

APPENDIX B: CONDUCTING A VARIETY SHOW

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The purpose of a variety show can be twofold: to bring immediate joy and happiness through lively entertainment to nursing home residents, staff and visitors and to create an opportunity for Christians to share their love for God and faith in Christ.

You need only one committed person to start a variety show. The role of that person is to begin things by calling others and persuading them to share their talents for at least one show. You will find that your performers, after their first performance, may be quite eager to make a more long-term (perhaps once-a-month) commitment of their time.

The talent coordinator may also be responsible for contacting the nursing home. He^a should contact the activities director and set up a show time that's most convenient for all involved. If a piano is required, he should find out whether the home has one available. He should always call in the morning of the show and speak to the nurse in charge. She must be prepared for your arrival and be aware of your needs, schedule, etc.

It is not necessary, but it may be useful in some cases, that rehearsals as a whole group occur. Each performer can practice his part alone but he should communicate with the coordinator about his needs for music, time and props. Do leave yourself enough time before the show to pray together and plan the order of the acts.

Find someone with an outgoing personality and a good loud speaking voice to be the Master of Ceremonies. The M.C. is a key figure, especially in adding a "spiritual note" to the show. Perhaps he could work up a short, humorous story with a deeper spiritual meaning. If he tells this at the beginning of the show, it can be referred to at appropriate points throughout the show to reinforce the meaning.

Costuming is important. Bright, flashy colors bring joy and laughter, as does exaggerated makeup. There is no need to spend a lot of money—sew your own (every actor doing his or her own), have a bake sale to raise money or buy from thrift stores.

Older audiences enjoy many kinds of entertainment. Avoid anything that is especially "modern" such as folk-rock guitar and singing. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Old-time sing-along
2. Juggling
3. Banjo / harmonica / accordion / trumpet (in fact, any instrument); short piano solos
4. Vocal solos
5. Clowns
6. Tap dancing
7. Soft-shoe
8. Skits

^a The pronouns 'he' and 'his' as originally used by Becca have been retained.

A word about recruiting your talent: The acts that you are seeking are not supposed to be professional. In fact, they don't have to be polished performances at all! Their function is to have fun and provide an opportunity, if you desire, to share your faith. For this reason you should encourage interested amateurs to perform. Keep in mind that children, too, can make a very important contribution to your show. Older people truly love to see children. And even if some of the kids are too small to participate, bring them along anyway. But be prepared—they invariably steal the show!

