

# PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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## *Kidnapped in London*

By

**Timothy Mason**

*Kidnapped in London* was first produced by The Children's Theatre Company in the 1969-70 season.

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Characters:

Corin Marvell

Benjamin Marvell

Nellie Marvell

Diccon Burbage

Fan-Dan

Cuthbert Bogs

Geoffrey Bile

Joseph Taylor

Ensemble includes: citizens, sailors, tradesmen of London, apprentices, actors, rouges, serving girls, peasant man, jailor and prisoners

## **Setting**

Time: The late 1950's

Place: County Warwickshire; London

Design: The set resembles an open inn-yard theatre of Elizabethan London. The theatre audience bears the same relationship to the stage as the audience behind the groundlings would have had. A central platform has gallery space on either side. Each gallery has an upper level and lower level. Upstage of the platform is a balcony and chamber space for the use of The Players. On the platform, which revolves, are posts hung with with tapestried curtains. The costumes are period and the palette is of renaissance hues, gilding, greens and earthy colors. Textures are velvet, homespun, silks, roughly hewn and elaborately carved.

## **Note from the playwright**

The dialect is a conventional approximation of Elizabethan pronunciation. Although we can have no certain knowledge of what Shakespeare's English sounded like, some scholars feel that it resembled a modern Scottish brogue. This is the pattern which I followed. I found that both adults and children could handle it, and that the audience can understand it.

The action and dialogue are reasonably true to period. Companies of child-players were very much in fashion (they were even mentioned in Hamlet). It was not uncommon for a promising-looking youngster to be literally kidnapped off the streets. Because of this attempt at historical fidelity, some of the language in the play is rather uncouth. If you prefer, these expressions can be altered or deleted. However, in the original production, neither parents nor children seemed upset as they entered into the spirit of the times.

## Act I, Scene i

*Dusk in the Warwickshire Hills. Corin Marvell is seated on a mound of hay. The boy is singing softly with the other sounds of dusk.*

NELLIE                    *(Calling from off stage).* Cory. Whur beest thou? Come now. Tis gone bedtime, lad.

CORIN                    TO MARY, QUEEN, AWAKENING  
ONE BLEAK MID-WINTER MORN,  
CAME LIKE A FALCON TO ITS KING  
FAIR JESUS TO BE BORN.

AND THOUGH THE WIND WAS COLD AS STARS.  
AND THOUGH THE SHADOWS LONG  
WHEN WINTER'S CAGE FLUNG WIDE ITS BARS  
THE SKYLARK FOUND HIS SONG.

FOR SPRING AWOKE THAT VERY DAY  
AND WARMED DECEMBER'S DAWN,  
TO HEAR THE SKYLARK'S GLADSTONE LAY,  
LIKE DEW UPON THE LAWN.

NELLIE                    *(Off)* Now, I says, Cory.

CORIN                    TO MARY, QUEEN, AWAKENING  
ONE BLEAK MID-WINTER MORN,  
CAME LIKE A FALCON TO ITS KING  
FAIR JESUS TO BE BORN.

NELLIE                    Cory!

*A frog croaks.*

CORIN                    *(Laughing)* Sssssh. Do na thou sing so, old toad, Tch, tch, tch, such a croak! List' to they bird friend here. He hath more grace...

NELLIE                    *(Off)* Corin! I've ears ye know. I hear thee. Come in out o' that.

CORIN *(Imitating Nellie)* I've ears ye know, Corin. . .Lambs and she-goats, soft now. Sing low. Mother shall come wroth wi' thee. She hath ears, ye know. *(Yawn and stretch)* Stars and bright things – do na shine so loud. Tis gone bedtime, don't ye see.

BENJAMIN *(Coming to Corin)* Sloth and folly, Nell. I'll have I'll have no idler for a... Corin Marvell! I bid thee come, and come now, if thou wouldst go wi' me morrow to London town.

CORIN I' faith, Father, I was not idle. I was minding the flock, sir, with an eye to that old ram, sir. Do ye know the one, butting and jumping at whiles, sir, and may I na' go wi' thee, Father, may I na?

BEN JAMIN Minding the flock with a silly song, and a man might earn his bread dancing in a motley jerking if ye'd have thy way. Ah, Corin, shun folly and do na let thy head be turned. Come now to bed. We've a long journey on the morrow. *(He goes into the house).*

CORIN *(To the Hills)* My sheep and billies, go quiet now to sleep. Mind ye shun folly til I come back. I've a long journey on the morrow.

Blackout.

## **Act I, Scene ii**

Tambourine bang! and lights up where a jester pops out from the platform curtain. He jerks like a puppet on strings and beckons the audience to follow him. Young girls dance by, with dim shafts of light falling across the stage to hint at people of the city gathered about in frozen motion.

Vendors slowly come to life, hawking their goods in a round.

1<sup>st</sup> VENDOR RED ONIONS, BUY MY ONIONS!

2<sup>nd</sup> VENDOR FINE LACES FOR A LADY!

3<sup>rd</sup> VENDOR FRESH MACKERAL, FRESH MACKERAL!

4<sup>th</sup> VENDOR            NEW OYSTERS, NEW OYSTERS!

The stage slowly begins moving into action as trademen, fine ladies and gentlemen, chimney sweeps and others start crossing, calling out, dancing, accelerating until it becomes a swirl of intoxicating song and activity. Sailors are unloading a barge.

Corin enters, running. His parents follow, buying, haggling, but ill at ease in the big town. The boy stops, smells the air, and looks about him as the sailors begins to sing, with Vendors barking in the distance.

1<sup>st</sup> SAILOR            CAST HER DOEN EASY, ME HEARTY LADS ALL,  
LEAVE 'GABRIEL' BEHIND.  
FOR THE GOODLIEST MATE THAT EVER DID SAIL  
SLEEPS NOW AMONG THE BRINE.

FULL TWENTY AND FOUR AT WHITSUNTIDE,  
AFORE THE MOON DID BLEED.  
COME INTO PORT ON MICHAELMAS,  
WITH ONLY TWENTY-THREE.

THERE FAST ON BECK STOOD GENTLE DAN,  
WHILST WE ALL HIGHED TO LEE.  
COME DOWN, I CRIED, MY DANLY, DEAR,  
THOU CANST NA STILL THE SEA.

I'LL HOLD THE STAYS, SUNG DARLIN' DAN,  
AYE, WITH ME HANDS BLOOD-RED.  
TIS BUT THE WINGS OF GABRIEL  
A' BEATIN' 'BOUT MY HEAD.

TELL ME LADY, MARILEE,  
HOW SHE LOST HER DAN –  
ON THE GOOD SHIP 'GABRIEL'  
TRUE AS ANY MAN.

CAME THE MORNING, STILL THE STORM  
DANLY, HE WAS GONE.  
IN THE DEEP – SOME ANGEL'S WINGS,  
DRIFTIN' WITH THE FOAM.

Small pause and quiet. Suddenly, a sailor throws Corin up in the air, and sets him on his shoulders.

1<sup>st</sup> SAILOR            Whoy, lads, here be a piece o' baggage! Do ye want it for to sail the briny deep?

2<sup>nd</sup> SAILOR            Aye, that we do!

3<sup>rd</sup> SAILOR            Need another hand!

2<sup>nd</sup> SAILOR            I says, bring it along!

3<sup>rd</sup> SAILOR            To Africa!

1<sup>st</sup> SAILOR            What, to Africa. To Ethiopia! Blackamoors!

2<sup>nd</sup> SAILOR            Rings throush their noses!

3<sup>rd</sup> SAILOR            Bones...!

1<sup>st</sup> SAILOR            What say ye, boy? Will ye have a bit o' the sailor's life?

BENJAMIN            *(From across stage, where he and Nellie are shopping).* Cory! Hie thee here!

CORIN                *(To Sailors as they set him down.)* Nay, sir. But thankee, sir. *(Runs to his parents).*

NELLIE                *(Taking Corin in her arms)* There's me stout son. Did yon rogue fright' thee?

CORIN                Nay, Mother. But didst thou hear him sing? Twas the beautifulest thing ever I list' to. I' faith, he was singing about islands and he said that might be I could go there...

Tambourine, drum roll, horn and cymbol.

The Players of Blackfriars enter and swirl across the stage, tumbling and waving swords and banners. The platform turns, holding some actors, and the citizens gather on the upper and lower

levels, laughing and murmuring. Corin stands among those at the front of the crowd. In a matter of moments, the stage has become full.

The Jester does a pantomime, and the players sing.

PLAYERS                   THE HUNT IS UP, THE HUNT IS UP,  
AND IT IS WELL NIGH DAY,  
AND HARRY OUR KING HAS GONE A' HUNTING  
TO BRING HIS DEER TO BAY.

THE EAST IS BRIGHT WITH MORNING LIGHT  
AND DARKNESS IT IS FLED,  
THE EARLY HORN WAKES UP THE MORN,  
TO LEAVE ITS IDLE BED.

THE HUNT IS UP, THE HUNT IS UP,  
THE DOGS ARE RUNNING FREE.  
THE WOODS REJOICE AT THE MERRY NOISE  
OF HEY, TAN-TA-RAH, TA-REE!

HERALD                   *(Reading from a long scroll.)* Good, me citizens, hark ye well! Today  
to Friars come ye all. Where performed anon shall be most gay and  
witty comedie! The Dame's Displeasure, wherein a lady seeks to  
win the attentions of two gentlemen.