

ANNA'S SONG (LIFT THIS CHILD)

1981. A long story that can't be made short! Pro Hart, noted Australian painter and Christian, had begun a series of paintings depicting the story of Christmas set in the Australian Outback. His publisher, Rigby's, were at first just going to put the Bible texts with the pictures, but they decided it needed more. Mike Gutzeit, the Rigby's rep and a Lutheran, asked his pastor if he knew anybody who could do a text to go with the paintings. The pastor, Mike Hassold (later Principal of Luther Seminary, Adelaide) just happened to be doing a course under Norman Habel, and so Norman was enlisted. He did a series of poems, mostly in free form, but some, like this one, in verse. Norman asked me to put music to some of them. "Anna's Song" and "Will you be coming home this Christmas?" were two of the first to get a tune. Both tunes came very quickly, and became highlights of the show that a group of us did almost every year from 1981 to 1988 in South Australia and further afield. The book and the show, OUTBACK CHRISTMAS, are a powerful presentation of the Christmas narratives, more impressive, I think, for showing the characters to be real people in difficult situations than for being distinctly Australian, though they are that as well. For "Anna's song" Norman took customs associated with the welcoming of new children from various cultures around the world and applied them to Jesus. The song works well if it's begun and ended simply and quietly, with a gradual build-up in the song to a climax in verse 5.

1. Lift this child to the sun,
raise this child to the sky,
God has come from above,
come to earth from on high.
Lift this child, lift this child to the
sun.

2. Lay this child on the ground,
one with us, one with earth;
let God know in his Son
human clay, human birth.
Lay this child, lay this child on the
ground.

3. Place this child in the shade,
hang this child 'neath a tree;
with his hand on the wood
may this child set us free.
Place this child, place this child in
the shade.

4. Give this child to the world,
let him be common folk;
God has come to be born
as an ordin'ry bloke.
Give this child, give this child to
the world.

5. Send this child down the road,
let him ride hard the track;
to be king of the bush
and the harsh world outback.
Send this child, send this child
down the road.

6. Lift this child to the night,
to the Silence of God;
let this child cry for us
and the silence be heard.
Lift this child, lift this child to the
night.

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