



Written by  
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## “The Second Shepherd's Play”

A Medieval Nativity Play

Adapted by Cora Alley

For the Christmas Madrigal Dinner

**Scripture:** Luke 2: 8-11

*"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord.'"*

**Dramatic Category:** Christmas Madrigal Dinner Theater

**What is a “Madrigal Dinner”?**

A "Madrigal Dinner" is a trip back in time. Twelve singers dress in 16<sup>th</sup> century, English costumes and herald in the Christmas season with a harmonious concert of traditional, acappella carols. The ten members of the royal court join the King and Queen as they sit on stage in a semi-circle that opens to the audience.

The guests are seated at festively decorated tables ready to enjoy a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings: the Wassail (hot apple cider), the "boar's head" (prime rib), and Figgie Pudding (bread pudding). The King's Jester serves as the "Master of Ceremonies" for the evening, as he delights and surprises the audience with toasts, jokes, and comic asides.

A troupe of the "King's players" join the Court and present a traditional play that dates back to the time of classic European literature. The scenes of the play are woven among the courses of the meal and set up the sweet message of the Christmas carols. The audience comes away from the evening having enjoyed a delicious holiday feast, laughed and cried at the players, and marveled at the vocal talent of the ensemble.

**NOTE:**

See the “Madrigal Checklist,” at the end of the script, to assist you in producing the wonderful evening of celebration.

**Topic:** Forgiveness, mercy, and grace are the true meaning of Christmas.

**Performance Time:** 1 hour program + the concert and the meal = 2 hours total

**Number of Players:** 9 players, 12 singers, (with an option of 15+ entertainers)

**Objective:**

To use a fanciful depiction of the events leading up to the Birth of Jesus to illustrate the practical application of God's forgiveness in our daily lives.

**Synopsis:**

Have you every wondered what those shepherds were doing on the hillside the night the angels heralded the birth of Christ? You'd think they were tenderly caring for their sheep; but "No," they were preparing to hang their fellow-shepherd after discovering he was a sheep thief! How could such an evil scheme be hatched on such a holy night?

*The Second Shepherd's Play* is a classic medieval nativity play. It is the story of Mak, a sticky-fingered sheep-thief, who hatches a crafty plan to literally "pull the wool over the eyes" of his fellow shepherds, as he steals a sheep while his comrades sleep. When the shepherds awake, they hurry to Mak's shack where they suspect they will find the stolen lamb; however, to their great surprise, all they find is Mak, his wife, and their newborn child. Oddly enough, Mak will not let them see the baby, "After all, a newborn babe is no great sight." They are about to leave, when the baby bleats, sounding very much like a lamb! Outraged by Mak's deception, they hurry him off to a hillside where they intend to hang him.

Just as they are about to tighten the noose, the sky fills with angels (*The Madrigal singers.*) "The Prince of Peace is born! Peace on earth, good will toward men," is their melodious message. Will the shepherds hearken to the message of the "herald angels"? Or, is this Mak's last night on earth? Watch and see!

**Cast:**

**The Royal Players:**

**Jester:** *A fun-loving, clownish fellow who conducts the fun*  
**Coll:** *The first shepherd*  
**Gib:** *The second shepherd*  
**Daw:** *The third shepherd*  
**Mak:** *A sheep thief*  
**Gill:** *Mak's wife*

**The Madrigal Singers:**

**The King:** *A commanding champion who wants the knight beheaded*  
**The Queen:** *A sensitive woman who gives the knight his sentence*  
**Ladies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5:** *Royal female members of the court*  
**Lords 1, 2, 3, 4, 5:** *Royal male members of the court*

**Note:**

These 12 singers, dressed in Renaissance costumes, make up the king's court. They are an acappella singing cast, which also presents a concert of Christmas carols during the program. Mix the vocal parts as you see fit. The parts sung do not have any bearing on the parts spoken.

## **Additional Cast (optional):**

*(The play does not require these people, but they add a wonderful dimension to the program)*

- 1 Juggler:** *entertains at mealtime*  
**3 Mimes:** *perform antics during mealtime*  
**4 Minstrels:** *serenade with instruments at mealtime, at the tables*  
**Trumpeter(s):** *signal events with fanfare*  
**2 Beefeaters:** *armored knights who stand guard at the door*  
**2 Announcers:** *announce guests by name, at the door*  
**Serving girls:** *dressed as peasants, to wait on each table (as many as you need)*  
**2 Litter bearers:** *carry in the courses of the meal*  
**1 Magician:** *entertains guests during mealtime, at their tables*  
**4 Troubadours:** *sing to guests during mealtime, at their tables*
- Dancers:** *They add festivity to the evening. They perform a dance number dressed as “Merry Maids” with flowing dresses and flowers in their hair; like in the days of “Robin Hood.”*
- Orphan children:** *This is an opportunity for your “children’s choir” to get involved. They sing a song to the audience during the show. Dress these elementary-aged children in rags, dirty their faces, and give them bowls to beg at the tables. Then, put chocolate “gold coins” on each table and let the people give them to the children when they come by.*
- Disgruntled Serving Girls:** *An ensemble of six women who work up a few songs that are off-pitch, and silly in nature. They are generally irritated that their voices are not good enough to be one of those “uppity Madrigal Singers.” After all, “We clean up real nice, too!”*

## **Costumes:**

Dress in Renaissance and medieval costumes. See specific cast descriptions above, for costuming suggestions.

## **Props:**

Set the King’s table for a traditional Renaissance Christmas feast  
Chocolate “gold coins” for the guest tables                      A few bushes to set out  
6 sawhorses with styrofoam ball heads                              A doorframe that is freestanding  
6 “wooly” covers for the sawhorses                                  A stuffed lamb (the size of a toddler)  
6 sheep head covers for the sawhorses                              A blanket that will cover 4 men  
12 little stuffed sheep (for the head table)                        A large, artificial rock  
A bag of artificial snow    A sheep’s bell (hung around the neck)  
6 sheets of “shining” white, angelic cloth

## **Lights:**

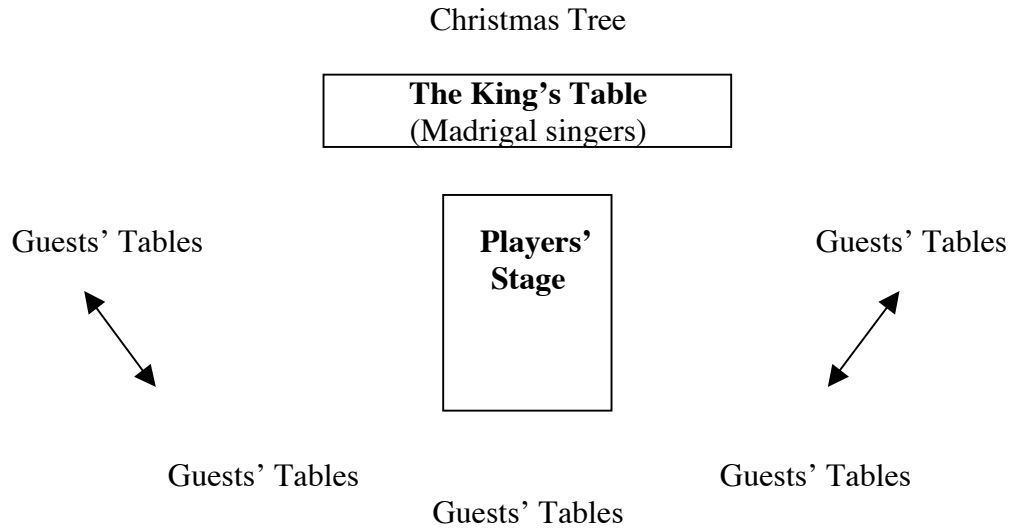
Design the lighting in such a way that the players and King’s Court are highlighted according to their dominance in the program.

## **Sound:**

Microphones for the singers, at the table  
Wireless mics for the actors with lines, who aren’t at the table

**Staging:**

If you can “transform” your room into a “castle hall” with “theater-in-the-round” seating, it will enhance the “ambience” of the evening. Here is a suggested diagram:



## A Guide to 16th Century English Christmas Customs

**Wassail** - The festive holiday drink from the Anglo-Saxon, “Wes-hal,” means “be whole.” The old wassail bowls, usually of silver or pewter, were immense. It was the custom of the stewards upon entering the banquet hall to call out, “Wassail, Wassail,” and this was answered by the host and the guests alike with song or carol. A forerunner was “lamb’s wool,” a mixture of hot ale, sugar, spices, eggs, and roasted apples. Thick cream was sometimes added. It was served in the wassail bowl with pieces of toast floating on top. Hence, the origin of the drinking toast.

**Boar’s Head** - Traditionally, this is the heart of the Christmas feast. Its mouth propped open with an apple, the head was brought in on a silver dish, to a fanfare and a special carol. Its origin comes from Psalm 80, in which Satan is the “boar out of the wood.” The head of the slain boar, paraded about the Great Hall, showed the defeat of Satan by the newborn Christ child. The master of the house would take an oath upon it to perform some charitable deed, and often the other gentlemen seated at the table would follow suit.

**Flaming Plum Pudding** - Everyone in the household stirred the plum pudding and made a wish. If a trinket were found in the piece one ate, the wish would come true; consequently, it became known as “Figgie Pudding.”

**The Twelve Days of Christmas** - Known liturgically as Epiphany, representing the traditional time of the journey of the Magi to worship the Christ child. The twelve days were a time of great feasting, celebration, singing of Madrigals and carols, plays and general merry making.

**Madrigals** - A vocal music idiom from the 14th and 15th century in Italy, the Madrigals developed chiefly in the 16th century in England. The word has its origin in either Mandrialis (pastoral song), or matricials (in the mother tongue). English Madrigals were variously called songs, sonnets, canzonets, and ayres.

### **Instruction for the beginning:**

Do a cheery job of decorating the set like an old English castle. Use coats of arms, banners, swords, thrones, drapes of rich tapestry, etc. The Christmas tree should be magnificent, the wreaths and centerpieces should be studded with decorations and lights, and the entire mood should be magical.

Set all the tables with china and good glassware. No paper plates. Outfit each table with rolls and fill the water glasses. People want something to eat and drink the minute they arrive. Hungry people are generally grumpy!

Light the candles, dim the lights and instruct the minstrels to roam the house playing their instruments while the guests enter. The “announcers,” welcome each guest and shout out his/her name (i.e. “The Lord and Lady Parker”). Servers wait inside the hall near the door, with their guest list for their table in hand. When they hear a name called that is assigned to their table, they come to the door and escort them to their table. Mimes and the magician can entertain the guests.

### **Caution:**

Assign the mimes, the musician, and the juggler, various parts of the house at various times, so they do not wear out their welcome by frequenting the same part of the house all night.

## The Script:

### Fanfare 1

*(The trumpeters enter and march around the hall. They meet at the front of the King's table.)*

### (Prologue)

*(Mak enters and steals a few things off of the tables as he approaches the front. He slyly sneaks up to the front table. His hand extends to grasp a goblet, and he stands to put it in his bag. He next, spies out the centerpiece, but pops under the table as the Jester enters.*

*For the remainder of the jester's opening discourse, he plays a vaudeville, "cat and mouse" game with Mak. When the Jester turns around, Mak disappears like a "Jack in the box.")*

**Jester:** That scoundrel Mak, has He entered this hall?  
If he has, grab your gold one and all.

Ne're so sticky a finger have I seen on a thief,  
Of his tricks and deceit we have no relief.

*(He rushes to the front table where Mak is hiding; when he looks behind it, Mak is in front, etc.)*

I'm now content that we shan't be harassed,  
By Mak, the thief, till this night has passed.

So, we begin...  
*(He clears his throat)*

Alas, dear guests, you've come again,  
To escape life's sorrow, strife, and pain!

So gaily clad in handsome dress,  
*(aside)* No doubt this royal mob you'll impress

Unstick thy mind from present day,  
Let it come with us, let it fly away,

*(He begins to set the stage with wooden sawhorses decorated with lamb's "wool" covers, etc. He sets a few bushes out. Mak pops up to see the sheep and tries to steal one. He is unsuccessful because the Jester stands too near.)*

On wings of laughter, wings of song,  
Wings that carry each along,

To a special time and a special place,  
That magically, mystically, cares erase.

*(He admires the sheep he has set up.)*

Ah, your imagination must not fall asleep,  
For tonight, these wooden creatures are sheep!

*(appears insulted because the sawhorses don't look like sheep)*

A little fluff here, and a nose there will do.  
Don't laugh; they look better than some of you!

*(He puts the finishing touches on the sheep.)*

There! This room is now a castle hall,  
And we are players, one and all.

**Option: “Merry Maids” Enter**

*(They enter the hall, giggling. The Jester notices them.)*

Oh what lovely things are girls!  
Their beauty, like a rose, unfurls.

*(He is obviously caught up in the show of lovely ladies.)*

**“Merry Maids” Dance**

**Jester:**

*(as the Merry Maids exit)*

As graceful as snowflakes, as light as the air;  
God's crowning achievement, with bows in their hair.

*(He slaps his own face, and comes to his senses.)*

Now, speaking of grace and dignity,  
Our Madrigals enter, in harmony!

*(He motions to the back door, and the Madrigals strike a chord.)*

**Processional:**

*(The madrigal singers enter as they sing a Christmas carol. “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” is a favorite. They line up at opposite doors as they enter, weave through the audience as they sing, meet at the front, curtsy and bow to each other, and finally the Ladies are escorted to their seats by the Lords.)*

**Opening Prayer:***(This could be a song)*

**King:**

*(opens his arms wide as he welcomes his guests)*

Welcome guests from far and wide,  
From hill, and vale, and countryside,

My bounty is yours' eat, drink, and be merry!  
With jests and fine song this party will terry!

The feast before us is beyond all compare,  
Let us bow to our maker in most humble prayer.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this fine feast tonight  
as we gather together to honor you. In your beloved  
Son, you have given us hope, life eternal, and joy beyond measure. We lift our  
praise to Thee, and honor Thee in merriment and song. We pray in the name of  
Jesus, whose birth we celebrate tonight, Amen.

**Queen:** *(looking over the table at the wooden lambs)*  
My Lord, these lambs, they're really quite boney.

**King:** The reason, my love, is because they are phony.

**Queen:** *(puzzled)*  
Boney? Phony? Why this wood at our table?

**King:** The Jester will tell us. Let's pray that he's able.

**Jester:** *(running in)*  
I'm able, my Lord, and willing my Lady,  
To weave the tale of the miracle baby.

*(He places little sheep on the tables, one by each Madrigal's plate.)*

Tonight's story is the greatest 'er told.  
A miracle already two thousand years old.

On a hillside cold, four shepherds tarry,  
Near frozen to death, and hardly merry!

*(He tosses out styrofoam snow.)*

It was the very hillside where His birth was proclaimed,  
On that "Silent Night" when the earth was changed.

When the angels cried out:  
"Peace on Earth, good will towards men,"  
These shepherds were caught in a dastardly plan.

*(The Madrigals react in shock)*

One was a prisoner of the other three;  
Who had wicked intent.  
*(aside)* Well, you'll just have to see.



But, how could they execute their evil plan,  
In light of the birth, of the great “I am”?

The “Prince of Peace” foiled their plan,  
So, all they could ask was, "Where is the Lamb?"

*(Madrigals begin to ask questions, but the Jester hushes them all.)*

But, alas, how did they their hearts fill with such guile?  
Their story unfolds;  
*(aside)* it'll make you smile.

Here come our three shepherds; hang on each word;  
For, I'll wager, a sorrier lot, you've not heard.

*(He exits and the shepherds enter.)*

### **Scene 1: “The Shepherd’s Plight”**

**Coll:** What a horrible night, and I am ill-dressed.  
My fingers are numb, and my legs all distressed.

With a shepherd's plight, I am poorly impressed.  
I must surely be dumb to loose all of my rest  
For some lambs!

**Gib:** Through rain or through snow, wherever we go,  
No relief can we know, from our rams!

**Coll:** We poor men of the hills, nearly die of the chills;  
You should see all the bills, we run up for our pills,  
We poor men!

We are so underpaid, over-taxed and dismayed,  
Earning hardly a yen!

**Daw:** Our debts grow deeper, the less we can buy.  
The snow on these hills, like our debts, is piled high.

*(Madrigals throw snow at the shepherds.)*

Our houses are shacks, and we break our backs;  
Those are the facts, as surely as sin!

**Coll:** Aw, cold and wind won't ruin our lives,  
But I'll tell you who will: Those shrews we call...

**All:** Wives!

**Gib:** Each night I face a bitter choice: outside the wintry air,  
Inside a shrill and screaming voice; I find no there

**Daw:** Heaven is a special place, I hear,  
Where such as I may rest an ear.

**Gib:** I sound you fair warning, you single young man,  
Better greet each new morning alone if you can.

**Daw:** No hope to survive!

**Gib:** No hope for our wives!

**Coll:** No hope for our lives!

*(The shepherds trudge off the stage. The Jester enters, feeling obviously sorry for them.)*

**Jester:** *(drying his eyes)*  
What sorry shepherds! Your woes all grow double!  
I think, perhaps, here's the source of your trouble.

*(He points to the "Disgruntled Servers" who enter from the side of the stage, bickering about their terrible lives being married to shepherds. They have to work at the local tavern to help make ends meet.)*

**Option: "Disgruntled Servers" Song**  
*(On the topic of the hard life of a shepherd's wife!)*

*(The "Disgruntled Servers" exit, and the Madrigals lament their sorry state. The queen asks:)*

**Queen:** My Lord, these poor women, they seem so dismayed!  
We should share from the bounty, before us displayed!

**King:** Dear wife, their plight is not all that gory,  
Remember, this play is only a story!

And speaking of bounty; I see nothing displayed.  
I hope that by now, the Wassail's been made!

**Jester:** Ah yes, my King, the Wassail comes;  
And don't worry dear lady, about those three bums!

There lives are empty, filled with grumbling and fright,  
But all that will change right before you tonight!

**King:** More is empty here than a mere shepherd's life!

*(He turns his empty glass over and stares underneath it.)*

*(The Jester jumps to attention and motions to the Wassail carriers.)*

**Jester:** Come Wassail, for the King, his guests, and his wife!

**SONG: Wassail Song**

“Wassail, Wassail all over the town....”

*(A bowl of apple-colored gelatin that “looks like cider, but isn’t” is carried by the pages on a litter. It is paraded around the house and stops at the king’s table for approval. The King rises, survey’s the cider and nods. He waves the pages on, and they exit.)*

**WASSAIL SERVED:**

*(The hot apple cider brought out by the servers.)*

**Toasts:**

**King:** *(raising his glass)*

Some toasts for our guests? Come nobles, some rhyme!

*(It is silent, and the Madrigals stare at each other)*

On with it group; you can start anytime!

**Lord 1:** To the ladies who grace us; like flowers on sod.

*(He points to his comrade.)*

**Lord 2:** The final and crowning creation of God!

**Lord 5:** *(raising his glass high and the others follow)*

To the ladies!

**Lady 1:** To the gallant and gentle men at our side,

**Lady 2:** Who in tranquil enchantment, with us abide!

**Lady 5:** *(raising her glass high and the others follow)*

To the gentlemen!

**Lord 3:** And now to our guests,

**Lady 3:** May you dine with great pleasure.

**Lord 4:** May your merriment tonight

**Lady 4:** Be without measure!

**King:** To our guests!

**Queen:** To our guests!

*(The Madrigals all toast each other)*

## **Fanfare 2**

### **Scene 2: "The Set Up"**

*(Shepherds reenter and continue to complain.)*

**Coll:** It's not fair, I tell you; too few have enough!

**Daw:** Oh, face it, my friend; this life is just tough!

**Gib:** Still, the life of a shepherd is good honest work!

**Coll:** *(to Daw)* He tries to redeem this!

**Daw:** I think he's a jerk.

**Gib:** Speaking of jerk, have you seen Mak?  
Hardly a night goes by that he's not on our track.

**Coll:** There's a man whose crimes in ballads are sung,  
And one day soon, that thief will be hung!

**Daw:** Whenever that scum loiters or lingers,  
One of our sheep just sticks to his fingers!

All the wool from his stolen sheep,  
Would blanket the world when it wanted to sleep!

*(Mak enters from the side of the stage, wrapped in a large blanket.)*

**Mak:** Evening good friends! How goes the cold?

**Coll:** It's Mak!

**Daw:** Count the sheep!

**Gib:** Secure the fold!

**Mak:** You wound me my friends; why fret o'er your sheep?  
I was only concerned that you have a good sleep.

I brought you a blanket, so thick and so warm;  
All wrapped up together, like bees you can swarm

*(He wraps the three up in the blanket.)*

**Gib:** *(to the other two)*  
I knew it; I knew some strange tale would be sung;  
If you want my advice, this man should be hung!

**Daw:** Still, that blanket is warm; it's one we could use!

**Coll:** Fine, if you don't care how many sheep we lose!

**Mak:** *(breaking up their talk)*  
Look, I'll prove I mean you no harm.  
I'll surround you myself, and I'll keep you warm.

*(He puts his arms around the three of them and holds them tight in the blanket.)*

*(Daw stoops down and pulls the others down. Mak towers above them.)*

**Daw:** Listen! I have a plan that is purely genius  
Put Mak in the middle; and he'll sleep between us!

**Coll:** *(whispering to the other three)*  
Excellent plan! But, put that rock by his skull;  
So he won't slither out and make fools of us all!

**Gib:** Let loose of us Mak; we'll agree to your plan,  
And, you'll lie here between us as snug as a clam!

**Mak:** How could you mistrust me, a friend so true?  
I only want what's best for you!

*(The three shepherds take Mak and place him between them. Coll gets a rock and places it on the blanket at Mak's head; thus, keeping him in. They lie on either side of Mak, and the blanket covers them all. They sleep.)*

**Jester:** *(tiptoes in and whispers hoarsely to the audience)*  
Well, here they lie. Has Mak turned a new leaf?  
Or, once one has stolen, *(pause)* always a thief?

Alas; not all our folk are given to crime;  
Here come the children; please give them a dime.

**Option: “Orphan Chorus“**

*(The children enter the room and perform their song.)*

*(After the song, the Jester reenters, applauding the children.)*

**Jester:** Ah... children, they are God’s greatest gift.  
They always give our spirits a lift.

*(wandering over to the shepherd)*  
Do you think Mak is sleeping?

*(to the sleeping shepherds)*  
If I were you guys, it’s “watch” I’d be keeping.

While these shepherds sleep; have I got a deal!  
What say you if we get on with our meal!

I’m sure you wonder if it will be porridge;  
Not hardly, dear guests, we’re serving you foliage.

**SALAD IS SERVED:**

*(Play some Old English harpsichord-type music)*

**Fanfare 3**

**Scene 3: "The Rip Off"**

*(Mak slowly wriggles out of the blanket once the others are snoring loudly. He leaves the rock untouched and goes out the bottom.)*

**Mak:** Now, I draw a circle 'round about,  
And 'nere a one of you can come out,  
'till I have done what I came here for,  
Remove one lamb and nothing more!

*(Mak takes the stuffed, toy sheep which stands beside one of the sawhorses, and quickly leaves the stage; on his way off, he trips over a rock and lets out with a loud yell! The yell wakes the other three shepherds up. They scurry to their feet and notice that Mak is gone.)*

**Coll:** I knew it! Mak is gone!

**Gib:** Count the sheep; we're missing one.

*(Coll counts the sheep on the and discovers the missing lamb.)*

**Daw:** *(examining the blanket)*  
I thought we had him beat this time;  
But that dirty dog is slicker than slime!

**Coll:** He did it; he tricked us; so, let's make a plan.  
We can't sleep again; 'till we find the lamb.

**Gib:** He can't have gone far with a sheep on his back.

**Daw:** Let's follow him then; away to Mak's shack!

*(They race off the stage in the direction, which Mak also took.)*

*(The Jester reenters.)*

**Jester:** Well, what say you folks? Will they find the lamb?  
A greater question perhaps; than we all understand.

*(pondering),*  
Will they find the lamb? Will you find the lamb?  
Hummm... I pray the whole world finds the lamb!

*(changing his mood to satire)*  
Well, here's no mystery;  
It's as plain as the nose on your face!

Here come the servers,  
*(whispering to the audience)* They're quite the disgrace!

**Option: "Disgruntled Servers" Song 2**

*(On the subject of having to "lift a little here and there to make ends meet; after all, a girl's gotta' eat!")*

*(After the "Disgruntled Servers" exit, the Jester reenters the hall.)*

**Jester:** I know you imagine what life would be like,  
Cruising though life, with this kind of strife.

*(motioning to the "Disgruntled Servers" as they exit.)*  
I don't know much, but, one thing I know,  
You'll be eating again; then on with the show!

**SONG: The Boar's Head**

*(A pig's head, carried by the litter-bearers on a litter, is paraded around the house and stops at the King's table for approval. The King rises, survey's the head and nods. He waves the pages on, and they exit.)*

**THE MEAL IS SERVED:**

*(During dinner, the magician does tricks, the minstrel(s) play, jugglers stroll among the audience and the musicians play. When the meal is finished, the trumpeters enter.)*

## Fanfare 4

*(The Jester enters, and approaches the guest who has a bell near his plate.)*

**Jester:** What have we hear? Do you have a confession to tell?  
Where did you get this little sheep's bell?

*(interrogating the man)*

You scoundrel! Are you in league with Mak?  
If you are, you'll soon be on the rack!

But, maybe this isn't a sheep's bell;  
There's only one way to really tell.

*(to the guest)* If Figgie Pudding comes through that door,  
You're off the hook; worry no more!

*(He rings the bell, and the Figgie Pudding litter-bearers carry in the flaming pudding.)*

## SONG: "We Wish You A Merry Christmas"

*(A bowl of bread pudding with "sterno" cans that have been lit, creates a blazing Figgie Pudding look as it is carried by the litter-bearers on a litter. It is paraded around the house and stops at the King's table for approval. The King rises; survey's the cider and nods. He waves the pages on, and they exit.)*

**Jester:** *(to the audience when the pudding passes)*  
Don't look so famished; your time will come.  
We have Wassail and pastries for everyone!

## DESSERT IS SERVED:

## Fanfare 5

### Scene 4: "The Con"

*(Mak runs in, looking behind him. He races to his door and knocks loudly.)*

**Mak:** Open the door, wife, let me in!  
Or soon you'll have a casualty of sin.

**Gill:** Let you in? Sin? Get away you woman shopper!  
My husband's not home, and it wouldn't be proper.

**Mak:** I am your husband, and it's perfectly right!

**Gill:** I shall not open my door tonight.  
While I sleep here without my man,



*(to herself)* However worthless he has been,  
He's father of my children ten.

**Mak:** Oh, Gill, have pity on me.  
I'm freezing, desperate, hear my plea!

**Gill:** I will not let you through my door  
Unless you have food, just a little bit more.

*(She gets up to open the door, and Mak runs in.)*

**Mak:** They're on my tail, Gill, here's what I did.

*(He shows her the lamb.)*

**Gill:** Oh, bless you, you've rescued another lost kid.

Be calm Mak, from the first I knew  
The knock, the voice; that it was you.

And open wide the door I would  
If you brought home some smell of food.

**Mak:** I brought it home, so it wouldn't freeze.

**Gill:** Good, stiff lambs make the poorest cheese!

**Mak:** But hurry, If I am right,  
Others know of this lamb's plight.

**Gill:** Calm yourself, and don't go wild,  
I'll pass him off as our latest child.

I'll lie a-bed and moan in pain,  
He has my eyes, *(to Mak)* no doubt, your brain!

**Mak:** O, excellent plan, my dear sweet wife.

**Gill:** Of course, I've been having children all my life.

### **Scene 5: "The Unveiling"**

*(Their conversation is interrupted by Coll, Gib, and Daw, who arrive and begin pounding on the door. Gill quickly jumps into bed with the lamb and begins moaning.)*

**Gib:** Open you rogue; and open quick!

**Mak:** Who's there? Is this some trick?

**Daw:** Open up you brazen thief.  
This is the last time you've brought us grief.  
  
*(Mak opens the door, and all three accost him.)*

**Coll:** *(grabbing Mak)* All right you sheep-stealing scum!  
Hand over the lamb, you bum!

**Mak:** Good men; you attack my very worth.  
I've been here with my wife, who's giving birth!

**Gib:** Then you won't mind if we look around?

**Mak:** God's speed, but your sheep will not be found.  
  
But precious Gill, God bless her soul,  
Has once again fulfilled her role.  
  
Search the house; look where you will,  
But please, do not disturb my Gill.  
  
*(They look about the house; Mak stands between them and Gill.)*

**Coll:** I've looked my best and nothing found.

**Daw:** I've listened well and heard no sound.

**Gib:** Then, we'll be gone; back to the wild.  
  
*(They pause as they begin to leave.)*  
  
Please pardon, Mak, the false accusation,  
And we have not joined in your exaltation.  
  
*(He approaches the bed, and Mak gets nervous.)*  
  
We have not even joined in your joy.  
Tell us; have you a girl or a boy?

**Mak:** *(answering with Gill)* A girl!

**Gill:** A Boy!

**Gib:** Perhaps you've not had time to tell.

**Gill:** It's so dark, I can't see well.

**Mak:** I'm not so curious, I guess,  
As when I had nine children less.  
  
If I have wronged you and from you stole,  
I'll eat that child (*points to the crib*) and eat it whole!

**Coll:** Come, my friends, we've stayed too long;  
Our charge, it seems has been all wrong.

**Daw:** Let us return to guard our flock.  
This evening has been such a shock!

*(pausing as he reaches the door)*

Our manners, oh we've been so riled,  
We never once asked to look at the child.

*(Gill and Mak exchange panicked looks.)*

**Mak:** It doesn't matter. That's quite all right.  
A newborn babe is no great sight.

*(He tries to hurry them out.)*

**Gib:** No, we insist. What's this? Oh dear!

*(They uncover the lamb in Gill's arms.)*

What a long and hairy ear!

**Gill:** How very much like Mak!  
Of fatherhood, a certain fact.

**Coll:** His nose; t's black, and very wet.

**Mak:** From his grandfather, on his mother's side, yet!

**Coll:** This foot's a hoof...and so's the other!

**Mak:** A trait he must get from his mother!

*(The sheep bleats.)*

**Coll:** He doesn't cry; he only bleats  
A sound you'll very soon repeat!

*(Daw grabs Mak's hands and ties them behind his back.)*

**Daw:** Disguising the spoil in your wife's birth pang!  
We'll take you to town and watch you hang!

**Gill:** Oh Mak! It seems you've hit the skids!  
But now, who's going to feed the kids?

*(Gib unrolls the blanket and, with the help of the others, he forces Mak to lay in it They carry him like a deer.)*

**Gib:** You won't get loose this time, you loafer!  
Stealing sheep, then hiding like a gopher!

*(Daw, Mak, and Gib carry Mak out, tightly wrapped in a blanket.)*

### **Scene 6: "The True Lamb"**

*(The company of shepherds, with their rolled up prisoner, travels throughout the audience. They end up at the designated "hillside" location, near the front of the Madrigal table.)*

**Mak:** It isn't fair! Not fair I say.  
I work and slave 'ner everyday.  
  
To feed my wife and children ten,  
I need the loan of a sheep, or a hen?

**Gib:** Be quiet! You sticky-fingered jerk!

**Daw:** You've never known a lick of work!

**Coll:** His tune will 'ner again be sung,  
For in a moment, you'll be hung!

*(At this moment: the stage fills with light, the lady Madrigals stand on chairs, or risers to assume their "Angel positions" and drape the shining, white "angelic" fabric over their extended arms with the swag of the fabric falling in front of their costumes, so they appear to be "dressed in shimmering white." They break the mood of the moment with the annunciation of the birth of Christ.)*

### **Madrigals sing "Halleluiah" accompanied by the fanfare trumpeters**

*(The Madrigals interrupt Mak's cries for help and mercy and startle the shepherds.)*

### **Arrangement of the Madrigal ladies:**

	(Queen)	
	Lady 6	
	Lady 4	Lady 2
Lady 5	Lady 1	Lady 3

### **MAK & THE SHEPHERDS**

**Lady 1:** Fear not: for, behold,  
I bring you good tidings of great joy.

**Lady 3:** Which shall be to all people.

**Lady 5:** For unto you is born, this day

**Lady 6:** in the city of David

**Lady 1:** A savior,

**All:** Which is Christ, The Lord.

**Lady 4:** And this shall be a sign to you.

**Lady 2:** You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.  
Lying in a Manger

**Lady 4 & 5:** For a child will be born to us,

**Lady 1 & 6:** A son will be given to us.

**Lady 2 & 3:** And the government will rest on His shoulders.

**Lady 1:** And his name shall be called:

**Lady 2 & 3:** Wonderful Counselor,

**Lady 5 & 4:** Mighty God

**All:** Prince of Peace.

**The Madrigal Lords read excerpts from Isaiah 53**

*(The lady Madrigals sing a gentle carol, then hum and ooooh, as men read.)*

**The Arrangement of the Madrigal Lords:**

							<b>(King)</b>
	Lord 1	Lord 2	Lord 3	<b>The Table</b>	Lord 4	Lord 5	Lord 6
<b>Lord 3:</b>	Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?						
<b>Lord 4:</b>	For he grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground;						

**Lord 1:** He was despised and forsaken of men,  
**Lord 2:** A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.  
**All:** Like one from whom men hide their faces.  
*(The men look down and away)*  
**Lord 5:** Surely our grief He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows, He carried.  
**Lord 6:** The chastening for our well-being  
Fell upon Him; and by His scourging we are healed.  
**All:** All of us like sheep have gone astray  
**Lord 1:** Each of us has turned to his own way.  
**Lord 2:** But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all,  
**Lord 3:** To fall on Him.  
**Lord 4:** Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
**Lord 5:** And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
**Lord 6:** So he did not open His mouth.  
**Lord 1, 2, 3:** Yet He, Himself bore the sin of many,  
**Lord 4, 5, 6:** And interceded for the transgressors.

**All Madrigals sing a triumphant Christmas Carol, with the trumpeters adding to the impact**

*(All Madrigals finish out a carol in grand fashion, and the shepherds, who have been standing in amazement throughout the readings and the carol, turn to each other; they are stunned.)*

**Mak:** Did you hear them? We must away!  
A hanging, we can't have today.  
  
A Child is born; let's worship Him,  
The Child who takes away my sin.  
  
Did you not hear the angels say,  
"The Prince of Peace is born today."  
  
**Coll:** He has us there, I heard it too,  
His guilt is born by another who

In silence stands to take his blame  
And wash us all of guilt and shame.

**Mak:** Oh praise be to God! My life has returned.  
I shan't be hung, or shot, or burned.

**Daw:** Come now, have we thought this through?

**Gib:** This thief must pay, our bounty's due!

**Mak:** But what of the child? You heard it too,  
Forgive me please! This you must do,

For by His stripes I shall be healed,  
My righteousness will be revealed.

By God's own Child, I beg release,  
For he is born; the prince of peace!

**Coll:** Let him go. I know it's odd.  
We must go find the Son of God.

See the star, It shines so bright.  
Let's follow it; all shall be right.

**Mak:** *(dusting himself off)*  
Oh yes, *(putting his arms around the others)*  
Let's heal our friendship's rift.  
Let's bring the child a welcome gift.

I n'er shall steal ox, sheep, or hen.  
Now peace of earth good will toward men.

**Coll:** *(seeing that the others are reluctant to come)*  
Come my friends, we must forgive.  
The God of mercy would have him live!

*(The three shepherds exit out the back following the star that shines brightly.)*

**King:** Dear guests, It seems they've found the Lamb,  
The Babe, the Son of the great "I Am."

I pray His peace will fill your heart,  
All hate and envy from you part.

**Queen:** This season we remember what His coming means,  
His birth in that stable all mankind redeems.

May your soul find refreshment, and your spirit rejoice,  
As we Madrigals hail him in harmonious voice.

**THE CONCERT:**

*(This is 6-8 old-English Christmas carols arranged for 12 acappella voices. The standard favorite in this set is "The Twelve Days of Christmas," with hand-motions. A really funny gag, is to have one of the Lords try in vain to lay a golden egg each time his turn comes in the song. At the very end, he produces a golden egg, and the court applauds his efforts.)*

**THE BENEDICTION:**

**Queen:** Our evening, dear friends has come to an end,  
And all of you I heartily commend,  
  
Your warmth and your humor have been our delight,  
And we wish you God's speed as you homeward tonight.

**King:** I'll echo my Queen as she commends your grace.  
Your Christian charity shines on each face.

Please join us now in this most beloved carol,  
"Silent Night" as the Yuletide we herald.

**THE RECESSIONAL:**

*(The court exits one couple at a time, stands encircling the audience, then the King asks the entire audience to join the singers in singing "Silent Night.")*

**The End**

**NOTE:**

The following "Cheat Script" is a handy tool to put at the King's table for the singers; also, place this at all the entrances and exits for the players. This sequence of events can get confusing for even the most seasoned performers, and the last thing you want is for fine talent, dressed in their Elizabethan finery, to suffer from a brain vacation.



# “The Second Shepherd's Play”

- *Ye Old Cheat Sheet* -

## Fanfare 1

### (Prologue)

*(Mak enters and steals a few things off of the tables.)*

**Jester:** That scoundrel Mak,  
And we are players, one and all...

### “Merry Maids” Dance

Oh what lovely things are girls!  
As graceful as snowflakes, as light as the air...

## Processional

### Opening Prayer

**King:** Welcome guests from far and wide...

**Queen:** My Lord, these lambs, they're really quite boney...

**Jester:** I'm able, my Lord, and willing my Lady...

### Scene 1: “The Shepherd’s Plight”

**Coll:** What a horrible night, and I am ill-dressed...

**Jester:** What sorry shepherds! Your woes all grow double!

### Option: “Disgruntled Servers” Song

**Queen:** My Lord, these poor women, they seem so dismayed!

**Jester:** Come Wassail, for the King, his guests, and his wife!

## Serve The Wassail

### Toasts

**King:** Some toasts for our guests? Come nobles, some rhyme...  
On with it group; you can start anytime!

**Lord 1:** To the ladies who grace us; like flowers on sod...

**Lord 2:** The final and crowning creation of God!

**Lord 5:** To the ladies!

**Lady 1:** To the gallant and gentle men at our side...

**Lady 2:** Who in tranquil enchantment, with us abide!

**Lady 5:** To the gentlemen!

**Lord 3:** And now to our guests...  
**Lady 3:** May you dine with great pleasure...  
**Lord 4:** May your merriment tonight...  
**Lady 4:** Be without measure!  
**King:** To our guests!  
**Queen:** To our guests!

### **Fanfare 2**

#### **Scene 2: "The Set Up"**

**Coll:** It's not fair, I tell you; too few have enough!  
**Jester:** Well, here they lie. Has Mak turned a new leaf?  
Alas; not all our folk are given to crime;  
Here come the children; please give them a dime.

### **Orphan Chorus**

**Jester:** Ah, children, they are God's greatest gift...

### **Serve The Salad**

### **Fanfare 3**

#### **Scene 3: "The Rip Off"**

**Mak:** Now, I draw a circle 'round about...

### **Option: "Disgruntled Servers" Song 2**

**Jester:** I know you imagine what life would be like...

### **Boar's Head Song**

### **Serve The Meal**

### **Fanfare 4**

**Jester:** What have we hear? Do you have a confession to tell?

### **Serve The Dessert**

**Jester:** Don't look so famished; your time will come...

### **Fanfare 5**

#### **Scene 4: "The Con"**

**Mak:** Open the door, wife, let me in!

#### **Scene 5: "The Unveiling"**

**Gib:** Open you rogue; and open quick!

#### **Scene 6: "The True Lamb"**

**Mak:** It isn't fair! Not fair I say...

**Lady Madrigals As Angels  
Madrigals sing “Halleluiah”**

**Lady 1:** Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy...

**Madrigal Lords Read From Isaiah 53**

**Lord 3:** Who has believed our message?

**Triumphant Christmas Carol**

**Mak:** Did you hear them? We must away!

**King:** Dear guests, it seems they've found the Lamb...

**Queen:** This season we remember what His coming means...

**The Concert**

**Queen:** Our evening, dear friends has come to an end...

**King:** I'll echo my Queen as she commends your grace...

**The Recessional**

**Jester:** Our story's been told with harmonies sweet...  
And God send you a happy new year...

**The End**

# Madrigal Checklist

## Costumes

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Beefeaters* | <input type="checkbox"/> Serving girls*    | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Troubadours* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Minstrels*  | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Mimes*          | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Jester       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Magician*   | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 Singers        | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Juggler*     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Announcers* | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Litter-bearers* | <input type="checkbox"/> Trumpeter(s)*  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dancers*      | <input type="checkbox"/> Orphan children*  | <input type="checkbox"/> Coll           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gib           | <input type="checkbox"/> Daw               | <input type="checkbox"/> Mak            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gill          |  |   |

\* Optional cast members

## Publicity

- |                                       |  |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers   | <input type="checkbox"/> Church paper  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Town marquee | <input type="checkbox"/> Flyers        | <input type="checkbox"/> Posters  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tickets made | <input type="checkbox"/> Tickets sales | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs |

## Rehearsals & Performances

- Production Calendar

## Technical

- |                                   |                                 |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sound    | <input type="checkbox"/> Lights | <input type="checkbox"/> Tables |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Props  | <input type="checkbox"/> Set    |

## Decorations

- |                                 |   |                                   |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Madrigal table | <input type="checkbox"/> House    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foyer  | <input type="checkbox"/> Guest tables   | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up |

## Entertainment

- |                                    |                                      |                                  |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minstrels | <input type="checkbox"/> Troubadours | <input type="checkbox"/> Mimes   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magician  | <input type="checkbox"/> Jester      | <input type="checkbox"/> Callers |

## Food Service

- |                               |                                   |                                    |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Menu | <input type="checkbox"/> Caterers | <input type="checkbox"/> Cast/Crew |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|