



Second Shepherd's Play

Lisl Beer

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Lisl Beer adapted this famous play from the Townley Manuscript of Old English. As observed in FaceBook, “The play is actually two separate stories presented sequentially; the first is a non-biblical story about a thief, Mak, who steals a sheep from three shepherds. He and his wife, Gill, attempt to deceive the shepherds by pretending the sheep is their son. The shepherds are fooled at first. However, they later discover Mak's deception and toss him on a blanket as a punishment.” In her Production Notes, Lisl makes the following observation: “I have tried not to make too many cuts and changes in this very ancient English Play which has come down to us through hundreds of years with all its rich language of rhyme and alliteration. Care must be taken not to lose the music and pattern of the verses. The play itself is a fusion of the rough peasant humor of the period, and simple religious faith, and should be handled so as not to lose either quality. Although originally performed by human actors, the play can be done with hand puppets and perhaps even with marionettes. Some fine scenic effects are possible here - the snow falling, the stars coming out, the angel, or several angels, behind a gauze or translucent backdrop. A cut-out of the village of Bethlehem behind gauze, in the early scenes, and a Nativity tableau at the end, will be very effective. Christmas music on records or tape recorder can be faded in and out between scenes. This can be a very beautiful production if the director can manage to hold the mood and fuse the humor with the poetry in a delicate balance.”

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