

MARY, PICK UP YOUR ACCORDION AND PLAY

1. Mary, pick up your accordion and play,
lay down your baby for a while.
It's time to celebrate,
it's time to stay up late —
maybe your song'll make him smile.
2. Mary, pick up your accordion and play,
find us a simple harmony.
We could be instruments,
all kinds of instruments,
making a human symphony.
*Open up our ears — open up our eyes,
touch our weary world with your lullaby.*
3. Mary, pick up your accordion and play
one song that everyone can share.
Then we can sing along,
then we can all belong —
ev-er-y nation ev'rywhere.
4. Mary, pick up your accordion and play
music we've never heard before:
keep on surprising us,
revitalising us —
don't stop, just play a couple more!

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The poster for the 1998 Adelaide Festival of Arts caused quite a storm. It depicted Mary holding, not the baby Jesus, but a piano accordion, and the poster was in the style of an Orthodox Christian icon. It was condemned by church leaders, some individuals tore posters down, many letters were written to the newspaper.

I thought it was a pity that the Christian community responded so negatively. Even if the Festival organisers meant to offend, it was an ideal opportunity to build bridges with non-Christians, to share a glimpse of the unusual God we believe in, and not to be party poopers. Jesus compared heaven to a party on more than one occasion, and his first miracle was providing an excess of wine for a wedding feast.