

Playstage
Junior

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WHY NOT BETHLEHEM?



A humorous nativity play

Written by
Paul Cockcroft

CAST (in order of appearance)

HEROD

COUNSELLOR 1

COUNSELLOR 2

COUNSELLOR 3

COUNSELLOR 4

SOLDIER 1

SOLDIER 2

SOLDIER 4

SOLDIER 4

MELCHIOR

CASPAR

BALTHAZAR

MISSIONARY

SHEPHERD 1

SHEPHERD 2

SHEPHERD 3

SHEEP 1

SHEEP 1

SHEEP 3

MAK

GIL

ANGEL 1

ANGEL 2

ANGEL 3

JOSEPH

MARY

INNKEEPER

INNKEEPER's WIFE

INNKEEPER's DAUGHTER

REPORTER 1

REPORTER 2

CAMERAMAN

32 speaking parts.

WHY NOT BETHLEHEM?

Scene 1. Herod's Palace

Enter HEROD with counsellors and soldiers. The COUNSELLORS are constantly bowing and scraping. The SOLDIERS are bored and cynical.

COUNSELLOR 1

Hail mighty HEROD.

COUNSELLOR 2

Greatest king of the age.

COUNSELLOR 3

Thy wisdom is legend.

COUNSELLOR 4

Thy goodness knows no bounds.

HEROD (*irritated*)

Yes, Yes.....well never mind all that.....what's this I hear about a new king?

COUNSELLOR 1

Yes my lord it is written....

COUNSELLOR 2

By the prophets.....

COUNSELLOR 3

That one shall be born.....

COUNSELLOR 4

In Bethlehem.....

COUNSELLOR 1

Who shall be our saviour.....

COUNSELLOR 2

Lord of all.....

COUNSELLOR 3

Who will bring to us.....

COUNSELLOR 4

The kingdom of God.

HEROD

You lot should be on the stage you know.

COUNSELLOR 1

Yes my Lord...

COUNSELLOR 2

Your words are like pearls....

COUNSELLOR 3

Which drop from your lips.....

COUNSELLOR 4

Enriching all who listen.

HEROD (*annoyed*)

Go away!

COUNSELLOR 1

Away my lord?

COUNSELLOR 2

Your words to us....

COUNSELLOR 3

Are as God's commands...

COUNSELLOR 4

Which we must obey....

(HEROD glares at them and points offstage, indicating that they should leave immediately.

The COUNSELLORS exit backwards with much bowing etc.)

HEROD (*To the soldiers*)

Now then my fine men.....what do you know of Bethlehem and this great king yet to be born?

SOLDIER 1

Not much my lord. Bethlehem's a dump. Nothing ever happens there.

HEROD

What about you three? Do you know anything?

SOLDIER 2

My sister lives there. She keeps an inn with her husband. Nobody stays there.

SOLDIER 3

I once went to Bethlehem for a day trip.....it was shut.

SOLDIER 4

Of course the census will liven things up a bit, Your Majesty.

HEROD

The census.....oh yes, I'd forgotten. Everyone on the move. Just the opportunity for rebels and troublemakers to cause problems.

SOLDIER 1

The might of Rome won't allow that.

SOLDIER 2

We'll squash anyone who causes trouble.

SOLDIER 3

You can rely on us.

SOLDIER 4

We never sleep.....at least not all at the same time.

HEROD (*doubtful, then getting annoyed*)

Right.....well then.....you're beginning to annoy me now.....off you go.....and listen out for any rumours about kings being born.

ALL SOLDIERS

Yes my lord.

(Exit SOLDIERS)

HEROD (*to the audience*)

Yes well I'm probably fussing about nothing.....I am the real king.....powerful (pose).....wise (pose).....merciful (pose).....and the coolest guy this side of the Mediterranean (pose)..... (audience reaction)..... yes, well what do you lot know? I could have you all clapped in irons (audience reaction)..... well..... back to work.....let me know if you hear anything.

(HEROD exits grumpily)

END OF SCENE 1.

WHY NOT BETHLEHEM?**SCENE TWO**

In the Wise Men's shared flat. MELCHIOR and CASPAR are playing scrabble.

BALTHAZAR is looking through a telescope at the audience.

MELCHIOR *(looking at MELCHIOR's Scrabble word on the board)*

"Heehee"!?! That's not a word!

CASPAR

Yes it is. It means to laugh.

MELCHIOR

I know what it means but it's not a real word is it?

CASPAR

You had "ouch" a couple of minutes ago and it was a triple score.

MELCHIOR

That's not the same at all.....

CASPAR

Yes it is...

MELCHIOR

No it isn't....

CASPAR

Tis so.....

MELCHIOR *(tipping up the board and scattering the pieces)*

Game over I think!

CASPAR

Oh I'm so bored.....why does nothing happen round here? What are you looking at

Balthazar?

BALTHAZAR

Guys.....guys...come over here.....I've just seen something amazing!

CASPAR

What is it now?

MELCHIOR

This had better not be another star, Balthazar. I mean, what else do you expect to see in the sky? *(He sniggers)*

BALTHAZAR

No, No it's much more special than that, Melchior.....come and have a look.

(MELCHIOR and CASPAR come over. CASPAR looks through the telescope.)

BALTHAZAR

Well then.....what can you see?

CASPAR

I can see loads of children.

MELCHIOR

What?

BALTHAZAR

I think you're forgetting that we're in a play.

CASPAR

Oh yes.....right.....I can see a star.....

MELCHIOR

Oh not again! I warned you Balthazar.....

BALTHAZAR

Wait.....

CASPAR

No, No.....it's not just any star.....it's very bright.....

MELCHIOR *(annoyed)*

I'm going to the pub.....I'll be ready to listen to your nonsense when I get back....

CASPAR

No wait.....it's moving.....

MELCHIOR

Moving?

CASPAR

And it's got something written on it....

BALTHAZAR

I told you it was special.

MELCHIOR

Something written on it.....let me guess... Is it "Heehee" by any chance?

CASPAR

No I'm serious.....it's incredible.....it says... "This way to find the new born king".

MELCHIOR

Let me see that...*(looks)*....are you sure it's not something stuck on the lens?

BALTHAZAR

Of course not.

CASPAR

Why don't we follow it?

MELCHIOR

Follow it? Why would we want to do that?

CASPAR

Well it beats sitting round here all day playing scrabble with you.

MELCHIOR

You make a good point, Caspar...but I still don't see what we would get out of it.

BALTHAZAR

Well...it might lead us to a new king.

MELCHIOR

A new king!?! Haven't we got enough kings already? Some people even think that *we're* kings...just because we're quite...flamboyant (*poses*) in our dress.

CASPAR

Yes but this king might be special.

MELCHIOR

Why?

CASPAR (*trying to think of a reason*)

Because...because...because...

MELCHIOR and BALTHAZAR

Yes?

CASPAR

Because it says so in the script?

BALTHAZAR

Sorry?

CASPAR

Or perhaps because the new king can afford to advertise on stars?

MELCHIOR

OK. I guess that's special...silly...but special. Right I'm convinced! Let's go!

BALTHAZAR

Shouldn't we take something?

MELCHIOR

Take something?

CASPAR

What do you mean?

BALTHAZAR

Like presents or something.

MELCHIOR

Don't be daft! This isn't someone's birthday party we're going to! Then again...perhaps it is!

OK - what should we take?

CASPAR

I know, I know! I'd think I'll take frankincense.

MELCHIOR

Frankincense? Are you crazy? This is a baby we're visiting. What's he going to do with frankincense? Sprinkle it on his nappy to stop the smell?

BALTHAZAR

Mm. I could take myrrh.

MELCHIOR

Balthazar...none of us know what myrrh actually is...

CASPAR

Yes but in the script...

BALTHAZAR

I'll have to Google it.

(MELCHIOR and BALTHAZAR scowl at him)

MELCHIOR

Yes, well I'm taking something useful. I'm taking gold.

BALTHAZAR

Gold? How is that any more useful than frankincense and myrrh?

MELCHIOR

It's much more useful.....he can sell it to get something that he really wants.

(There is a loud knock on the door.)

CASPAR: Who's knocking on our door at this time of night?

(MELCHIOR goes to open the door. MISSIONARY enters holding large Bible.)

MISSIONARY

Good evening ladies.....

(all three wise men scowl)

Sorry, I mean gentlemen...it's just that your clothes are a bit...sorry. I'll get to the point. Have you ever wondered about life's purpose...have you ever asked yourself... "What am I doing here?"

MELCHIOR

We'd like to ask what *you* are doing here!

MISSIONARY

I've come to bring you good news.

BALTHAZAR

You're not trying to sell us something are you?

MISSIONARY

Only the good news about Jesus the King, about to be born in a stable in Bethlehem, who has come to save us all.

CASPAR

Did you say king?

MISSIONARY

Yes it's all here in the Bible.....look.....it says he was visited by shepherds and wise men - sometimes confused with kings - who followed a star and brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

MELCHIOR

Gold, frankincense and myrrh?...that is weird!

CASPAR

Are you the stage manager?

BALTHAZAR

Caspar...*(gritted teeth)*... not in front of the audience!

CASPAR

Well how come this guy's got the script? *(to the MISSIONARY)* Who are you?

MISSIONARY

I'm a missionary.

BALTHAZAR

What's that, when it's at home?

MISSIONARY

It means I'm on a mission to tell you about the new king.

MELCHIOR

And you know all about him do you?

MISSIONARY

I certainly do.

MELCHIOR *(to the missionary)*

Then I think you had better come with us dear friend...I think you could prove very useful on our journey.

MISSIONARY

With pleasure! When are we going?

BALTHAZAR

Now. But we've just got to stop on the way to get some gold, frankincense and myrrh...

(All exit.)

END OF SCENE 2.