

The Bethlehem Fox

(based on a story by Nick Butterworth & Mick Inkpen)

CAST:

Narrator - Charlie

Fox - Thomas

Lamb - James

Sheep -

Shepherds – William Hogg, William Overall, George +

Angels (x1 speaking - Maddie)

Mary - Isla

Joseph - Ben

Stable Animals - ?

Set/Props:

Trees, large moon, spot light

Chairs, Manger, baby Jesus

Alan Thomas – play recorded music through sound system?

Children wait in procession by the vestry.

During the recording they move to their starting positions

Play recording of: “Do You Hear What I Hear?”

Welcome: Alison?

& introduce first carol

Carol: *See Amid the Winter's Snow (1st verse only)*

Thomas: Hello, I'm a fox. I live out on the hills.

I sleep by day and hunt by night.

Narrator: If you're lucky, you might see me on a hilltop against the moon. But don't blink or I'll be gone!

Here's my story. It'll make your tail bristle.

Listen!

Two nights ago I'm up on the hill near the town. The night is cold and clear. I lift my head and sniff the air. The scent of sheep is everywhere.

Enter sheep & shepherds, settle on the ground half way down aisle

Narrator: There's another smell too. It halts me in my tracks. The shepherd's out ... by my nose, more than one. That means the sheep are lambing.

I skirt around the hill, then wait a while, and listen. Somewhere up ahead a lamb is calling to its mother.

*Lamb moves forward and settles on the ground asleep
Fox sniffs around him*

Narrator: Crouching low & keeping to the bushes, I follow. Now I can see it clearly sitting in the long grass. A speckled lamb, not one week old.

Now we will sing the first verse of 'While Shepherds Watched', carol number ____ on your sheets.

Carol: *While Shepherds Watched*

Angels jump up & twirl at front of Church

Narrator: Suddenly a blinding flash sends me running to the bushes. Shaking to my toes and blinking in the light, I freeze.

Shepherd: Oh, my goodness, it's amazing!

Narrator: Across the hill a golden glow has fallen. And coming from the sky the sound of singing. All at once, the air is filled with shining angels!

Angels twirl up the aisle and around the shepherds

Narrator: I'm scared. I cannot smell these angels. They have no scent. One of them is speaking to the shepherds:

Angel: Don't be afraid! We bring good news. Great joy has come to all of you. Today in Bethlehem a baby has been born. He is your promised King, your Saviour. You'll find him lying in a cattle trough. Quickly, run and see!

Angels exit – twirl round Church and settle in front of pulpit

Narrator: Suddenly, the shining angels are gone. The sound of singing dies away. The shepherds stare at one another. Then all at once they start to talk.

Shepherd: Quickly! We must run and find this baby (etc etc)

Shepherd 2 collects the lamb, they all laugh and shout their way to the back of the Church

Narrator: They laugh & shout. They jump and clap their hands. Then off they run towards the town to find the baby King. I follow on behind.

Now we will sing the first verse of 'O Little Town of Bethlehem',
carol number ____ on your sheets.

Carol: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

During carol, Mary & Joseph walk to the stable, the angels & the animals gather round.

When singing has stopped & while narrator speaks:

Shepherds follow and kneel in front of the manger

Fox creeps up behind them and stands on the front pew peering inside

Narrator: I am wary of the town. It's full of sounds and smells I do not know. But I would like to see this baby King. Keeping to the shadows, I watch the shepherds disappear inside a stable. Behind the stable is a high fence. Without a sound, I'm up and over it.

My luck is in. There is light streaming through a crack in the back wall. From here I can see everything.

Fox creeps around the animals & manger & then returns to stand on front pew

Inside are cows and sheep and goats. It's odd. They know I'm here but they are not afraid. There are people too. A woman and a man, and by the door the shepherds. All of them are looking at a cattle trough lit by a lantern.

Carol: *Children sing - Away In A Manger*

Narrator: And there, just as the shining angels said, a new-born baby sleeps. A king in a cattle shed. His mother smiles and tells the shepherds to come in. Quietly, they stand and watch. The baby murmurs in his sleep.

Mary: His name is Jesus

Shepherd 2 steps forward and gives the lamb to Mary & Joseph. Lamb curls up by their feet.

Narrator: One of the shepherds takes something from his cloak. It is the speckled lamb. A present for the baby. He gives it to the woman, then bends close to see the baby's face.

Fox steps forward, mingles a little and then faces the congregation

Narrator: The shepherd's smiling face glows in the light, just like the shining angels. He has seen a King and so have I. Not many shepherds or foxes can say that.

The shepherds whisper their goodbyes and leave.

Exit shepherds to back of Church

Narrator: My belly tells me that I too must be making tracks. It is a harsh winter and life is hard for a fox. And for you too, little King, it seems.

I wish you well. I hope the lamb will keep you warm. Sweet dreams.

The fox takes a bow to the congregation.

Prayer: children repeat after Narrator?

Narrator: Now we will sing 'Silent Night', carol number ____ on your sheets.

Carol: *Silent Night*

During the carol, the children hand out chocolates to the congregation and then gather back as a tableau around the manger. Fox steps forward and says:

Fox: The End!

Play a recording of this at the beginning?

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Said the night wind to the little lamb,

"Do you see what I see?

Way up in the sky, little lamb,

Do you see what I see?

A star, a star, dancing in the night

With a tail as big as a kite,

With a tail as big as a kite."

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,

"Do you hear what I hear?

Ringin' through the sky, shepherd boy,

Do you hear what I hear?

A song, a song high above the trees

With a voice as big as the the sea,

With a voice as big as the the sea."

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,

"Do you know what I know?

In your palace warm, mighty king,

Do you know what I know?

A Child, a Child shivers in the cold--

Let us bring him silver and gold,

Let us bring him silver and gold."

Said the king to the people everywhere,

"Listen to what I say!

Pray for peace, people, everywhere,

Listen to what I say!

The Child, the Child sleeping in the night

He will bring us goodness and light,

He will bring us goodness and light."