



RADIUS exploring faith through drama

LIST OF RADIUS PLAYS ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY BY AUTHOR

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CATEGORISATION OF PLAYS

C: Christmas; **E:** Easter; **G:** General; **S:** Short; **1A:** One-Act; **FL:** Full-Length; **Y:** includes parts for Young People.

Dana Bagshaw

Cell Talk

G, 1A

Set in the early fifteenth century, a time of political and religious unrest, this one-act play focuses on the meetings between Margery Kempe and the mystic Julian of Norwich who wrote 'Revelations of Divine Love'. Described by her biographers as 'extraordinary', Kempe was a restless and troubled soul who travelled widely including undertaking a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In contrast, Julian spent her later years as an anchoress living in a cell attached to the church in Norwich, dependent upon the local people to bring her food and water. Yet, as this play shows, these two very different characters, 'one rooted woman and one wandering woman', delight in their meetings as they talk about life, love and God.

Both funny and profound, this play was joint winner of a Radius Plays Competition. It has a cast of 2 women and lasts about 1 hour.

Roy Chatfield

Waiting for the King

E, 1A

This one-act play features six characters, Sergeant, Governor, Citizen, Apostle, Informant and Priest who wait in the ante-room to the Seat of Judgment. Each has been given a file containing details of their life by the Angel whose role is to welcome and supervise. Their attempts to justify their actions, both to themselves and to the others, cause friction and, in some cases, aggression. At times light-hearted, this play provides an interesting exploration of people's reactions when faced with difficult decisions.

With a modern, simple setting it lasts about 50 minutes. The cast of 7 could be either male or female.

Keith Clements***Time to Sing*****C, 1A, Y**

The action of this one-act play begins in Heaven where the young angelic choir rehearses for an important event which is soon to take place on earth. What this event could be is the subject of much speculation but the members of the choir are dismayed when they learn that they will be singing to 'a few flea-ridden shepherds and their mangy sheep'. However, the true significance and consequence of their singing is gradually made apparent.

A fun one-act play which would be ideal for a mixed cast of all ages. The cast consists of 10 small parts for adults plus 3 young people, who must be able to sing. There are also non-speaking singers who could be any age.

PLAYS BY LES ELLISON

Les Ellison is a playwright based in the north-west of England. Several of his plays have been toured by Riding Lights, most recently in 2016, and Radius has commissioned Easter and Christmas scripts for our collection. Les specialises in flexible drama that can be performed by either men or women and where the scenes can be used in different combinations.

Are the Kings Still Wearing Curtains?**C, 1A, Y**

A witty and unusual take on the Nativity play, this series of scenes shows what might happen if adults who are veterans of past productions try to hand on their costumes and give advice to a new cast of young people. Age gives way to youth; traditional costumes are replaced by modern equivalents but, above all, fresh insight is found by those taking up the challenge to retell the story to a new generation.

There are parts for players of every age. This flexible script lasts just under an hour when performed in its entirety, or some of the 10 scenes could form a series of playlets around which a church or school carol concert can be easily and effectively constructed.

An Easter Carol**E, 1A**

In this one-act play, the three students of the Magi, following up on clues that they discover at a house clearance, travel independently to Bethlehem, Galilee and Jerusalem looking for what their tutors sought 33 years ago. They each learn about various aspects of the man Jesus's life and works, but it is only when they finally meet up at Golgotha and learn of his death that they are able to piece together the whole story.

This modern play lasts about 1 hour. There are 13 characters but, with doubling up, it can be performed by a cast of eight.

First Easter**E, 1A**

This play is made up of seven modern, lively and theologically engaging scenes which feature some of the non-biblical characters involved in the events immediately before and after the Crucifixion. Underneath the humour of these pieces lies a serious discussion of the meaning of what happened in Holy Week.

The whole script lasts about 40 minutes but various combinations of the scenes can be used. All the scenes with the exception of the final piece have a cast of 2 actors/actresses. The following is a brief description of each of the scenes:

The Watchers

Three friends settle down to watch the film “King of Kings”; something they always do at Easter. While tucking into TV snacks, they discuss whether Jesus knew what the outcome of his crucifixion would be.

The Deceivers

In Jerusalem an agent, who is seeking to take Jesus on as his client, pays one of the disciples to help him with a secret plan to bring Jesus into the limelight.

The Caterers

It is Passover, and Hannah and her husband are busy serving a special party for guests who have booked their upstairs room.

The Lawyers

The trial of Jesus is over and the Lawyer for the Defence accuses the Prosecution Lawyer of being a willing participant in a flagrant miscarriage of justice.

The Day Trippers

Two tourists in Jerusalem watch, from a distance, what they presume to be street theatre and are shocked by the violent nature of what they see.

The Soldiers

Calvary: a Corporal and a Private build a cross and wonder whether the latest “Messiah” who is about to be executed might be genuine.

The Gardeners

Whilst eating their sandwiches, two gardeners ruminate about life and death with their friend the grave digger.

The Watchers (again)

The film is over and the friends discuss whether the “happy ending” is believable.

He's Not Here**E, 1A**

Written for a promenade performance, the nine short dramas are set in the hours immediately after the key events of the Easter story. The audience are led from location to location, in the role of travellers, following Jesus into Jerusalem, to Gethsemane, Golgotha and on to the empty tomb. They arrive at each location to experience first hand the impact of Jesus's words and actions and to hear the words: ‘He's not here’. Finally, arriving at the empty tomb, the question is asked: if Jesus is not here, then where can he be found? Both entertaining and profound.

Specially commissioned by Radius, this play is written for a small, mixed cast with doubling, or a larger cast without. Each short play can be performed individually, as part of a selection or within a complete one-act play. With flexible casting the whole script runs for about an hour.

Red Star**G, 1A**

Joint winner of a Radius play competition, *Red Star* charts the rise and demise of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space and the first truly international superstar. Gagarin's desperate attempt to regain control as he is forced to be a passenger in his own life's story is an examination of the phenomena of fame and celebrity which is relevant to our present times and would provide an interesting and informative starting-point for discussion.

A 50 minute, one-act play for a mixed cast of 9 actors which, with doubling up, could be performed by three men and four women. With minimal props and costume it would be ideal for entry in a one-act play competition or festival.

Sorrowful Mysteries

E, 1A

A dramatic interpretation of the Five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, the play explores the themes of pain, loss, anger, remorse and guilt as exemplified by some of the main protagonists in the Passion story. Mary, Judas, Pilate, Barabbas and Simon of Cyrene each struggle to come to terms with their role and involvement in the recent events. The scenes are followed by a meditative link.

Lasting about 45 minutes, the setting is modern and easy to stage with a cast of 10, 5 men and 4 women and a young girl/ boy. There are also 2 Readers.

Special Delivery

C, 1A

Commissioned by Radius, this sequence of eleven short modern dramas takes the ingredients of a traditional nativity story but sets them in a world ruled by darkness, where the voice of God is no longer heard and where his messenger searches for those few still open to receive it: a young mum-to-be, her fiancé, rustic shepherds, intellectual stargazers and practical hoteliers. They must all be given the message in a form that makes sense to them. But the forces of darkness are watching, and waiting for their moment to destroy the messenger and his message and keep the world in darkness. Powerful but with plenty of moments of lightness and wit, this would be ideal for those groups looking for something different and unusual.

The scenes make up a complete play, but each scene serves as a play in itself and so one or two could be used in a carol service or concert. There are 18 characters but most of these only appear in one scene so doubling up is possible. Flexible casting.

The Summoning of Everyman

G+E, 1A

Les Ellison's plays enact Christian themes for the modern world and *The Summoning of Everyman* takes the well-known medieval play and re-imagines what we understand by judgment.

Everyman, a successful business man and fitness freak, is visited by Death who informs him that he must die that day and, in order to avoid damnation, he must find someone who will speak on his behalf. Despite his best efforts to canvas his business partners, friends and relatives, he discovers that only Good Deeds is able to do this.

The dialogue is modern, but Death speaks in rhyming couplets, preserving continuity with the original and also a sense of awe. Lasting about an hour, *Everyman* can be performed throughout the year, but speeches at the beginning and end relate the action to the Passiontide narratives and so make it very suitable for Easter.

With only minor changes to the text and, where necessary, to the name of the role, each of the eleven characters can be played by a male or a female actor. If necessary, they can be played by as few as six actors.

Ellison, Lark, Warburton *Sacred Spaces*

Collection of nine short plays

Sacred Spaces is a volume of nine short dramas each of which stands on its own, but performed together they add up to a one-act play which provides a sequence of lively snapshots in the life of a church community during the course of a year.

Six core characters can be played by men or women: the number of players required for the plays varies between one and six. Easy to stage, each short play is suitable for a particular season in the Church's year. They last between three and fifteen minutes and the whole sequence lasts around an hour.

A brief description of each play follows:

Birthday by James Lark

Pentecost: an unwelcome guest disrupts preparations for a party to celebrate a Church's Centenary and raises questions as to who should be welcomed. Cast: 6 of either sex. Duration: 10 minutes.

Waiting Room by Les Ellison

Advent: During discussions about a proposed new Church building it becomes apparent that there are different ways of waiting to know God's will. Cast: 2 of either sex. Duration: 3 minutes.

Christmas Spirit by Les Ellison

Diverse opinions are expressed about how best to get over the message of Christmas at the Carol Service. Cast: 4 of either sex. Duration: 4 minutes.

Promise by Nick Warburton

A number of work-related problems are brought to the Leader of the Church who realises that there are no easy answers. Cast: 2 of either sex. Duration: 3 minutes.

Cake Thursday by James Lark

Lent: A bizarre conversation leaves the Leader confused as to the general perception of how Lent should be observed. Cast: 2 of either sex. Duration: 4 minutes.

Mothering Sunday by Les Ellison

Three generations, Grandmother, Mother and daughter come to understand and accept each other and also to welcome others into their extended family. Cast: 3 women and 2 men. Duration: 15 minutes.

Easter Hymn by James Lark

An unconventional take on the preparations for Easter Day as parishioners voice their opinions on what kind of music should be used. Cast: 5 of either sex. Duration: 7 minutes.

A Matter of Balance by Nick Warburton

Harvest: Two members of a Church are at odds over what constitutes a proper offering at Harvest. Cast 2 of either sex. Duration: 4 minutes.

Memorial by Nick Warburton

Remembrance: Discussions are under way about the cleaning and restoration of the war memorial and whether names of deserters should be removed. One member of the committee is strangely silent until, at last, he speaks out. Cast: 1 man, 3 of either sex. Duration: 5 minutes.

Margaret Franks ***Three Wise Fools*** **C, 1A**

Subtitled 'A Fantasy on the Nativity', this one-act play, in the words of the author, 'explores some of the more intriguing aspects of the Nativity story'. With more than a passing nod to T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Journey of the Magi', she asks the question 'Were the Wise Men really so wise? Or could they have been status-conscious dignitaries whose astronomy was, at best, shaky, and whose philosophies had failed them?' Witty, entertaining and thoughtful, the play can be performed at either Christmas or Epiphany.

In addition to the Wise Men, the cast includes The Recording Angel, who could be either male or female. Also featured are some noisy and rumbustious shepherds: at least two, but there could be any number, male or female, young and old, providing an excellent opportunity to include some young people alongside the adult actors.

PLAYS BY KATE GRIFFIN

Kate Griffin is a Yorkshire-based playwright. Many of her plays have been premiered by the Wakefield Diocesan Drama Group, and she has also had a number of professional commissions to create community dramas. Her most recent community play, *Of Truth Be Told*, was commissioned to mark the re-ordering of Wakefield Cathedral in 2014.

Cuthbert and Hilda **G, S**

The two 7th Century Celtic saints are depicted in modern dress, with newspaper and knitting, talking ruefully and candidly about the qualities and incidents that elevated them to sainthood. Earthy, amusing and profound. This short play, lasting about 20 minutes, has a cast of two, one man and one woman.

No Flowers for Ally **G, 1A**

In this one-act play, a young man, Ally, confined to a wheelchair after a car accident, is wheeled into a church by his friend Max who was responsible for the accident. Both are traumatised and embittered by the experience and this initially focuses in casual cruelty to Nancy, a blind old woman who is doing the church flowers. But this chance encounter and ensuing conversation changes both Ally and Nancy's lives.

The cast consists of an elderly woman and two young men.
It should be noted that this play contains expletives.

One Step More **G, 1A**

This script which runs for about 45 minutes was commissioned for the Richard of Chichester anniversary and was premiered at the Cathedral. During a pilgrimage to Chichester, family tensions are renewed. Gradually, as the issues are resolved, it is

recognised that the pilgrimage is not as important as the reconciliation that has taken place.

Lasting about 45 minutes, it has a small cast of 2 men and 2 women.

I, Said the Sparrow

G, FL

Commissioned for Radius's 75th anniversary, this full-length play tackles important and difficult subjects as a young woman has to choose between ordination and her female lover: a decision not made any easier by the presence of her eccentric family who have gathered to celebrate her forthcoming ordination.

A complex play, it explores the need for both truth and multiplicity whilst offering no straightforward solution and, as such, would make an excellent starting point for a discussion. The cast consists of 2 men and 5 women.

Michael Hendy

Iscariot

E, 1A

This one-act play questions the historic view of Judas as someone who willingly and knowingly betrayed Jesus. Joint winner of a Radius Play Competition, it was first performed in 2002 when this debate was in its infancy, but the questions raised are just as relevant today. Judas is brought to trial in a modern courtroom which is set in limbo, outside the temporal world. Did Jesus know Judas would betray him? Did eyewitnesses lie about Judas's role? Is he a victim of history? Was Judas preordained to play the role of traitor? If so, can he be blamed, let alone condemned?

Lasting 1 hour, there is a cast of four men and two women although one of the male parts could be played by a woman.

Ken Hornsby

I See a Star

C, 1A, Y

An adaptation of the author's book *House of Bread*, this play tells the Nativity story with a fresh perspective and unusual characters. It is not so much a devotional play, more a dramatic re-enactment of the Christmas story, with more history than religion, giving background and providing cause for thought about how and why the events developed. As such, it would suit a variety of school, church and youth groups.

Lasting about an hour, the play has been written with children in mind so there are a large number of small fun character parts but it could also be performed by adults or a mixed age group.

PLAYS BY BRENDA JACKSON

Brenda Jackson, who died in 2015, worked in the Radius Library as a young woman between 1954 and 1961, and left Radius to become an administrator in the drama department of Bristol University. The plays she wrote for her church drama group combine detailed historical research with psychological insight.

***Green Branches* Collection of poems,**

E

This is not a play but a sequence of seven dramatic poems. The first five are the recollections and reactions of mainly unnamed individual witnesses to some of the events

of Holy Week, with the sixth being a dialogue between Lady Joanna and her husband. The final poem imagines the thoughts of someone who contemplates the medieval Ascension stained glass window in Fairford Church, Gloucestershire.

These unusual and lovely pieces would be ideal for inclusion in services during Lent.

Seven before Easter

E, FL

In this full-length play of seven scenes, Caiaphas, Martha, Pilate, Herodias and a Woman of Jerusalem, The Centurion, Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalen are quizzed about their experiences in Holy Week. Originally designed to be performed in church on the seven Sundays of Lent, Passiontide and Easter, each scene lasts about 15-20 minutes and could be performed as part of a sequence or individually. Modern and requiring very simple staging, the scenes would be a good basis for discussion.

There is a cast of 9: 4 men, 4 women and 1 either.

PLAYS BY SEAN LANG

Sean Lang is a Cambridge-based playwright whose historical dramas, particularly those set in World War I, have won numerous festival awards. He is the author of the highly informative reference book *World War I for Dummies*. Sean's plays for Radius show a keen sense of historical context, whether based on the gospels or re-imagining the mysteries for our own times.

Brother Man

E, FL, Y

This play explores the relationship between Jesus and his brother James. The action travels between the childhood of Jesus and a period twenty years later, during the Passion Week in Jerusalem. It chronicles the boys' rivalry which, on James's part, continues into adulthood, and how finally James comes to accept Jesus as the Son of God. The dialogue is fast-paced, modern and down to earth. There is a cast of ten: three young teenagers (2 boys, 1 girl) plus 4 men and 3 women. Stage directions and period-specific references have been kept to a minimum to allow as much freedom as possible to the director. The play, which lasts about 75 minutes, can be performed in period costume or in modern dress.

The Last Act in the Story – Mysteries for the Modern Age **G + C & E, FL**

A series of well-known Mystery Plays that have been re-written for a modern audience. There are 10 titles: Prologue, Lucifer, The Fall, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, The Annunciation, Herod, The Woman Taken in Adultery, The Temptation and The Crucifixion. They can be presented singly, in selection or as a whole with minimal staging required. The plays are written with a mixture of verse and prose, the former an echo of the original medieval pieces, but the language is up-to-date throughout, reflecting the ideas and attitudes of the twenty-first century. Several pieces include sections intended to be sung although these passages could also be spoken. The plays vary in length but the whole piece lasts about one hour 45 minutes. They can be presented at any time of the year but would be particularly suitable for Christmas and Eastertide.

Richard Tydeman *Christmas through the Window* **C, S**

Eli and Keziah live opposite the Inn in Bethlehem. Keziah spends a lot of time at the front window, reporting the comings and goings to Eli who is more concerned with reading his newspaper and dozing by the fire. Keziah gets drawn into helping with the birth of the baby and later instals the young family in her own home before they are forced to leave for Egypt.

Well-written and quietly amusing, this play is short, lasting about 20 minutes, has a cast of two and is easy to stage.

Mike Umbers *Trial by Night* **E, 1A**

As darkness descends, the Sanhedrin, led by Caiaphas, gathers to engineer Jesus's conviction with the help of Judas. The only voice of dissent is from Joseph of Arimathea. There follows a meeting between Pilate and Caiaphas who engage in a battle of wits to gain the upper hand. Pilate is torn between the influence of his high-ranking, strong-willed wife and the politics of the situation but finally gives in to the plotters.

A well-structured and engaging script, lasting about 50 minutes. Easy to stage, it has a cast of 6 men, 1 woman and 3 either.

PLAYS BY NICK WARBURTON

Nick Warburton is a Cambridge-based scriptwriter for BBC radio and television. His credits include *On Mardle Fen* and *Holby City*, as well as the gospel-based plays he has adapted for Radius. In 2012 he wrote the Easter radio series *The People's Passion*, set in a fictional cathedral. Nick's plays have won a number of awards, including the Sandford St Martin premier award for radio in 2009.

Witness **G (second half E), FL**

A stage version of the award-winning series of radio plays broadcast on BBC Radio 4, *Witness* chronicles the story of Jesus as told by St Luke. The first half deals with the ministry in Galilee and the journey to Jerusalem. The second half concentrates on Holy Week.

A full-length play with a modern setting, it has a large cast, but many of these roles can be doubled and some can be played as either male or female. It is perfectly possible to present individual scenes or play the two halves of the play separately; the second half for example is particularly suitable for performance at Easter.

Christmas Diaries **C, S**

A collection of five short monologues originally broadcast on *Radio 4 Extra* over Christmas 2012 and subtitled 'Meetings with Strangers'. The characters featured are Mary, Joseph, a Shepherd, a Lawyer and a Traveller. The monologues are easily adapted for stage and church performance and can be presented as a single performance or as individual pieces.

Easter Diaries **E, S**

Originally broadcast on BBC *Radio 4 Extra* over Easter 2012, this is a collection of seven short monologues spoken by The Man in the Temple, the Disciples John and Peter, Herod

Antipas, Mary, The Thief's Sister and Mary Magdalene. Like the *Christmas Diaries*, the monologues are flexible. They can be adapted for stage or church use and could be presented as a single performance or as individual pieces.

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