**N. TOWN PLAYS 2025, AUDITION PIECE 3: BISHOP, JOSEPH, 3 KINSMEN, ANGEL**

BISHOP Sirs, ye shall understand

 that this is the cause of our coming,

 and why that each of you bringeth a wand:

 for of God we have knowing

 here is to be married a maid young.

 All your rods ye shall bring up to me,

 and on whose rod that the Holy Ghost is sitting,

 he shall the husband of this maid be.

JOSEPH It shall not be I, I lay a groat!

 I shall abide behind privily.

 Now would God I were at home in my cot.

 I am ashamed to be seen, verily.

1st KINSMAN To worship my Lord God hither am I come,

 a fair white wand in hand now I bring.

 My lord bishop, after thine own doom,

this wand do I offer at your bidding.

2nd KINSMAN And I a wand have both fair and white;

 in my hand it is ready here,

 and here I offer it forth within sight,

 right in good manner.

3rd KINSMAN Come on, Joseph, with offering thine,

 and bring up thine as we have ours.

 Thou tarriest right long behind!

 Why comest not forth to God’s tower?

JOSEPH Come? Yes, yea! God help! full fain I would,

 but I am so aged and so old

that both my legs begin to fold –

 I am almost lame!

BISHOP Ah! mercy, Lord, I can no sign espy.

 It is best we go again to prayer.

ANGEL (voice off) He brought not up his rod yet, truly,

 to whom the maid ought to be married here.

BISHOP What! Joseph, why stand ye there behind?

 Iwis, sir, ye be to blame!

JOSEPH Sir, I cannot my rod find.

 To come there, in truth, methink it shame.

BISHOP Come thence!

JOSEPH Sir, he may evil go that is near lame.

 In sooth, I came as fast as I may!

BISHOP Offer up your rod, sir, in God’s name.

 Why do ye not as men you pray?

JOSEPH Now, in the worship of God in heaven

 I offer this wand as lily white,

 praying that Lord of gracious steven

 with heart, with wit, with main, with might.

 And as he made the stars seven,

 this simple offering that is so light

 to his worship he wieldeth even,

 for to his worship this wand is dight.

Lo! Lo! Lo1 What see ye now?

BISHOP Ah! Mercy, mercy, mercy, Lord, we cry!

 The blessed of God we see art thou!

Ah, gracious God in heaven’s throne,

 Here may we see a marvel one:

 a dead stock beareth flowers free!

 Joseph, in heart withouten moan

 thou mayest be blithe with game and glee.

 A maid to wed thou must go.

 by this marvel I do well see.

 Mary is her name.

JOSEPH What! Should I wed? God forbid!

 I am an old man, so God me speed!

 And with a wife now to live in dread,

 it were neither sport nor game.

BISHOP Joseph, now as I thee say,

 God hath assigned her to thee.

 What God will have done, say thou not nay,

 our Lord God wills that it so be.

JOSEPH Against my God can I nought say.

 Her warden and keeper will I ever be.

 But, fair maiden, I thee pray,

 keep thee clean as I shall me:

 I am a man of age.

 Therefore, sir bishop, I will that ye wit

 that in bed we shall never meet,

 for, iwis, maiden sweet,

 an old man may not rage.

BISHOP This holiest virgin shalt thou marry now.

 Your rod flourisheth fairest that man may see:

 the Holy Ghost, we see, sitteth on a bough.

 Now yield we all praising to the Trinity.