” The song builds as the entire cast is inspired to be creative in their own way.

All Things – An up-tempo song, based on the hymn text *All Things Bright and Beautiful* by Cecil Frances Alexander. Measures 5-22 can be sung as solos/duet by ARTSY and CRAFTSY, with the entire cast joining in at m. 25. And then at m. 45, MUCK 1 and MUCK 2 bring everything to a grinding halt. They take center stage, making their case that God sees *all of it* as good, not just things the world deems pretty. Musicians will need to be attentive to when MUCK 1 and MUCK 2 jump in so the music can fizzle out. After their dialogue, the instruments come in strong at m. 49. MUCK 1 and MUCK 2 rap a duet from m. 53-69. The entire cast joins at m. 71, with a couple of spoken lines interspersed. Make *sure* these spoken lines are loud, or they won’t be heard. Brief optional *divisi* near the end.

Wonder-Beautiful – A ballad. Measures 5-12 can be sung as a solo by ENVIRONMENTALIST. Little to no staging needed. This song is essentially a musical devotion. Optional *divisi*.

It Was Good (Interlude) – This instrumental piece, based on the opening number, lasts just over 50 seconds. The idea is to create the illusion of the passing of time as the children are in a flurry of creative activity. As the instrumental winds down, the children are holding (or otherwise ready to demonstrate) the finished products of their creative efforts.

What Do You Suppose? – In this playfully mysterious song, the children wonder what God looks like. They can add simple actions, highlighting different physical features – face, hair, hands – to correspond with the lyrics.

The Heart-Song of God – An uplifting ballad. The accompaniment can start right as CATALYST is saying her line, “Maybe. What if the image...” Brief optional division near the end.

In the Image – The big finale. The length of the song depends on the length of your Handmade Parade and the size of the space. The interlude (m. 21-65) takes about 2:15 when observing the repeats. Make sure all the instrumentalists are attentive and ready to extend or shorten the interlude. I would encourage the instrumentalists to really play out during the interlude so any children marching with rhythm instruments will be able to stay in tempo.

The optional instrument parts bring a fantastic energy to the musical score, reinforcing the diversity and style of each song. Seek out a great woodwind player and a few talented percussionists. As with any song, instrumentalists should be attentive to the marked dynamics, careful not to overshadow the singers.

The Handmade Parade

We hold a Handmade Parade at our church every other year, usually around Earth Day in the spring. In the weeks leading up to the parade, the children make all the banners, puppets, instruments, and more – all using recycled materials and found objects! Aside from being a great way to begin a worship service (or end a musical!) a Handmade Parade is a true celebration. It celebrates:

- a loving Creator
- the wonder and beauty of God’s creation
- our own creative spirit
- our role in caring for creation
- the amazing things that can happen when we work together

Making Your Objects

Preparing for the Handmade Parade can offer wonderful opportunities for children to share their talents beyond singing. It might even draw children into participating who might not have considered being part of a children’s choir.

In fact, imagine this possibility...

What if you decide to present *In the Image* as your spring musical in April or May? Rather than have a series of choir practices, one dress rehearsal, and a show – you could design your time with the children like an Arts Academy.

- Divide the children into two groups.
- You and another grownup can work with one group on dialogue, solos, and staging while another pair of volunteers works with the other group on some of the Handmade Parade items.
- Have the groups switch places for an equal amount of time.
- Finally, bring everyone together for the last fifteen minutes to sing through a couple songs and share devotional time.

The Handmade Parade does *not* have to be complicated. It can be as simple as you want it to be. Artsy-craftsy bonus material is available at choristersguild.org, giving ideas for several objects to include in your own Handmade Parade and including step-by-step instructions for the following projects: jellyfish, bat, butterfly, double helix, fish, puppets, bird kite, torn paper masks, found-object percussion, and leaves of hope and blessing. Don't feel limited to what I've provided. My goal was to come up with things that would be easy to assemble, that incorporate recycled materials/found objects, and are easy on the budget. Remember – you were created to *create*. I *know* you've got good ideas, and so do the creative children under your care!

Staging Your Parade

Staging the Handmade Parade all depends on your space. During the intro to *In the Image*, children can line up with their instruments, banners, puppets, whatever it is they've created. The children sing verse 1 (“*We are all made in the image of God...*”) while stationary or marching in place. During the extended interlude, the parade line begins moving. Repeat the interlude section as often as needed for the children to finish the parade route.

A few recommendations:

- Don't have the children sing while they parade around the space. It's very easy to get out of sync with the accompanist or the performance track.
- Position the drummers/percussionists near the front of the line. The rhythm they play can help lead the others.
- Have a few special things set aside just for the parade. Otherwise, the children will have revealed everything in the previous portion when they show each other what they made. Reserving a few little surprises for the congregation (or audience) will be more enjoyable for everyone. These items can be tucked away in a corner of the space.
- Carefully plan out your parade route. If you have one center aisle, consider having the children line up at the back and process down that aisle. If you have two side aisles, perhaps the children can start at stage left, parade up one side aisle, down the other side aisle, and return to the main staging area via stage right.

Once the entire procession of children has made its way back to the stage, have them continue with the song to the end. And note the optional cuts and repeats which can shorten or lengthen the interlude, depending on the timing of your Handmade Parade.

In the Image

A Sunday school room. The lights are low if possible. Not completely off, just low. The lighting person/people should be ready to switch on all the stage lights in m. 27 in the opening song, It Was Good.

1. It Was Good

Based on Genesis 1 - Genesis 2:3
adapt. Mark Burrows

Mark Burrows

With mystery (♩ = 80)

Oboe

Piano

p

5

(optional group 1)

p

In the be-gin-ning God cre-a-tes the

A reproducible oboe part is available, code CGRP41.

9 *p*

(optional group 2)

heav-ens and the earth, _____ and the earth was shape-less and

13

(group 1)

emp - ty. _____ And the Spir-it of God moved up-on the

17

(group 2) (ALL)

wa - ters, _____ and God said, "Let there be

21

Part I
light." There be - came day and night...

Part II (optional)
light." There be - came day and night...

8va

25

pp rit. *f* **With rhythmic energy** (♩ = 120)
(prep stage lights) (all stage lights on)

for there was light.

pp rit. *f*

for there was light.

With rhythmic energy (♩ = 120)

pp rit. *f*

(Optional solo 1)

29 *mf*

God cre - a - ted the

32

sky up a - bove_ for the rain and sleet and snow_

35 (Optional solo 2)

God cre - a - ted the land and the seas_ and made trees and flow-ers grow_

38 (end solo) ALL:

— And it was good,_ so ver - y good,_

41

Ob.

mf

— good, good, good, good. — It was good. —

44

(Optional solo 3)

God cre - a - ted the sun and the moon_ and the

47

(Optional solo 4)

stars be - yond com - pare. — God cre - a - ted the

50

(end solo) ALL:

fish of the sea___ and the birds that fill the air.____ And it was good,___

53

I
so ver-y good,___ good, good, good, good...

II
Yeah, it was good,___ so ver-y good,___ good, good, good, good...

56

It was good. —

It was good. —

59

God cre - a - ted the bear and the bug — and all crea - tures on the land. —

62

God cre - a - ted the peo - ple to care_ for the

65

earth at God's com - mand. And once cre - a - tion

68

had been blest, God took a day_ to get some rest. God

The image shows a musical score for three systems. Each system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs), and lyrics. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'God cre - a - ted the peo - ple to care_ for the earth at God's com - mand. And once cre - a - tion had been blest, God took a day_ to get some rest. God'. A large 'DRAFT' watermark is overlaid diagonally across the page.