

Production Notes

How Great is Our God

by Steve Moore

If this is your first time performing this type of musical, I believe you are in for both a treat and an experience with God. David T. Clydesdale, Word Music, Alan Carter, myself, and now you, are participants in a new genre of musicals for the Church.

If you have gone along on this journey before, welcome back. *How Great is Our God* is similar in many ways to our previous work, *Evidence of Grace*. Both musicals involve the choir and the congregation in the experience of God's provision. While *Evidence* let us celebrate the promise of God's Grace, *How Great is Our God* examines God's wonderful provision for us in good times, and in bad. He is SO good to us! All the time. Sadly, though, we do not recognize it much of the time.

How Great is Our God is a time to stop, reflect, recognize God's wonderful love for us, and give him back the only thing we have to offer: Praise.

This is done by the use of video, in concert with choir and audience participation. When David, Alan and I began and were led to this medium, it was new. Now I'm not so sure it is still so new. However, I wanted to remind you of a quote from one of our earlier, similar musicals:

“We explore new mediums not because we want to blaze new creative trails. We do so because the expectations and experiences of the congregations are changing. Twenty-five years ago, music and video merged into an art form unto itself. As the church has always ‘moved forward forcefully,’ we see worship media and presentations also moving and changing with that same force.”

STYLE

How Great is Our God is an examination of God's provision for us, as seen through the lives of others. We learn from their hard, yet wonderful experiences, that God provides, God loves, and God cares, even when He seems (at least to us) far away.

CASTING CONSIDERATIONS

Two narrators are the only live characters with lines. Many churches have performed similar musicals with one male, and one female narrator with very favorable results. They should have energy, and possess a gentle, yet strong persona on stage.

Choir: There is considerable flexibility with regard to choir location and scene participation. The choir is the figurative centerpiece of this musical, and can occupy a

portion of the stage where their music illustrates the thoughts, dreams, and motivations of the characters.

Technical: The testimonies in this presentation are on DVD. We hope that they are moving, and meaningful to your congregation. However, if you are using a live orchestra accompaniment with the Click Track option on the DVD, you may choose to use live testimonies from within your congregation. If you decide to do this, you will need to be able to mute the right audio channel and the video projector during the testimony times within the musical.

Obviously, these testimonies will have to be chosen beforehand and synced and rehearsed with the live music.

SET AND LIGHTS

The production is designed to be simple to present. If it is desired that the DVD will provide the testimonial portion of the production, at least one screen will be required, which should be visible to all in the congregation. I have seen the similarly-staged *Evidence of Grace* performed utilizing a single screen, and even utilizing five. The size of your congregation, as well as your facilities will obviously dictate much of these decisions.

Obviously, any screen should not distract from the choir. However, the piece is designed to enhance the choir's presence, not eliminate it or detract from it. With multiple screens, a simple staging would have screens stages right and left, with the screens even with, or slightly downstage of the choir. Similarly, the narrators would also be downstage of the choir, but ideally would not be directly in front of the choir.

Other options are limited only by technical capabilities of your facility. Similar presentations have been produced, where the choir is surrounded (or fronted) by a scrim, which, when lit from the outside, becomes opaque, and can actually be the screen on which the characters are portrayed. When the choir is featured, lighting on the choir renders the scrim largely invisible. Screen placement, however, is limited only by imagination and facility.

If it is desired that the testimonies be presented live, staging locations similar to the screens should be considered. A simple staging would include a wash on the choir, with spotlights designating the positions of the people giving their testimony.

While this piece, as others before it by the same authors, is scaleable, it is best suited to a simple presentation. It requires no "costuming" and is uncomplicated. It is hoped that the words and eyewitness accounts of the characters, on their own, will impact the audience.

As I have said before, the message of this musical is not dependent upon the scale. It depends upon the way in which it is communicated, and the prayers of the participants.