

And Also Much Cattle

*An adaptation of the
Book of Jonah*

*by
Raleigh Marcell*

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STORY OF THE PLAY

A clever adaptation of the Old Testament Book of Jonah. Ease of staging, flexibility of cast, faithfulness to the original text, humor, theatricality and relevancy to today's world help to make this adaptation one which will interest any theatre group. The script follows the story of "Camel-trader, potter, jack-of-all-trades yet expert in none" Jonah as he is called to save a people for whom he has nothing but hatred. After attempting to elude his calling, Jonah reluctantly does God's bidding. His transformation from potter to Prophet is successful: he saves people. But does he save himself? "And Also Much Cattle" is a compelling parable of tolerance, a plea for understanding applicable to our world's dazzling multiplicity of peoples, cultures and beliefs.

About 40 minutes.

MUSIC

An integral part of the production is the music, which precedes the play, and occurs at every change of scene. Ideally, the audience should see the Chorus re-arrange the set. I leave specific choice of music to the director with the stipulation that it be from the Medieval and/or early Renaissance period.

SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

- {1} Leviticus 26:6
- {2} Leviticus 26:6
- {3} Leviticus 26:7
- {4} Nahum 1:5
- {5} Adapted from Nahum 3: 1-4
- {6} Psalms 119: 146-147

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(All male. All female. Or any combination.)

JONAH*
FRIEND
CRIER**
CAPTAIN**
OLD ONE**
MONARCH**
CHORUS -1 thru 8

**Jonah may be played by a female, even in a mixed cast.*

***Roles will be most effective if played by one person.*

NOTE: *The Chorus may, if desired, be larger, especially to play ASSYRIAN YOUTHS. The individual roles assigned to Chorus members may be distributed as desired, according to the abilities of your performers; however, the eight parts are relatively equal. If the cast is mixed, let a female play the FRIEND.*

SETTING

One shouldn't take too literally the angular dimensions for the platforms given in the text. The outline below is essentially the shape I refer to in the stage directions, but any irregular acting area, preferably raised on several levels - one which can be manipulated - will do. Portable 4' x 8' staging will do the job as well. If the staging can be set to varying heights and one has the triangular "corner" sections, this is all you need. In fact, the original production was done in a gym using portable staging.

The bottom line is be creative. Take the space you've got and use it to its best advantage. Any acting area will do; as long as there is a quadrilateral platform (*with angles of 69, 74, 90, and 127 degrees*) able to be rotated about, with movable steps. An alternate set-up could use several smaller platforms of various heights. In either case, the idea is to have the Chorus create from these platforms alternately: A Town Square, A Ship, A City, and A Place on a Mountaintop. The platform should be made to accommodate the erection of poles which can be used to support drapes, a sail, and backdrops if desired. Props, clothing, and make-up are all secured from a large chest or box on the platform.

And Also Much Cattle

(About five minutes before the beginning of the play, the cast have assembled in the acting area, casually chatting, checking out the props, etc., in an informal manner. Music begins, and each member, sometimes in pairs, leave at intervals until only the actor playing Jonah is left. When Jonah exits, or goes to upstage area, there is a BLACKOUT. AT RISE: The entire cast is on stage. Some are seated, some standing about, some entering. The CRIER stands in the center of the platform and begins with a long roll of a tambourine and a crash!)

CRIER: *(Descends, going about the crowd.)* Our Gracious Monarch has decreed that on this very day You people of this dusty town can freely have your say, On subjects otherwise taboo you can rant and rave, Or simply sit and listen to each prophet, fool, and knave.

CHORUS 2: Are you going to say something today?

CHORUS 1: I'm thinking about it. And what about you?

CHORUS 3: I'm thinking about thinking about it.

(THEY freeze. A roll and a crash with the tambourine.)

CRIER: The Regal Rex is hoping you will "get it off your chest". Try standing here and telling us just why you are obsessed.

CHORUS 4: I hope I have the courage to do it today.

CHORUS 5: Courage! It's not courage I lack.

CHORUS 4: Then what...?

CHORUS 5: It's something to say!

(THEY freeze. Tambourine roll/crash.)

CRIER: That there might be some order here will skeptics wait 'till night. While those possess'd go to the left and zealots to the right.

And Also Much Cattle

- 5 -

CHORUS 3: ...and there was a mist that came over my eyes and I heard a great rumbling thundering with lightning all around me!

(EVERYONE has come to 'life' with great anticipation.)

EVERYONE: And what happened?

CHORUS 3: *(Suddenly overcome by the attention.)* I woke up.

(ALL begin to slowly move about and converse with their neighbors.)

CRIER: So be encouraged to indulge in cant of ev'ry kind
Because you never can be sure Just when Our Gracious Monarch, he *(she)* Will end this bit of anarchy And dare to change his *(her)* mind!

(A final roll and crash of the tambourine as CRIER goes upstage, where he/she will change, becoming a member of the crowd, or Chorus Member 8, if desired.)

CHORUS 6: I've got a speech!

CHORUS 7: You've always got a speech.

CHORUS 6: But this time I've got a cause to go with it.

CHORUS 8: *(From platform, while changing.)* But you always forget.

CHORUS 6: This time I've written it down. See!

(During the following, the FRIEND will gradually come out of the crowd, stand on the platform and begin to speak. At first, no one will pay any attention whatever. But gradually, they will be won over.)

CHORUS 1: Are we going to continue to pay such taxes?
NO! It's an outrage! It's a scandal! *It might even be worse than that: a scandalous outrage! Or even, even worse: AN OUTRAGEOUS SCANDAL!

And Also Much Cattle

- 6 -

CHORUS 2: (*Overlapping from * in previous speech.*) What a day! What a day! The sun. The sky. The wheat. The wheat waves. *See the wheat wave. Long may it wave. I rave! I rave. Oh, how I love to rave! To Rave 'n nevermore will I stop-

CHORUS 3: I want my say!

CHORUS 4: Your say?

CHORUS 3: * My say.

CHORUS 5: Hearsay!

CHORUS 3: Where say?

CHORUS 5: I just did.

CHORUS 4: (*Overlapping from*.*) What are we going to do about the Assyrians? Are we going to just stand by and let them treat us like that? Are we? ARE WE? *That certainly felt good. Got it off my chest. Off my chest.

CHORUS 5: (*Overlapping from*.*) Oh woe! Oh woe is me. *Oh woe is you. Oh woe is everybody. Oh woe to my mother and woe to my brother and woe to the deep blue sea.

CHORUS 6: (*Overlapping from*.*) I want this to be a better world. I really do. But I don't think it'll ever come about. I doubt it, I really doubt it. * I really and truly doubt it. I doubt it.

CHORUS 7: (*Overlapping from*.*) Anything you can prophesy, I can prophesy gloomier.

CHORUS 8: No you can't.

CHORUS 7: Yes I can.

CHORUS 8: No you can't.

CHORUS 7: Yes I can.

(*And they continue until +. At about the start of 6's speech, the FRIEND begins:*)

FRIEND: Oh, how can we ever hope to have peace and live free if we cannot agree even among ourselves? How can you listen to another person if you are talking? How can we even speak of petty complaints in times like these?

End of Freeview

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