

New from Radius

Birthday in Bethlehem

by Francis Wright.

One act, 1w, 3m, 4 who could be either, two non-speaking animals, plus any number of extras.

£7 from Radius online shop.

Radius's new Christmas play is a family show with lots of humour, some serious moments, and opportunities to introduce extras as animals, villagers, musicians and sycophantic courtiers. It's an exuberant retelling of the Nativity story in a style reminiscent of the Medieval Mysteries, featuring a very young Mary and a much older Joseph, with a plain-talking Angel Gabriel who startles everyone whenever he swoops in to announce the birth. A Narrator keeps the story moving, while Caesar Augustus is a gloriously over-the-top tyrant. Some of the dialogue is conducted in the words of well-known Christmas carols, and the script could be extended by the introduction of sung carols and stage business.

Here Gabriel gets told off by a shepherd for his lack of empathy with the low-income groups of the day:

Gabriel See how the shepherds, summoned to His cradle, leaving their flocks draw nigh with lowly fear . . .

Benjamin (To Gabriel) That's just where you're wrong, Mister Angel. It's not fear. There's nothing to be frightened of. Nothing.

The characters of the Nativity are all reimaged in a lively way, from the young Mary's common sense to Caesar Augustus's tyrannical tirades. The basic script is a one-act play lasting 40-45 minutes, but with the addition of carols it would be longer. Suitable for young people or a mixed-age cast.