

A CHRISTMAS ROSE

A historical play with traditional
French and German holiday music
for young audiences

by Emily Ball Cicchini

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A Christmas Rose was first produced by Pollyanna Theatre Company at the Dougherty Arts Center in Austin TX in November 2002. The original cast and crew were as follows:

JACQUES:

Marty Herzog

JEANNETTE:

Cari Zoch

SAINT TERESE OF LISIEUX,
PEOPLE IN THE WINDOWS,
HOODED FIGURE/MAMAN:

Monica Asencio

GARGOYLE, ALOUETTE,
NAZI SOLDIER:

Blake Anthony Delong

DIRECTOR:

Judy Matetzschk-Campbell

STAGE MANAGER:

Kristi Smith

SCENIC DESIGNER:

Don Day

COSTUME DESIGNER:

Pam Fletcher Friday

LIGHTING DESIGNER:

Don Day

SOUND DESIGNER:

Emily Ball Cicchini

VOICE COACH:

Deneen Fraizer

SINGING COACH:

John Howrey

Synopsis

Set in 1944 France, *A Christmas Rose* is the story of a young brother and sister who find themselves alone in an old cathedral on Christmas Eve, surrounded by many symbols of faith and love. As the children play games, comfort each other, and keep themselves occupied, the cathedral comes to life! At first Jacques and Jeannette wonder if they are dreaming! But soon they realize that the greatest gifts of the holiday season are ALWAYS theirs to give and receive. Come along on this playful yet moving journey and discover with Jacques and Jeannette the true meaning of giving and rediscover the spirit of family and Christmas.

Cast of Characters

<u>JEANNETTE:</u>	8-year-old girl who dreams of going to Paris
<u>JACQUES:</u>	6-year-old boy, JEANNETTE's brother who loves books and gardens
<u>SAINT TERESE OF LISIEUX:</u>	A statue, called "The Little Flower," she is the patron Saint of France and orphans
<u>GARGOYLE:</u>	A half-scary, half-loveable pig-dog-bird creature
<u>ALOUETTE:</u>	A little sparrow
<u>PEOPLE IN THE WINDOWS:</u>	Characters from the bible, offstage voices
<u>NAZI SOLDIER:</u>	Very young, a bit reluctant
<u>HOODED FIGURE/MAMAN:</u>	The Mother of JEANNETTE and JACQUES

Scene

A gothic church cathedral in Normandy France

Time

Christmas Eve, 1944

Songs

Alouette (Little Sparrow; sung in French & English)

Frère Jacques (Brother John; sung in French, English, & German)

Sur Le Pont d'Avignon (On the Bridge of Avignon; sung in English)

Il Est Ne Le Divin Enfant (He is the Child Divine; sung in English)

La Légende de Saint Nicolas (The Legend of Saint Nicholas; sung in English)

Un Flambeau, Jeannette (Bring a Torch, Jeannette; sung in English)

La Marseillaise (French Republic Anthem; sung in English)

Adeste Fideles (O Come, All Ye Faithful; sung in Latin & English)

C'est le jour de la Noël (Christmas Day; sung in English)

Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen (Lo, How a Rose Ever Blooming; sung in German & English)

Stille Nacht (Silent Night; sung in German & English)

Les Anges Dans Nos Campagnes (Angels We Have Heard on High; sung in English)

SETTING: The interior of a cathedral in a mid-sized town in Normandy, France, late Christmas Eve, 1944.

AT RISE: Sounds of war rage in the distance fade into dripping water. We see a tall pillar made of marble, pews, kneeling chairs, an altar, and several large wooden doors. A statue of a nun is in the shadows in the corner. It is SAINT TERESE OF LISIEUX, frozen in time. The place is dark and full of shadows. The curves of the arches span up, up, up and disappear, obscuring the windows that line the upper walls. JACQUES, 6 years old enters, wearing a winter coat, with his school bag still in tow, boisterously.

JACQUES

Bonjour. Maman! Joyeux Noël!
(Pause. It echoes.)
Maman? Are you here?

JEANNETTE

(offstage)
Attention, Jacques! What do you see?

JACQUES

Hello? Anyone?
(back toward doors)
Jeannette, ma jolie soeur, entrez!

(JEANNETTE enters with a torch and a stick with a blanket full of stuff tied up, hobo style, over her shoulder, also in her winter a-line coat and black boots.)

JEANNETTE

Hah. Just as I thought. Empty. Come on. Let's go. I don't want to stay here...

JACQUES

Why not? It's too dark outside to continue. Isn't this a good place to spend the night?

JEANNETTE

Alright. But in the morning, we get moving.

(Setting up a place to be, with her torch, and blanket, and other things she has collected along the way. JACQUES looks around a bit.)

Ah, ah, ah! Stay in the middle. Away from the doors and windows...

JACQUES

I'm merely regarding...

JEANNETTE

Windows are very dangerous. The streets outside are wrecked. The buildings are nearly destroyed! Stay away from the windows, I say!

JACQUES

Alright, alright.

JEANNETTE

This was a stupid idea.

JACQUES

But I thought for sure she would be here. She never misses church on Christmas Eve...

JEANNETTE

Come on. Let's eat.

JACQUES

Thank Heaven! I'm starving! What will we have? Beef à la Burgundy and asparagus with Hollandaise Sauce?

JEANNETTE

Bread.

(She hands a long loaf of French bread to him. He drops it, it hits the ground with a thud.)

JACQUES

It's so hard we'd have to use a saw!

JEANNETTE

Just be glad it's something!

(breaks off a few pieces)

Here.

(pulls out a canteen, pours
a cup of water)

You can dip it in the water, make it softer...

JACQUES

No butter? No milk? No jam?

JEANNETTE

(as she eats)

It's because of the war.

JACQUES

I can't remember when there wasn't a war. Do you?

JEANNETTE

Yes. A little. It was summer, and mother's roses were all in bloom... Papa and I played kickball in the yard...

JACQUES

Why are we at war?

JEANNETTE

I don't know. Because... Because there is a very bad man and he wants to rule the world. Now, eat.

JACQUES

Not a very good explanation. But I guess it will have to do...

(munching, wandering,
looking at the statue)

Who is that?

JEANNETTE

Some Saint.

JACQUES

What is a Saint, anyway?

JEANNETTE

Very, very good people. People who are like angels.

JACQUES

Were they real people?

JEANNETTE

I think so.

JACQUES

So, which one is this?

JEANNETTE

I don't know! I don't know why I agreed to come here.

JACQUES

But, but... It's Christmas Eve! Any minute now, all the people will come for Midnight Mass. They will set up the manger and light the star of Bethlehem, and everyone will wear a costume and assume their part. And then the bells will ring, and then we'll go home, to our very scrumptious dinner, with milk and candied chestnuts and cakes covered with chocolate...

(JEANNETTE sings. As she does, she pinches JACQUES, who protests freely throughout.)

JEANNETTE

Alouette, gentille alouette,
Alouette, je te plumerai.

JACQUES

Jeannette!

JEANNETTE

Je te plumerais la tête,
Je te plumerais la tête,

JACQUES

Jeannette, stop it! I hate that song...

JEANNETTE

Et la tête, et la tête,
Alouette, alouette, oh-oh,
Alouette, gentille alouette,
Alouette, je te plumerai.

JACQUES

Why are you always fighting?

JEANNETTE

The French will never give up, little brother!

JACQUES

Who do you think you are, Joan of Arc?

JEANNETTE

But of course! Give me liberty, or let them eat cake!

(sings again)

Little sparrow, gentile little sparrow.

Little sparrow, I will pluck your head.

JACQUES

Don't, you big bully!

JEANNETTE

I will pluck your little nose,

I will pluck your little eyes.

JACQUES

You're nothing but a tyrant...

JEANNETTE

And your mouth, and your arms.

And your hands, and your feet. Oh...

Little sparrow, gentile little sparrow.

Little sparrow, I will pluck your head!

(There is a loud explosion.
Some dust falls from the
ceiling. JEANNETTE and
JACQUES cling together.)

JACQUES

Wha- what was that?

JEANNETTE

SHHH!!!! Stay here!

(She separates from him and
looks around. Sounds of
bombs in the distance.)

JEANNETTE (Cont.)

Bombs. Or dynamite. Those Nazis will not be satisfied until every French house, shop, or school is gone. I suppose this is the safest place to be.

(They hear the sound of an airplane passing low overhead. Silence for a bit.)

Come over here and let's try to get some sleep, okay? We can head for Paris in the morning.

(JEANNETTE pulls up blanket and tries to go to sleep.)

JACQUES

What's in Paris?

JEANNETTE

The Eiffel Tower, for one thing...

JACQUES

So, what's so astonishing about the Eiffel Tower?

JEANNETTE

It's the tallest building in all of France! And the Louvre...

JACQUES

What's that?

JEANNETTE

A great museum, where there are hundreds and hundreds of the world's finest works of art... And people. There are plenty of people in Paris.

JACQUES

I'd rather just go back home to our little house and our little garden... and Maman's roses...

JEANNETTE

(strongly)

I told you! We're not going back there again. Do you hear me? DO YOU HEAR? Didn't you see the walls shaking, the windows breaking...

JACQUES

Alright, alright...

JEANNETTE

And don't use such big words, like astonishing and scrumptious and explanation. You're too young to know such words. Goodnight.

JACQUES

It was so strange, going home. And no one there. I wish we had brought some books before we left.

JEANNETTE

I told you, they were too heavy.

JACQUES

Sing me something.

JEANNETTE

Why?

JACQUES

To help me go to sleep. Something more- agreeable, this time.

JEANNETTE

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques,
Dormez vous? Dormez vous?
Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines,
Ding, dong, ding. Ding, dong, ding.

JACQUES

Do it again.

JEANNETTE

Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques,
Dormez vous? Dormez vous?*

Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines,
Ding, dong, ding. Ding, dong, ding.

(*JACQUES begins as a round.
He indicates JEANNETTE to
repeat at end.)

JACQUES

Are you sleeping, are you sleeping,
Brother John, Brother John?
Morning bells are ringing,
Morning bells are ringing,
Ding, dong, ding. Ding, dong, ding.

JEANNETTE

(continuous from previous)

Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques,
Dormez vous? Dormez vous?
Sonnez les matines, sonnez les matines,
Ding, dong, ding. Ding, dong, ding.

JACQUES

(continues)

Bruder Jakob, Bruder Jakob,
Schläfst du noch? Schläfst du noch?

JEANNETTE

Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques,
Dormez vous? Dormez-
(stopping as she hears it)
No!

JACQUES

Morgenglocken klingen,
Morgenglocken klingen,
Bim, bam, bum. Bim, bam, bum...

JEANNETTE

(standing and stomping)

Shut up shut up shut up!

JACQUES

Hey, what's wrong with you?

JEANNETTE

You were singing in German!

JACQUES

So?

JEANNETTE

That's what the Nazis speak! We hate the Nazis! They are
the whole reason we're in this mess to begin with. I don't
want to hear or know anything about those German Nazis ever
again!

JACQUES

D'accord, okay. I comprehend! Gosh. Suddenly, I'm not very
sleepy.

JEANNETTE

I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry. You're too young. You just don't understand.

JACQUES

Understand what? I understand a lot more words than you...

JEANNETTE

Jacques, if they take over our country forever, everything will be different. We will not be free to speak our minds, to do the things we like to do. That is why Popi went away. To fight. We will not even be able to speak French, the most beautiful language in all the world. Do you want that to happen?

JACQUES

No... Maybe they will reconsider and go home.

JEANNETTE

What good will big French words be if we can't even use them?

(The sound of marching
outside. Nazi soldiers.)

JEANNETTE

Hear them? They are still coming! Even with everyone gone. It's no use. No use!

(JEANNETTE covers her ears
and shakes her head in
frustration.)

JACQUES

Come on, Jeannette...

(quickly grabs her hands
and sings and dances)

On the Bridge of Avignon,
They are dancing, they are dancing.
On the Bridge of Avignon,
They are dancing all around.

(spins her one way, then
the next)

The pretty girls go this way
And then again go that way...

(They listen. More sounds,
but fainter.)

JACQUES (Cont.)

Again!

JEANNETTE & JACQUES

On the Bridge of Avignon,
They are dancing, they are dancing.
On the Bridge of Avignon,
They are dancing all around.

(They do, and then listen.
The sounds get fainter.)

JACQUES

Again!

(As they do, the statue of
SAINT TERESE OF LISIEUX
comes to life and joins in.
She is very youthful,
sweet, angelic. They almost
don't notice for a bit.)

JEANNETTE & JACQUES & SAINT TERESE

On the Bridge of Avignon,
They are dancing, they are dancing.
On the Bridge of Avignon,
They are dancing all around.

(JACQUES starts to spin SAINT
TERESE.)

The pretty girls go... AHHHHHHH!

(They all scream, realizing
that they have been joined,
and caught. They turn to each
other in turn, until the
brother and sister pull
aside, JEANNETTE standing
between the apparition and
her brother.)

JEANNETTE

Who are you?