

The Play of Mary

A co-creative play
based on *Mary* by Hector Sabelli

The stage contains a platform at its center, where the historical story is presented (high stage). Behind, a screen for projection of slides illustrating scenes and narrations. On the two sides, the male chorus and the female chorus; all actors emerge from them. In front, below, a father and his two children sit in their living room (lower stage). Asterisks * indicate notes in the corresponding section.

MARY*: *[Antonio's wife, entering]* Antonio, Lydia is in one of her moods, and Ernest has gone to his room to read, talking to nobody. It will be good of you, Antonio, to tell them a long story tonight. They miss our family so much..., especially now, during the holidays..

ANTONIO: It is so difficult to move far from home... I guess this is the fate of modern times, to have to change places following jobs... or avoiding dictators... I think I have a good story to tell, but I will need your help, Mary. *[Antonio crosses the stage to join Lydia (6 years old) and Ernest (11 years old), and all three sit on the carpet.]*

LYDIA: *[cuddling in Antonio's arms]* Tell us a real story, a story about you, Daddy!

ERNEST: *[leaving his book aside]* A mystery story, Dad...

ANTONIO: Let me tell you a great Mystery* about which I was called as an expert witness.

ERNEST: *[doubting]* No . . .

ANTONIO: Yes. During the restoration of an old monastery, they found an even older Spanish manuscript.

LYDIA: So, what did it say?

ANTONIO: The writer claimed that he was copying the translation of a very old Jewish parchment found in Ephesus, the Greek city where Mary, the Mother of Jesus, lived when she was old.* The original, he said had been written by Mary herself.

ERNEST: *[not believing]* Was it really written by Jesus' Mother?

ANTONIO: The historians could not tell because it was a copy if a copy of a copy, so they called all kinds of specialists to help.

ERNEST: Is this true? *[very doubtful; subtext: are you pulling my*

leg?]

ANTONIO: Among others, they called me as a psychologist, a doctor of souls*.

ERNEST: How is a "doctor of the soul" useful in this case?

ANTONIO: Because we study the inner life of people. So they asked me whether or not the person who wrote this book had the depth of soul necessary to be the Mother of Jesus. I imagine that Mary and also the three wise men, asked themselves the same question.

LYDIA: I do not understand.

ANTONIO: Let me tell you the story. It began with Mary's memories as a young girl. She was...six.

LYDIA: *[surprised and pleased to find someone like herself being introduced]* Just like me!

ERNEST: Oh, Lydia, just listen to the story. You're always interrupting.

ANTONIO: Miriam --Mary's true name was Miriam, you know --, Miriam was falling asleep in her father's arms. Her father told her stories every night, as I do, and this evening he told her the story of the Jews exiled in Babylon, far, very far from their homes and their friends..

ERNEST: Just like us.

ANTONIO: Well, not quite, because the Babylonians have taken the Jews prisoners. One Jew, Isaiah, made a prophesy...

LYDIA: *[interrupting]* What is a prophesy?

ANTONIO: Isaiah said that the Jews would win their freedom, led by a great Messiah... In her daddy's arms, Miriam fell asleep, and had a dream... Next morning, Miriam went to play with her friends in the meadow, full of the yellow and blue spring flowers. *[Lights fade on family and come up center stage, illuminating Lydia as Miriam, and her friends.]*

It was in Canaan, the land of milk and honey...

The Joy of God

[stage: a meadow with blue and yellow flowers]

LYDIA: *19 year old Miriam, dressed in sky blue, sings to a variation on "Miriam had a little lamb", while the other girls stand in line, rocking right/left with the music, their fingers entwined, palms down, legs somewhat apart.]*

I am the Virgin Miriam

I am the Virgin Miriam

of Nazareth
Come to play and dance with me
and my gay cousin Beth.

GIRL 1: Miriam, you've come late today.

LYDIA: I had to take care of the baby, my mother always makes me do her work. But I do not mind, because when I grow up I will be a mother. Dad told me that a maiden of the House of David who will have a son who will be a handsome and strong prince.. What is a maiden?

GIRL 1: Mom told me that a good maiden must be a virgin.

GIRL 2: What is a virgin? *[some laugh, others ask around]*

MIRIAM: I will grow up to be a maiden, the maiden who will be the Mother of the Messiah.

GIRL 2: Why you?

GIRL 1: I will be the mother of the Messiah.

GIRL 2: I will.

MIRIAM: But I am of the house of David.

GIRL 1: So what? What matters is the father; it is the father who must belong to David's family. *[they leave laughing, playing, jumping, while both men and women enter the stage]*

WOMAN CHORUS: *[Looking at the girls that leave]* Nothing is sweeter than playing in spring in Galilee.....And so we grew up..

Joseph falls in love

Miriam is fifteen years old. She is full of life and of spirit, of determination and of gracefulness. It must be impossible not to fall in love with Miriam. Miriam walks accross the stage, while Joseph follows her with his eyes.*

JOSEPH: *[Joseph* is a mature man, whose three salient characteristics are his virility, modesty and intelligence.]* The world is alive...I had never realized before that each rock, each flower, each piece of the wood with which I work, is alive and full of light and color. I feel the creation as it grows and blossoms. Nothing is sweeter than falling in love in the spring of Galilee..

FEMALE CHORUS:

-Shame on you, old Joseph, the way you look at Miriam. She is too young for you.

-How can you marry a girl that is almost a child.

-Miriam should not marry; she wants to remain a virgin.

JOSEPH: Don't blame me for marrying a virgin maiden at my age. Old I am, but strong and loving. And who would refuse a gift of God like Miriam?

MALE CHORUS:

-That's right, a gift from God..

- Mary is a strange and hot-headed girl, full of dreams, and exceedingly proud.
- She boasts of being as educated and well-read as a man.

FEMALE:

-As a little girl, she told me, *in a mocking tone!* "I want to be the mother of the Messiah".

MALE CHORUS:

-She wants you, because you belong to David's family.

-She has rejected all the young men who ask her hand in marriage. What do you offer her, old Joseph?

JOSEPH: Miriam had read in the book of Isaiah that the mother of the Messiah will be a maiden, and she convinced herself that she ought to be a virgin, not only before, but also after being a mother. Miriam was so innocent that she did not even know what virginity is. She thought it must be something physical. As the Messiah will be born like any other child, the virginity of His Mother cannot be physical, except with God's help. Virginity is in the spirit, I explained to her, kissing her tenderly, and she understood me. We are very happy. When she became pregnant... *[Chorus leaves the stage, as Joseph approaches Miriam, who looks radiant, helps her to sit down in their bed, and combs her hair. While he does, she speaks.]*

The Annunciation

MIRIAM: *[Recitative]*

I am with child! I am with child!
The miracle has taken over my blood and flesh.
The world will never be the same again.
I am a miracle myself.

When the nights become long and cold
I will feel your warmth, my beloved child.
When my days and my breath become short
I will feel the long meaning of your light.
Wherever I am, you are there!

[Addressing her own body]

What are you dreaming?
When I was in my mother's womb,
I did not walk or sing,
but only dreamed.
What do you dream in my womb?
How do you feel the rivers of my blood
flowing into your veins?
Do you see me as a forest of flesh?
Do you feel the pulsating urge of my love?

When I was in my mother's womb
I did not walk or work
but already dreamed
and loved the mother
that surrounded me.
Do you love me?

[Joseph has helped her to lie down as she speaks, and lies next to her]

MIRIAM: *[to Joseph]* Could He be the Messiah..?

JOSEPH: Ah, what an angel thought... Rest my dear... *[Soft music, which comes to a sudden stop in the middle of a bar. A spotlight reveals an angel with a trumpet.]*

RAPHAEL: *[an angel]* You will have a son, and your son you will be call Immanuel, which means "God is with us", because in Him God will be with you.

Let your soul proclaim the greatness of God
And your spirit rejoice in God your Saviour,
who has looked upon you, poor, young and woman.
For behold, henceforth all generations will call you blessed
because God has done great things for you.
God's love reaches from age to age
for all of us, even those who fear Him.
We shall witness the strength of God's arm
and the scattering of the privileged.
God will put down the mighty from their thrones
and exalt the lowly.
God will fill the hungry with good things,
and send the greedy empty away.

MIRIAM: *[suddenly sitting up, erect, wakes up Joseph, and tells him]*
An angel came down to me, in my dreams. Raphael was his name, and he told me that my son will be a Messiah, and ... oh, you do not believe me... *[she gets up and walks away. Standing by herself, she questions]*

Was it an angel that flew into my dreams?

Was it my dream that flew me, up to the world of angels?

Thinking that my son will be the Messiah.

This is the thought of an angel.

Was it Raphael who called me with his trumpet
out of my slumber?

Did the angels give me dreams,
or did my dreams give me angels?

Are perhaps thoughts and angels

made of the same fabric, the spirit?
Can I perhaps have an angel thought?
Does it matter how it came to me?

MIRIAM: *It to two women, one of them a darker girl dressed as a Palestinian, who just entered the stage!* An angel came down to me, in my dreams. Raphael was his name, and he told me that my son will be a Messiah, and ...

JEWISH WOMAN: An angel came down to me, first, and told me that my son will be a Messiah, and I reign over a kingdom, like David and Solomon. I called him Barabbas, the Son of the Father.

ELI: *Shakes her head, dismissing Miriam's ideas in a friendly manner/ You Jewish girls always dream that your first born son will be a Messiah. What if he is a she? What if the baby is a girl child?*

MIRIAM: *Oh, it wouldn't matter, really. I'm so excited to have a child...!*

[Lights off Miriam, now focuses on a group of women looking and pointing in the direction of the manger shown in the screen]

Birthing

FEMALE CHORUS: *Each sentence is spoken by a different voice, as if in a conversation/:*

-There is a woman in that manger about to give birth.

-Her husband is so poor that they could not pay for a room at the inn.
-Poor woman having to deliver in that place.
-And she is so young. She herself is a child.
-Children dream a lot, but they end up in the manger if they ...
-To have a child..! My first child... I was so young too.
-It was painful.
-I'll never forget...

[Miriam, who comes out with Jesus in her arms and sits.]

MIRIAM: A boy, just like in my angel thought! *[Rocking the baby in her arms, singing first softly, then audibly]* My Son! I celebrate and I sing for you! I am forever changed, because you have come into my life. I feel full of God. *[Changing tone, and speaking now like a determined adolescent asserting herself.]* Which does not mean that I will not have my own will. The angel told me to call you Immanuel, but Joseph and me decided to call you Joshua, because it was Joshua, the son of Nun, who led the people into the promised land of Canaan. It is a good name for a Messiah.

The Magi

[A comic and child-like scene. They appear with lots of flourish and music, and dressed in magnificent robes. The Magi are portrayed as large, huge men somewhat comically contrasted to the small youthful Miriam. Gaspar and BALTHAZAR are middle eastern men. Gaspar is always more concerned with his science than with the reality that surrounds him. BALTHAZAR is an artist, personable, eloquent, and also out of touch with the physical world in a different manner. Melchior is an African physician, intelligent, physically fit, educated and experienced. They present science, magic and religion as both marvelous and childish. The When the three wise men come by, BALTHAZAR hits his foot on a rock and cries:]

BALTHAZAR: "Ouch! *[sits, moans and babies his foot for the rest of the scene]* I think this is it, I cannot walk anymore. We must stop here. Please let's find a place to sleep. *[Melchior comes to him, and examines the foot]*

GASPAR: *[somewhat pompous]* But my chart of the moon and the evening star indicates that we must continue ... that way. But we can rest for today, if we find where. Anyhow, we are not in any hurry. We are quite far from our persecutors, and I believe that we can already give up the search that they entrusted us. The wandering star has stopped several days ago, and we have found no sign of the Messiah...

BALTHAZAR: Sure, sure, but I don't care. My foot hurts. Look, it's swollen. Find a place!

MELCHIOR: It is not broken. You will be fine after some rest.

BALTHAZAR: Yes, yes, rest I need!

MELCHIOR: I see a manger.

GASPAR: We certainly can't stay there. Straw and animals mean bugs and disease. Besides there is a family already there..

MELCHIOR: She has a baby... I will get us a place to sleep...
[approaches Miriam and addresses her] Good evening lady.

MIRIAM: *[raises her head and is surprised seeing the Three Wise Men]* Oh! *[recovering]* Good evening to you too. Forgive me of my surprise. *[pointing to BALTHAZAR and Gaspar]* They have such beautiful robes... We do not see the like around here... Who are you? And they, are they kings?

MELCHIOR: No, they are not kings. They are magi, priests of Zoroaster. I am a travelling physician. I see your baby has just been born. I hope everything has gone well?

MIRIAM: *[proudly]* Yes, My baby has been good these first three days of His life..

MELCHIOR: Would you like me to look at your baby? I am a physician, you know. *the examines the baby, while Mary looks expectantly]*

MIRIAM: Do you see anything special?

MELCHIOR: He is a wonderful, strong baby, and very alert. He will be an intelligent man. *[Miriam looks very disappointed]*

MIRIAM: *[recovering her pose, somewhat defiantly]* I think He is very special. We call Him Joshua. My Greek neighbor calls him Jesus. He has the name of a Messiah, you know. Joshua was the leader who brought us to the land of Canaan.

GASPAR: *[apart]* All the Jewish mothers are expecting to deliver a Messiah..

BALTHAZAR: I know *[to Melchior]* Let us get a place to sleep.

MELCHIOR: *[trying to gain Mary's interest]* When was he born? Wouldn't he be the one we are looking for?

MIRIAM: Are you looking for a child?

ALL THREE: Yes!

GASPAR: Yes, you see, we are searching for a very special child. We came from far away in a holy search for such a child.

MELCHIOR: We could tell you, if we could stay the night... We have travelled far, and our man BALTHAZAR has injured his foot.

ALL THREE: We came from Babylon! *[While pictures or images of scenes, colors, fractals and symbolic associative images flash on the screen, the Magi tell a magic story of their journey, in the style of the Arabian nights, with a variation of Stravinsky's Firebird as background for the narrative. The narration has a fast tempo. The Magi are attempting to impress Miriam and, instead, they are impressed by her. The music starts softly.]*

GASPAR: I am the High Magus of Babylon, the mathematician astrologer of the Great King. In the stars I read the plans of God.

BAUTHAZAR: I am a Magus Artist. I build the temples of God, and envision God's image.

MELCHIOR: They are wise men, priests, the magi of Zoroaster.* I travelled all the way from Ethiopia to learn to read the stars from them. They are mathematicians...

MARY: ?

MELCHIOR: ... , they divided the hour into sixty minutes, and the circle into 360 degrees. Knowing how the stars predict the seasons and the weather, and the moon the seasons of women, they read the heavens above to learn about the seasons of man. The highest science known to men is the magic of the priests of Babylon!

MIRIAM: Babylon, where our ancestors were exiled? How does it look like?

GASPAR: Babylon is not a city. It is a mountain of buildings standing in a spacious plain.*

BAUTHAZAR: It is surrounded by a wall so broad that a four-horse chariot can be driven along its top.

MELCHIOR: Through the center of town runs the Euphrates river, fringed by palms. All around, the city spreads itself out in wide and brilliant avenues, alive with the traffic of men and camels and donkeys, and crossed by canals crowded by ships.

BAALTHAZAR: The buildings are faced with tiles of enamel, brilliantly colored in blue, yellow and white, and adorned with figures of animals in glazed relief.

MELCHIOR: My first sight of Babylon was an immense and lofty tower, the tower of Babel, rising in seven stages to its crown, where there is a shrine, and in this shrine there is an ornate bed of solid gold, upon which each night a new maiden slumbers, awaiting the pleasure of the god...*[Miriam blushes]*

BAALTHAZAR: *[in a sarcastic tone]* ...the pleasure of the high priest; *[in a somber mood]* the false Magus who took over our temple, and covers himself with the gold of its treasures.

GASPAR: Gold, gold, gold... That is all they care about, gold. That is why we fought against them.

MELCHIOR: I arrived to their great city at the climax of the great fight between black magic and white magic.*

BAALTHAZAR: It was the battle of sorcerers and magic, enchantment and evil curses, malediction and thunderbolt. The women took shelter in their houses, locking up their children, and the men were like children, trembling, scared, useless warriors in this battle of giants.

GASPAR: We thought the people would help us, but they were fooled. The false magi took over our words, our hymns, our rituals, so people believed in them. They celebrate every ritual..

BAALTHAZAR: ...But the science that studies all was replaced by the superstition that explains it all.

MELCHIOR: The black magicians pretend to know it all. They don't study nature, they don't learn, nor do they teach what they know, but they take advantage of the ignorance of the people, dominating them with superstitions, rituals and mysteries. The heavens have ceased to be the universe of the stars, to become a mysterious place which nobody knows where it is .

GASPAR: We, the students of mathematics, arts and medicine, were driven away.

BAALTHAZAR: We had to leave Babylon in the hands of the impostors.

GASPAR: We went into the world to search for something different.

BAALTHAZAR: Many hoped that a Messiah would lead us to

freedom...

MELCHIOR: ...the world is full of stories, because the sun is changing signs in the zodiac...

GASPAR:...and of course, many thought that, guided by the stars, we could find the Messiah.

BAUTHAZAR: *[nostalgic]* It was difficult to leave my Babylon. As I looked at it for the last time from the hill, I

said good bye to the hundred giant stone lions that guard its walls.

GASPAR: As I saw for the last time the hanging gardens, I imagined the princesses of the royal harem walking there, unveiled, on the hot afternoons, secure from the common eyes, under the cool shade of tall trees.

BALTHAZAR: We walked for the last time along the Sacred Way, paved with limestone, so the gods might walk without muddying their feet. *[He walks to the left of the stage]*

MELCHIOR: At the end of the Sacred Way rises the magnificent Ishtar Gate, a massive double portal of resplendent tiles adorned with enamel flowers and animals. *[changing from poetic to business-like]* Through these doors we walked out into the desert. *[joins BALTHAZAR]*

GASPAR: We wandered through land and sea, following a star that had appeared in the sky. *[He joins the other two. In the narrative that follows, the Magi walk together across the stage in a exaggerated manner, as light and sound create the feeling of the resisting elements. The music grows louder. The narrative.]*

MELCHIOR: We traveled through hot deserts and cold mountains.

BALTHAZAR: We almost drowned in the torrential waters of the Tigris river...

GASPAR: We shivered with fear in the dark nights of Arbela, where the birds of prey circled over our heads, waiting for our bodies to drop.

MELCHIOR: We crossed Gaugamela, and Ninus, and wandered into the ancient lands of Armenia..., until we came to Nablis....

BALTHAZAR: Ah the fresh waters and the wonderful maidens, the clear skies and the airy palaces...

MELCHIOR: Into the great city we walked and, to our surprise, the people began to cheer..

GASPAR: In our robes they read an ancient prophesy.

BALTHAZAR: Yes, that three wise Magi would come from the East to find a Messiah.

MELCHIOR: The king himself came out to give us treasure, gold, myrrh and incense.

BALTHAZAR: Here they are, do you want to see them?
MIRIAM: Go on with your story, I do not really care for those things.
MELCHIOR: The king wanted us to stay with him, as his own advisors. To stay with him, and proclaim his son the Messiah.
BALTHAZAR: We were thirsty.
GASPAR: We were hungry.
BALTHAZAR: We were scared.
MELCHIOR: We were poor.
GASPAR: So, we...*[drawing his face quite near to Miriam, and changing the tone of his voice from narration to questioning like an examiner. The music stops.]* What would you have done in our place?
MIRIAM: Oh, I think it was understandable if you stayed, but I... I think I would have gone on, because, were you not following a star?
ALL THREE MAGI: *[pleasantly surprised, almost admiring, leaning forward]* Aaahhhh!
GASPAR: *[As the music starts again.]* So we walked, and walked, and walked some more, until we came to a very dark city.
BALTHAZAR: It was night, but no fire was lighted.
MELCHIOR: It had doors in its walls, but no soldiers were guarding them.
BALTHAZAR: It was enormous, but no one walked in its streets.
GASPAR: Then, from one house, a small cry came out.
BALTHAZAR: It sounded like a child's cry.
MELCHIOR: So in we were going ...
BALTHAZAR: ...but the child heard us, and said...
CHILD'S VOICE: Do not come in. My parents are dead, they are dead with the plague, and so are all the men and the women of this town. You, strangers, save ourselves. Go away.
BALTHAZAR: And so we ... *[drawing his face near to Miriam's, as the music stops]* what would you have done?

MIRIAM: I would call the boy to come out, ask his name, get him to trust me, and see if he could be helped, and how. I do not know if I could, because I am not a physician or a Magus, like you are. Were you able to help him?

MELCHIOR: Do you think we did stay to help?

MIRIAM: *I considers the question, and then replies* I think you did. That is justice, is it not?

THREE MAGI: *I pleased, but not surprised, leaning backwards*! Aaahh ...

GASPAR: *[As the music starts again.]* We wandered through land and sea, following the star that had appeared in the sky.

BALTHAZAR: We traveled through hot deserts and cold mountains.

MELCHIOR: We almost drowned in the torrential waters of a river.

GASPAR: We shivered with fear in the dark nights of Arabia, where the birds of prey circled over our heads, waiting for our bodies to drop.

BALTHAZAR: We arrived at cities where they closed their gates...

MELCHIOR: ...and to cities where our fame had reached...

GASPAR: The fame of our wisdom and justice..

BALTHAZAR: ...they had legends that said we had been travelling for a thousand years, even before Moses..

MELCHIOR: ..so sometimes we were well fed and sometimes we went hungry..

BALTHAZAR: We trekked our way after the star, until we came to a valley where we were surrounded by bandits. *[they stop suddenly]*

MELCHIOR: They wanted our lives, not just our treasure, their looks intimidated us.

BALTHAZAR: We knew that our ending was there.

GASPAR: I looked at the stars for a way out.

BALTHAZAR: I imagined our tragedy as a painting, looking from above.

MELCHIOR: So I had no time for out-of-body experiences. I had to act, and act then, by myself. So, . . . *[begins to draw his face near to Miriam]*

MIRIAM: *[before he has time to ask]* I know how you escaped. You called them to come, to help you, telling them, "Don't be afraid. Don't leave us! We do not have the plague!"

ALL THREE MAGI: *[pleased]* Aaahhh...

MELCHIOR: *[somewhat humbled by Miriam's wit, but trying to dissimulate it]* Yes, that is what we did ... more or less.

BALTHAZAR: *[the three wise men start walking again, as the music starts again.]* So we continued our trek...

MELCHIOR: ..along the top of the mountains...

BALTHAZAR: ..following torrential rivers...

GASPAR: ... always following the star...

BALTHAZAR: ..never resting, across deserts ..

GASPAR: ...until the star stopped! *[They stop, and so does the music.]*

BALTHAZAR: We were puzzled.

GASPAR: I was puzzled. We were in the middle of a country dominated by a barbaric empire..

MELCHIOR: *[explanatory, to Miriam]* This country.

GASPAR: ...and also here the people are looking for a Messiah.

BALTHAZAR: Maybe we are supposed to find a Messiah?, I asked myself.

GASPAR: I say yes. The sun is changing its rising point in the zodiac.* We are entering the age of Pisces. It will last two thousand years, and then the sun will move to Aquarius, which means water, the symbol of the mother, the sea of the unborn child... Then women will claim their rights and their souls, and all shall remember that God is also a Mother.

MELCHIOR: I said it could not be done. There are many who claim to be the Messiah. All over the country...

MIRIAM: I had a dream ...

MELCHIOR: *[apart, to BALTHAZAR]* Of course, she also wants her child to be the Messiah..

BALTHAZAR: *[to Melchior]* I want to rest.. now!

MIRIAM: *[apart]* I wonder if they know about my angel thought. *[To the three wise men]* I know now why I have been brought here to have my baby. An angel came to me, and told me that I would give birth to the Messiah that everyone has been looking for.

BALTHAZAR: What makes you think that this dream is different from any others?

MIRIAM: Well, perhaps it was a dream, but the angel said I was with child, and with child I was. He said that I would have a boy child, and now my baby boy is here, proof that the dream has come to pass. The angel said he would be the Messiah, and now you, three wise men, have actually come from far away lands, to see this baby.

MELCHIOR: She almost convinces me..

GASPAR: The wandering star has led us to this country, but a star can hardly pinpoint a specific place.

MELCHIOR: What would you do, Miriam, if you would be the mother of the Messiah?

GASPAR: How would you raise Him?

MIRIAM: I will not push Him to accomplish, or bribe Him with rewards, or punish Him if He misbehaves. Nor would I just let Him be free to grow without direction. I will be like a beacon, an attractor, a pull. I will teach Him all I know.

GASPAR: You will teach Him?

MIRIAM: Yes. *[With the pride of a bright adolescent]* I am educated. My parents were well educated, even if we were treated as lowly peasants by the Romans and King Herod because we do not speak Greek. *[the lights of the lower stage go on briefly to illuminate:]*

ERNEST: Like grandpa, who they thought was illiterate because he did not speak English. *[the lights of the lower stage go off.]*

MIRIAM: My father taught me the Scriptures in Hebrew*; he did not mind that I was a girl. I am going to teach Him. I will send Him to school, because I do not know everything, but I will also teach Him at home, because the teachers don't know everything either. I will have to rethink everything, because I cannot teach Him things that are wrong. I must doubt even my most firm beliefs...especially my most

firm beliefs. *[The three magi are very impressed]*

MELCHIOR: How are you going to teach Him?

GASPAR: Let's keep in mind that this child is here to make a difference.

MIRIAM: This is how I would mother God: I would love Him, so He learns to love. I would celebrate His first steps, so He learns to race ahead. I would teach Him to think for himself, because this is the only way to think. I would expect much from Him, so He betters himself. I will teach Him to value himself, which is the very source of goodness. I will recognize Him, so He knows who He can be.

JOSEPH: *[Joseph enters, and greets the wise men with a nod.]* I am the father. I will teach him carpentry, because it is good for a man to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow. One has to be self-sufficient to learn to appreciate the work of others. Wood is a great teacher. Wood is like a woman, who resists the arrogant hand, and surrenders willingly to the hand that knows and loves her. Working the wood, you learn soon that nobody is better than anybody else. All that matters is how you work.

BALTHAZAR: You're good people, I think He has a chance.

[Led by Gaspar, BALTHAZAR and Melchior move off apace, and discuss among themselves the possibilities of Miriam being the Mother of God.]

GASPAR: This girl dreams that her child could be a Messiah because everybody awaits for Him.

MELCHIOR: Well, this world needs a Messiah, so someone has to be the Mother of the Messiah.

GASPAR: The Mother of the Messiah must adore her Child, see in Him the face of God.

MELCHIOR: This girl does adore her Son, so she can make Him blossom.

BALTHAZAR: One must adore something, or someone, to have a soul.

GASPAR: This Miriam believes in God, and in herself.

MELCHIOR: She also has her feet on the ground.

BALTHAZAR: And she is so full of grace... If you doubted God is there, as soon as you see her face you are reassured.

GASPAR: Why not tell her that her child will be the Messiah? How can that hurt anybody? It may even help it to become true.

MELCHIOR: Sure, if you do not try, you never succeed.

BALTHAZAR: If it is true, faith will make it easier. If it is not true,

faith will not make it so. Perhaps we are wrong in choosing this boy, but if we do not will the Messiah, no Messiah will grow among us.

MELCHIOR: We physicians make a lot of good predictions, because prognoses often become self-fulfilling prophesies.*

BALTHAZAR: There are several newborns even in this town, how can a star help us to choose. Let us choose this one, Gaspar, because I want to rest my foot.

GASPAR: I must confess that even I cannot see how a star will point to one child rather than another, whereas the character of the mother seems to me a more certain sign...

[In rapid succession]

MELCHIOR: Miriam could be a good Mother for the Messiah...

BALTHAZAR: I guess someone has to be the Mother of the Messiah...

GASPAR: I do not know that she is the Mother of the Messiah...

BALTHAZAR: ...but she could be the Mother of the Messiah...

MELCHIOR: ...someone has to will to be the Mother of the Messiah..

[Slow down to normal rate of speech]

BALTHAZAR: If we do not encourage her, perhaps she will not try to be the mother of the Messiah...

GASPAR: *[making a decision]* If someone must be the mother of the Messiah, she should be her. But we shall talk of the star, or she may not believe us.

MELCHIOR: She will.

GASPAR: We all need a sign.

FEMALE: *[entering]* Ave Miriam, I learned that you have had a child. How beautiful He is! *[surprised]* And these men with beautiful robes? Are they kings? *[as receiveing a revelation, with great surprise and admiration]* Your son is the Messiah! Just as when we play as children...!

BALTHAZAR: The sign! *[the three magi address Miriam]*

GASPAR: Your son is the Messiah.

MELCHIOR: The Greeks call Him The Christ.

BALTHAZAR: You are the Mother of God. We want to offer the child more than gifts; we want to give ourselves. Contributing to His mission, co-creating with God, that is how we can save our souls from meaninglessness and oblivion.

MIRIAM: *[She motions the three to come closer and observe her sleeping baby.]* Look at him. He's asleep. *[A moment of silence. The three Magi come closer and a peace and a glow envelopes them all, transforming them. Lights fade, and come up on the family.]*

ERNEST: I read that the star the Astrologer-Magi followed was Halley's Comet. So astrology somehow worked..

LYDIA: Do you believe in astrology daddy?

ANTONIO: Of course not! These are all stories..

ERNEST: You are never consistent, Dad. You do not believe in the stars but the other day you told me that many persons are happier in summer and sad in winter, that heart illness kills you in the morning, that many people get sick when there is a full moon...* No connection, huh?

ANTONIO: *[Unable to speak with this rapid-fire attack]* Yes, but . . .

ERNEST: So if the time of the day, and the phases of the moon, and the seasons of the year are important for life, why not the stars? After all the Magi did find Jesus..

ANTONIO: That's true. The Gospels recognize the wisdom of the priests of Zoroaster. Perhaps the important message is that other religions are also true, not only our own.

LYDIA: Did the Three Wise Men exist, or are they like Santa Claus?

ERNEST: Why do grown-ups fool little kids with Santa Claus?

ANTONIO: Perhaps as a vaccination against believing easy images of God. Many times we believe what we want to hear. *[Lights fade from family and come up on Miriam.]*

MIRIAM: Maybe I made them say what I wanted to hear. Maybe these Magi were making fun of the dream of a young mother, but .. but I believed them. They were repeating my angel thought. Perhaps every child could be a Messiah..

SHEPHERDS: *[the male chorus entering]* We have come from the hills, where we left our sheep, because we heard of the Messiah. All the workers await for Him. *[As we hear the first few bars of the Magnificat, and then a few bars of variation, Miriam pulls herself up to her full height and recites in a low, strong, melodic, focused voice, filled with wisdom beyond her years. The light focuses on her and the chorus unobtrusively leaves the stage.]*

My soul proclaims the greatness of God
and my spirit rejoices in our Savior.

For God has looked upon me, poor, young and woman.
All generations will call me blessed.
God's love reaches from age to age
for all of us, even those who fear Him.
My Son will be the strength of God's arm
and the scattering of the privileged.
My Son will put down the mighty from their thrones
and exalt the lowly.
My Son will fill the hungry with good things,
and send the greedy empty away.
All generations will call me blessed
because God has given me this Child.

JOSEPH: At the beginning, I did not believe her, as her friends did not believe her... When these three magi came from Babylonia, she could not get the idea out of her mind. *[pause]* Slowly, I did realize. I began to realize one morning waking up, and seeing Him, so small, and already standing looking at us, Miriam and me, with His eyes, so serious and at the same time smiling. He was five months old. *[pause]* Even as a small child, He was a man of books. He was two when we called Him to see a very pretty baby goat. He told us, "I can read Him in my book". Can you imagine? To read a baby goat, instead of playing with it! Slowly, I realized that my son, is the Son of God. How could I have created such a miracle?*

ALTERNATIVE BEGINNING

The interior of a Greek house in Ephesus.

HELENA: *150 years old!* Mary, please read to my grand-children the history you are writing. We Greeks want to learn everything, and little we know about the history of your people. **LYDIA:** *16 years old!* Tell us a real story, a story about you, Mary!

ERNEST: *111 years old!* A mystery story, Mary....

MARY: *la young eighty year-old lady, active, sharp, affectionate, curious, peaceful!* I will tell you a story of three wise men who came to visit me when I gave birth to my Child, Jesus. For me to tell the story is like to pass a heritage, to write a Testament leaving our most dear possessions to our children and friends. Others write what wealth will they grant them. I have something richer, a great learning, my Assumption, since, falling asleep in my father's arms, I dreamt that I would be the Mother of a great Messiah, up to the glorious time in which I was a mother. *!to Helena!* You too Helena are a mother. This is also your Testament. I shall call it "The Testament of

the Mother", for all of us. *[to the children]* That night, my dad told me of the times when the ancient Jews, the Hebrews, were exiled in Babylon, far, very far from their homes and their friends... One of them, Isaiah, made a prophesy...

LYDIA: *[interrupting]* What is a prophesy?

MARY: Isaiah said that the Jews would win their freedom, led by a great Messiah... I fell asleep, and had a dream... Next morning, I went to play with my friends in the meadow, full of the yellow and blue spring flowers. As I had slept until late, they asked me "Miriam" (my true name is Miriam) "why are you so late?".