



Clarion Review

Performing Arts

Holiday Skits & Contests: Songs, Quizzes, Jokes & Prayers for Children, Families & Seniors

Cornell Christianson

Lulu

978-0-557-53421-0

Three Stars (out of Five)

Senior centers and kids' organizations searching for instructional material to help them develop or produce programs for the holidays will find *Holiday Skits & Contests* a useful resource.

The book is the brainchild of TV producer and film writer Cornell Christianson, acclaimed for his work on the award-winning television series, "The Paper Chase." Additionally, Christianson has led or organized more than 400 musical shows in numerous nursing homes, schools, recreation centers, veterans' centers, and other venues. In the book, he includes his own skits, plus a compilation of jokes, quizzes, prayers, lyrics, and contests that relate to twenty-two American holidays.

Understandably, Christianson takes some forgivable liberties: "Since August has no holidays, we celebrate National Clown Week. In September, since Labor Day isn't a lot of fun, we also celebrate National Dog Week and honor all animals," he explains.

For an example of the depth and breadth of material, readers can turn to his thirty pages of St. Patrick's Day ideas, starting with an explanation of the day's history and two prayers. Next, he offers a quiz with thirty-six questions including, "What do you do to a Blarney Stone?" He also offers some corny jokes, such as, "What do you call a diseased Irish criminal?"
ANSWER: A leper con."

There are several pages of Irish blessings, followed by the lyrics to traditional Irish songs. A collection of original skits includes such characters as Pecos Bill, leprechauns, pirates, and a master of ceremonies. Some of his holiday-specific jokes are worked into each skit. The brief skits are unabashedly absurd, involve minimal casting and props, and will be easy to produce and perform by young and old. No doubt, Christianson has tested them all in various venues.

Some of the materials he reprints include part of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech and "A Dog's Prayer," by Beth Norman Harris, both of which may not be in the public domain, even if they have been widely quoted. Readers should be aware that King's speech, in fact, was the subject of a copyright infringement lawsuit.

This busy resource book, however, has much fodder for groups to use as part of their annual celebrations.

Linda Salisbury