

*In a chapel service in rural Wales,
all is not what it seems . . .*

A stage adaptation of one of the most celebrated and controversial short-story collections in the history of Anglo-Welsh literature. Originally published in 1915, the searing stories of *My People* – darkly comic, poignant, with flashes of savagery – exposed the hypocrisy and avarice nestling side by side in a Nonconformist community in the rural West Wales of the early 1900s.

First produced in the centenary year of the publication of the original collection, this radical reimagining makes us question whether the events depicted in these remarkable stories are consigned to the past, or if we can discern uncomfortable parallels between them and modern life?

This stage adaptation had its world premiere on 5 November 2015 at Theatr Clwyd, in a co-production with Inverigo Theatre.

INVERIGO

THEATR CLWYD

DRAMA & PERFORMANCE STUDIES

Cover design by Dawyrtys
Cover image © John Knapp Fisher, courtesy of Gillian Pare

ISBN 978-1-4742-8649-7



90100

9 781474 286497

www.bloomsbury.com

Also available
from Bloomsbury



CARADOC EVANS

MY PEOPLE

Adapted by Steffan Donnelly

MY PEOPLE

CARADOC EVANS
Adapted by Steffan Donnelly



BLOOMSBURY

Bloomsbury Methuen Drama

An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London1385 Broadway
New YorkWC1B 3DP
UKNY 10018
USAwww.bloomsbury.com**Bloomsbury is a registered trademark of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc**

First published 2015

© Steffan Donnelly, 2015

Steffan Donnelly has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organisation acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the author.

This version of the text went to print before the end of rehearsals and may differ slightly from the version performed.

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved and application for performance etc. should be made before rehearsals by professionals to Steffan Donnelly, c/o Inverigo Theatre Company, 4 Branksome Court, East End Road, London N2 0RX, UK (info@inverigotheatre.co.uk) and by amateurs to Permissions Manager, Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP, UK, (performancepermissions@bloomsbury.com). No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained.

No rights in incidental music or songs contained in the work are hereby granted and performance rights for any performance/presentation whatsoever must be obtained from the respective copyright owners.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: PB: 978-1-4742-8649-7

ePub: 978-1-4742-8650-3

ePDF: 978-1-4742-8648-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Typeset by Country Setting, Kingsdown, Kent CT14 8ES

Printed and bound in Great Britain



Created through the vision of Clwyd County Council and its Chief Executive Haydn Rees, Theatre Clwyd was opened in 1976.

Located in the beautiful Clwydian hills of North Wales, the building incorporates five performance venues: The Anthony Hopkins Theatre, Emlyn Williams Theatre, Studio 2, Clwyd Room, Cinema and three art galleries.

In addition to a varied programme of visiting work, Theatre Clwyd produces eight shows a year, which include classic plays, new writing and musical theatre. Tamara Harvey succeeded Terry Handis as Artistic Director in summer 2015.

"One of the hidden treasures of North Wales, a huge vibrant culture complex"
The Guardian

Playing to over 200,000 people a year, Theatre Clwyd was voted Most Welcoming Theatre in Wales in 2015.

"Absolute must-see productions"
Western Mailwww.theatrclywd.com
t: @clwydtweets
f: facebook.com/theatrclywd**"Exciting young company"**
(The Stage)

Inverigo is an award-winning theatre company, representing the lesser-known – neglected literary voices, theatre in different languages, and new writing.

Established in 2012 by four Guildhall School of Music and Drama graduates (Sion Alun Davies, Steffan Donnelly, Paapa Essiedu, and Tim Bowie-Phillips), Inverigo's first devised play **Freefall** by Steffan Donnelly, premiered at the Barbican Centre's Music Hall and the company went on to win the Deutsche Bank Award for Creative Enterprise 2012.Most recently, Inverigo co-produced **My People** by Caradoc Evans, adapted by Steffan Donnelly, with Theatre Clwyd as part of their Autumn Season 2015.Earlier in 2015, Inverigo toured Wales with **Y Tŵr/The Tower** by Gwenlyn Parry (in Welsh with English surtitles), culminating in a performance at the Arcola Theatre, London. Inverigo had earlier blazed a trail here with its 2013 production of Parry's **Saer Dolau/Doll Mender** at the Finborough Theatre, London.Forthcoming projects include Inverigo's 2015 Writer in Residence project, and a new production, **My Body Welsh**, by Tara Robinson and Steffan Donnelly, a co-produced with Pontio in Bangor, Wales.**Joint Artistic Directors:** Sion Alun Davies, Steffan Donnelly, Paapa Essiedu, Tim Bowie-Phillipswww.inverigotheatre.co.uk
info@inverigotheatre.co.uk
t: @inverigo
f: facebook.com/inverigotheatre

Notes on the adaptation

I have adapted twelve of the fifteen stories in Caradoc Evans' collection, *My People*, and we performed it with a cast of six doubling in multiple roles. This doubling should not be superficial or grotesque; it should be subtle and genuinely embodied. The stories are taking the Prologue's Minister and Deacons on a real journey. The stories are a vehicle through which those core characters' beliefs are tested to the extreme, so the characters' arcs are not just what happens to them in a single story, but the sum total of all the stories they have experienced by the end of the play.

I've kept a lot of the original prose because of its remarkable style and striking imagery, but this narration should never feel like narration – it should always carry an intention and a purpose (sometimes it's the community gossiping, other times it's a character speaking about herself in the third person, etc.).

I have been fairly free with adapting the stories. I have merged characters and changed their names, and have altered events and compressed time. I have also borrowed words from Evans' other works (mainly *Capel Sion* and *Taff*).

During rehearsals we decided all the props in Act One are naturalistic and easily found in the chapel (e.g. the cow halter for Aclisah in 'A Father in Sion' is a dog lead, and the children in that story are figurines from the Sunday school toybox; the food offerings in 'The Glory That Was Sion' can be from a Deacon's shopping bag; the horse skin in 'Lamentations' can be a coat). However, by Act Two more illogical but story-appropriate props appear (e.g., picnic at the top of the act, dead bull-calf covered in blood in 'A Just Man in Sodom', beach gear in 'Greater Than Love').

I wanted to question how much has changed in the world a hundred years on from the stories' publication. In 1915, they were widely criticised within Wales for their grotesque lack of realism. I wanted to challenge that by grounding them in the reality of the present day, within a sermon, inside a modern

8 My People

place of worship. The modern setting stops us (mercifully) from being distracted by pretty period costumes and rolling green hills, in favour of focusing on the debate within the stories.

The boundary between reality and fiction is gradually eroded during the play, as the *My People* stories flow into the otherworldly chapel. I believe that reflects the way Evans merged reality with imagination, to create his very personal brand of fiction. The worshippers we meet in the Prologue embody the stories' characters and inhabit this altered world. The stories become a vehicle for their relationships and their beliefs (about the book, religion, society etc.) to be challenged.

It's important to consider how the events in the play don't just belong to the Wales of the early 1900s. Much of the action, punishments, ways of thinking still exist in our society today – across the world. Neither is the content specifically relating to nonconformism or religion. The same criticisms work on any hierarchy; any tightly ruled community, where the potential for power-hungry corruption lurks. The play's debates transcend time and the stories' themes are universal. They're ultimately about humanity, how we live side by side.

Steffan Donnelly
October 2015

Character chart

The chart opposite groups which characters the Prologue's Minister and Deacons take on in each story, keeping character continuity.

Story	Minister	Deacon 1 (Grace)	Deacon 2	Deacon 3	Deacon 4 (Ifan)	Deacon 5
Narration	6	1	2	3	4	5
The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity		Betti	Silah	Joshua	Gwylim	Rhys Shop
A Father in Sion		Dorcas	Achsah	Sadrach Small / All Children		Sadrach Large
As It Is Written	Sali / Bern-Dafydd	Alice Wite	Mali	Joshua	Dan / Samson Post / Bertha	Shaci
Be This Her Memorial			Nanni	Bryn-Bevan	Seller	Sadrach Large
The Glory That Was Sion's	Bern-Dafydd		Miriam / Madlen	Old Shemmi	Abel Shones	Schoolin' / Twm Tybach
Lamentations	Bern-Dafydd	Matilda	Hannah			Evan
The Devil In Eden		Dinah				
A Just Man in Sodom	Haymaker / Bern-Dafydd	Martha		Sadrach Small	Pedr	Sadrach Large
The Blast of God	Owen		Shan	Dai Tygwyn / Joshua		Berwyn Morgan
The Talent Thou Gavest	Bern-Dafydd	Olwen, Sara Jane	Big Man / Maggie	Ben	Eben	Noah / Schoolin'
The Redeemer	Bern-Dafydd	Lissi	Puah	Joshua	Adam	Lamech
Greater Than Love	Gildas	Esther	Catrin	Hws Morris	Sam	Sadrach Large
At Theatr Clwyd, played by	Hugh Thomas	Roanna Lewis	Valmai Jones	Rhys Meredith	Sion Alun Davies	Michael Geary

Characters

Minister is Sali, Bern-Dafydd, Haymaker, Owen, Gildas

Deacon 1 (Grace) is Betti, Dorcas, Alice Wile, Matilda, Martha, Olwen, Lissi, Esther, Sara Jane

Deacon 2 is Silah, Achsah, Mali, Nanni, Muriam, Madlen, Hannah, Shan, Big Man, Maggele, Puah, Carin

Deacon 3 is Joshua, Sadrach Small, Bryn-Beyan, Old Shemmi, Dai Tygwyn, Ben, Hws Morris

Deacon 4 (Ifan) is Gwyllim, Dan, Samson Post, Bertha, Bible Seller, Abel Shones, Pedr, Eben, Adam, Sam

Deacon 5 is Rhys Shop, Sadrach Large, Shaci, Schoolin, Twm Tybach, Evan, Berwyn Morgan, Noah, Lamech

Act One

Scene One: Prologue

Pre-show. A Minister and five Deacons open the doors to their chapel. Talking with the congregation as they filter in.

The set is recognisable as a chapel, but there are unusual features.

The Minister walks to the pulpit, the Deacons sit. The

Minister starts the sermon. He is warm and charming.

Minister W. W. W. Dot. Think about how thirty years ago we didn't have the internet. Can you believe it? No Google! And everyone had big hair and wore dungarees. Even me! (No I didn't.) So that's thirty years ago. Now, think about a *hundred* years ago, and before you ask I wasn't around then. But I know, *you* know, that things were different. People were different, expectations – different. But how exactly? Well, we rely on other people, on history to show us how we've moved on. But we also have to be careful of trusting everything that those people from history tell us. There will be people intent on rewriting history, people with agendas.

And I want to talk today about criticism.

How we deal with it in the chapel and how we deal with it in day-to-day life.

I read something the other week and thought, 'That's just not us.' It was about our chapel, our ancestors. Not the chapel I know. Not my ancestors. And I read more and thought this isn't historically accurate either. I read more and felt awful because it was misrepresenting something I hold dear. This is the book *My People* by Caradoc Evans. Full of violence, bad caricatures, and slander.

Minister And that's another thing, there's a lot of talk about chapels and religion in our day-to-day life, as if it means nothing any more. People using Jesus' name in vain. Alex Ferguson! Alex Ferguson, football manager, in an

interview went bright red (redder than he usually is), lost it and said 'Jesus Christ' like that. Well he went down like *that* in my estimation. There are people in this town. Down the road, your neighbours, who aren't here today. They say, 'Oh yeah, Jesus is something to do with Christmas.' Something to do with Christmas. Easter. A bloke was born and died. Have a chocolate egg.

But what about the other 364 days of the year? Our God is all seasons, spring – summer – winter. Through it all He guides us – autumn – he guides us through the ever-changing landscape of our lives. Within these four walls, I have been privileged to witness and honour life in all its seasons, the christening of Ioan last week, and before that, the marriage of his parents Sian and Russell -

And in the coming months another marriage, two people entering into the summer of their lives, Ifan and Grace. Congratulations again to you both from the chapel. And of course this is the chapel where I met *my* wife, thirty years ago. Thirty years she'll never get back! Thirty years *I'll* never get back! But in all seriousness, we have been very happy and we hope you will be too.

That happiness, the moral guidance, and the strength this house offers is lost if people don't come, if people are misled by bad press.

Criticism will hurt the attendance and spirit of the chapel. Criticism will drive away a seeking sinner. Someone considering joining our chapel might turn away at the gate and think, 'Do you know what, no, I've heard about these people and I don't want to be like them.'

'But I say unto you -

Brandishing a copy of My People, he passes it to the Deacons. It arrives at Deacon 1, and when she opens it, the world of My People crashes in: the room turns green, sound blares, the other Deacons comfort their bodies, and the Minister shouts: 'Back you his, you brazen slut! Terrible is your sin!' She shuts it tight, and instantly the

room is back to normal. The Minister flows straight back into the sermon where he left off, as if uninterrupted.

- that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.' Matthew, chapter 12, verses 36-37.

We all know a word. That in the end will count for something. It's a name and it's a password. Jesus Christ. His name is a password into heaven. Because there are only two choices: heaven and hell. And I know where I want to be. And there is only one name that will get me there.

Of course, Paul warned us, in 2 Timothy, chapter 3:

'All that will live godly in Jesus Christ shall suffer persecution.'

Jesus Christ.

Our password.

Caradoc Evans, whether he is in heaven or hell, and I think we know where he is, deceived a generation and hurt the chapel badly.

He published this in 1915 when mothers were losing their sons in the war. When fathers were going away never to come back home.

These people plan to confuse in every way that they can.

Deacon 1 *dares to open the book a second time. The same chaos comes with it, the Minister says: 'And in the stillness the rats crept boldly out of their hiding places and resumed their attack on her face.' She closes it, terrified.*

And that's all there is to it – they see it and they dream of it and they lust for it and we are called to protect our beliefs. We're not like the people in this book. Or that newspaper article, or that television programme, or that news segment. That is a lie they try to tell you. These stories are just that – stories. We live in truth.

But I'm not going to stand here and tell you about it, I'll read you a direct quotation. (*To Deacon 1*) Pass me the book. (*To audience*) Have you read this filth? They're not great stories. The writing in them isn't very good.

He realises Deacon 1 isn't bringing him the book.

Minister Give me the book.

Deacon 1 *refuses to move, holding the book tightly shut.*

Minister You see the power of it, this fear won't do.

We must look our enemy in the eye.

He takes the book. Deacon 1 fears the worst, but when the

Minister *opens the book it's an anticlimax – none of the chaos ensues. He starts reading the first story plainly, guiding Deacon 1 through it.*

THE WOMAN WHO SOWED INIQUITY (1)

Minister A reading from 'The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity'. This is the chronicle of Betti Lancoch, daughter of Essec. The Essec of whom is written on his gravestone that he was possessed –

There's a collective intake of God-fearing breath. The Minister turns the page.

Minister – of two farms, Lancoch and Llanwen. His words as he was dying: 'Keep your purse full and the strings tight, and nothing will fail you.' Betti's inheritance was –

In tentatively trying to understand the story the Deacons contribute to it by taking on the roles of characters. The Minister casts them and holds the book for them to read certain passages.

Deacon 1/Betti Lancoch –

Minister – which is the smaller of the two farms. And the inheritance of her brother Joshua was –

Deacon 3 – Llanwen –

Minister – which is the larger of the two farms. Until her thirtieth year Betti was a princess in Sion.

Her wealth was a prize for which many intrigued and prayed.

But her brother Joshua looked very keenly after her interests.

Deacon 3/Joshua You should marry a godly, humble man.

But godly, humble men are scarce in the land.

The Minister returns to the pulpit as if to finish the reading, but Deacon 3 snatches the book from him and continues.

Joshua For Joshua managed the selling of most of the produce of Lancoch and paid himself, one way or another, for his trouble.

I am married but I do not find much pleasure in it, and so I wish to keep you as free and happy and pure as the Big Man has ordained you should remain.

Betti Betti answered only too well her brother's skilful guiding. She did not open the window of her room to any man in Capel Sion or in the place around.

Even Rhys Shop, the white-faced, big-paunched shopkeeper tried to climb up the wall to the room wherein Betti slept.

Deacon 5/Rhys Shop She bolted her window shut!

Deacon 2 'Rhys Shop! Terribly short was the last sack of bran I bought from you.'

Rhys Shop Bought! Make your complaint when you pay for it. Boy without blemish am I.

Betti Now on an August day Betti went to the fair at Castell-y-bryni!

Excited by the possibility of the fair, Deacon 2 goes to the CD player, presses 'play' on a fair folk song. Out of the pulpit the Deacons pull out bunting with which they decorate the space. Folk dance, in which Betti meets Gwylim.

16 My People

Deacon 4/Gwylim And there Betti met Gwylim from the Vale of Towy.

Noticing this, the others peel away. They seek Joshua.

All Little Josh! Little Josh!

Rhys Shop Speak you to her, little Josh, for is she not your sister, man?

Joshua I will take counsel of God.

Taking the microphone from the pulpit, he ducks behind the pulpit to speak God's lines:

'Well, well, Josh bach, very terrible is this about your sister Betti. Windy is the female.

'Command you her to remain unwed. Moreover, not right for her to take a husband away from Capel Sion. Ach y fi!'

Men Ach y fi!

Joshua 'Giving her farn and pennies and silver and yellow gold to a male who worships trappings and ceremonials in the old church! Be you wrathful with her in My name.'

Joshua spoke these words; and more, to his sister.

Betti But Betti jerked her freckled face and boasted in the security of her riches:

(Doing her hair and make-up in compact mirror.) Goodness me, must then I be instructed in my doings by a pack of old hens? Sure now, I am not beholden to anyone in Capel Sion.

Joshua In the foolishness of her vanity she curled her yellow hair –

Deacon 2 – like a Jezebel!

Joshua Woman! Have you no shame? Will you bring discredit on me then?

Betti O Josh bach, there's good you are to call, man. Do you take this bucket of wash to the old pigs, and ask Madlen Tybach to come over and milk the cow on your way home.

Joshua My sister Betti, for what you do not know that the wages of sin is death?

Betti Don't you get savage, Josh. Am I not making myself look pretty for to see Gwylim's father and mother tomorrow?

Joshua The Big Man brought my feet here, Betti fach. Listen you to me now. How would you say if I mouthed this to you: 'Betti the daughter of Essec, this bit of land is very vexatious to you. You don't get the best from it. Let me, your religious brother Joshua, trim it for you, and come you and live with me and Priscilla in Llanwen.'

Betti Josh, indeed you are leaving Gwylim out!

Joshua You are not intent on wedding Gwylim?

Betti Iss, man bach, I am. Think you I curl my hair for Rhys Shop?!

Joshua Mercy me, don't be like the foolish hen that cackles before she lays the egg she doesn't. Have you not heard what a dissipated boy Gwylim is? Heard you not of his doings and his cheatings over cattle in the Vale of Towy? Turn you away from your purpose, and act as I bid you.

Betti I shall wed him in front of all you say. Josh. Boy bach swellish is Gwylim.

Joshua O Betti, is it a light thing to you that you take your possessions to a man who never goes to chapel?

Betti Little man senseless! Do you think I could live for ten minutes with that old hare of your wife Priscilla?

Rhys Shop Rhys Shop proclaimed in the Seiet that the Terrible Man's anger is like the pierce of a new pitchfork against Betti Lancoch!

Josh bach, she is your sister and she goes against the capel's will if she marries Gwylim.

All Gwéd dy brofiad! Gwéd dy brofiad!

Joshua Little people, I pray you now not to think too harshly of me because my sister brings this abomination upon the nice capel. Look you mercifully upon my affliction. The Lord, little people, will administer the rod of correction on this slut who so shamelessly sows the seeds of iniquity; she will reap vanity. Stand you by me and Capel Sion: if I am wrong, sure, indeed the Big Man will send a message to Sadrach Danyrefail here.

A FATHER IN SION (1)

Sadrach A reading from A Father in Sion.

Deacon 6 On the banks of Avon Bern there lived a man who was –

Sadrach – a Father in Sion.

Deacon 6 And the name of the farmhouse in which he dwelt was Danyrefail.

Sadrach Sadrach Danyrefail.

Deacon 6 This episode in the life of Sadrach Danyrefail has its beginning on a March night with Sadrach closing the Bible.

Sadrach (*falls to his knees and prays*) Is not the Lord trying His servant to the utmost? Job am I like. Will the all-powerful Big Man, the Big Man who delivered the Children of Israel from the hold of the Egyptians, give me a morsel of strength to bear my cross? I am lonely. Man was born to be mated, even as the animals in the fields. All-powerful Big Man, hear my prayer. Amen.

My children – Esau, Ioan, Rachel, Simon, Sarah, Daniel, Wil, Samuel, Sadrach the Small – do you gather around me now, for have I not something to tell you?

Deacon 3 *plays all the children using children's figurines from a Sunday school toy box, which he puppeteers. He also plays Sadrach the Small.*

Deacon 3/Sadrach the Small Indeed, indeed, now, little father; you are not going to preach to us this time of night!

Sadrach Now be you all silent a while, for I have things of great import to tell you. Heard you all my prayer?

Ioan There's lovely it was.

Sadrach Well, well, then. How can I tell you? Your mother Achsah is not what she should be. Indeed to goodness, now, what a disgrace this is! Is it not breaking my heart?

Your mother Achsah is mad.

Ioan Mam! Mam!

Sadrach She will not hear you. Dear me, have I not put her in the harness loft? It is not respectable to let her out. Twm Tybach would have sent his wife to the madhouse of Carnarthen. But that is not Christian.

With the birth of each of you she has got worse and worse. Childbearing has made her foolish. But it is not Christian to blame you.

Deacon 6 The frame of the small window of the harness loft where Achsah spent her time had been nailed down. Once a week when the household was asleep:

Sadrach *places a ladder from the floor to the loft where Achsah is being held. Achsah descends, Sadrach throws a coo halter over her and ties her to the pulpit.*

Sadrach At the time of her marriage Achsah was ten years older than me. She was rich, too. Danyrefail with its stock of

good cattle and a hundred acres of fair land was her gift to me. Six months after the wedding Sadrach the Small was born.

Tongues wagged that the boy was a child of sin.

He goes to the pulpit.

Dear people! It has been said to me that some of you think Sadrach the Small was born out of sin. You do not speak truly. Achsah, dear me, was frightened by the old bull. She was running away from him, and as she crossed the threshold of Danyrefail, did she not give birth to Sadrach the Small? As the Lord liveth, this is the truth.

Achsah, Achsah, stand you up now, and say you to the congregation if this is not right.

Achsah Sadrach speaks the truth.

Deacon 6 Three months after Achsah had been put in the loft, Sadrach set out at daybreak for Aberystwyth.

THE WOMAN WHO SOWED INIQUITY (2)

Joshua . . . She will reap vanity. Stand you by me and Capel Sion: if I am wrong, sure, indeed the Big Man will send a message to Sadrach Danyrefail here.

All Sadrach speaks the truth.

Deacon 6 But against all of this Betti Lancoch and Gwylim from the Vale of Towy were married.

Wedding motif.

Betti We were married. And all livestock in Lancoch having been sold, and the house and the land having been rented, we went to live in the town of Carmarthen.

Deacon 5 A year after her marriage Betti came to Manteg with her child

Betti And our Carmarthen house has ten stone steps in front of it.

Deacon 2 And she magnified brazenly the fortune of her husband:

Betti And it is named Avon Towy, because that river is the distance of a field beyond it.

Deacon 4 But she did not say anything of the occasions that Gwylim had come home drunk, or of the times when he had struck her with the ring end of his razor strop –

Betti – nor did she show to any the sore that was on her left breast.

Boy bach swellish is Gwylim.

Deacon 5 The man Gwylim was foolish in his drink.

Deacon 3 He backed a bill for twenty sovereigns, and when one came to redeem it he had nothing with which to pay the price.

Deacon 2 He went to his parents' house and said how this and that evil had befallen him:

Deacon 2/Silah Give you the boy bach money. Give you him money.

This is not his fault. Is he not wedded to a slothful woman? I've killed for you a chicken.

Gwylim (*feigning remorse*) An old rascal am I to bring this upon you.

Silah Pity such a concubine snared you, little Gwylim, my son bach.

During the lullaby Silah feeds Gwylim the chicken.

SILAH'S LULLABY

Pity such a concubine snared you,
little Gwylim,
my son bach.

Deacon 2 His mother's lullaby lodged itself in Gwylim's brain; and drank he never so deep nor got he never so muddled, he remembered it always.

Deacon 4 It was as if the words were the first words he had been taught to utter.

Deacon 1 Beti ceased to visit Manteg; she rarely went out of her Carmarthen house.

Deacon 4 Always she was either with child –

Deacon 1 – or she bore some mark of her husband's savagery.

Deacon 4 In common with the women of her race constant childbearing had made her slovenly and fallow.

Deacon 3 With the birth of her fifth boy came her first humiliation:

Beti Dear Joshua, I ask you kindly for a loan of thirty sovereigns.

Joshua Dear Beti, I will lend you fifteen sovereigns provided you sign a bill of sale on Lancoch. Sign this and Lancoch is mine if pay back my fifteen sovereigns you cannot.

Beti *signs the bill, Joshua hands her money.* **Gwylim** *finds Beti concealing the money.*

Gwylim Fiery Pool! Where did you get this from?

Oh, you've been whoring.

You concubine! You slut!

(To audience.) A harlot has lured me. A harlot the mother of my children. Did not the old mam say:

Deacon 2 'Pity the bitch of a concubine snared you, boy bach?'

Deacon 1 In the morning Beti opened the door of her house.

Gwylim *is lying dead on the steps.*

Deacon 6 A hearse took away Gwylim's body to the consecrated ground.

The Deacons remove the lid of the bench to reveal soil which becomes our graveyard. Beti places a cross in the graveyard.

Deacon 5 Beti, a widow woman with five children, returned to Manteg.

Deacon 6 And in Manteg none said to her:

Deacon 2 'How be things with you, Beti fach?'

Deacon 6 For is it not known that the woman who sows iniquity shall reap the fruits thereof?

Beti Out of the wreckage I have saved enough to provide Lancoch with a poor cow, a couple of pigs, and a few hens.

Deacon 5 She tilled the soil as well as a woman without implements can till it. But stray cattle wandered into her fields because of the broken hedges, and these cows belonged to:

Beti Joshua, your old cows have trampled on all my little beds.

Joshua Beti, the five over ten sovereigns are more than due now. Give them to me.

Beti I haven't any yellow gold.

Joshua You won't anger the Big Man by trying to cheat your brother, will you?

Beti I don't know where to get it.

Joshua According to the law, Beti fach, Lancoch is mine if pay you cannot.

Beti Lancoch was given to me.

Joshua For surely, Beti fach. But did you not sign the little agreement?

Betti Agreement or no, Lancoch is mine.

Deacon 3 Joshua took possession of the land around Lancoch.

Deacon 2 He put up new gates, and repaired the hedges, and drove Betti's cow out of the fields into the roadway.

Deacon 5 Betti's cow went thirsty for three days, and then she laid herself down on the moor whither she had wandered, and perished.

Joshua Little Betti! Grave is the news I have for you. Priscila has promised Lancoch to Hugh the Stonemason.

Betti You want me to go off?

Joshua Glad I'll be if you go off, Betti fâch.

Betti Where?

Joshua Pity now you didn't take the offer to come and live with us in Llanwen. I can't go back on Priscila's word to Hugh.

Betti Little Josh, I have passed through the Fiery Pool since I wedded Gwylim. Oh Josh, deal gently with your sister nice. Turn not me out of my home. What is the rent to you? Listen you to my plea, there's a boy bach.

Joshua I would now, indeed, but you see Priscila has given her word –

Deacon 2 The infant nestling against Betti's breast touched the sore made there by the ring end of Gwylim's razor strop, and the place hurt her.

Deacon 1 And with that cry there arose in her heart something of the old spirit who laughed in the faces of the men of the Big Seat.

Betti *cries out. The ensemble speak these words combined with Silah's lullaby:*

'Sabbath or no Sabbath, Rhys Shop, I will not buy my wedding gown from you.'

'I am not beholden to anyone in Capel Sion.'

'Am I not making myself look pretty for to see Gwylim's father and mother tomorrow?'

'What do I count what Priscila thinks?'

'I shall wed him in front of all you say, Josh. Boy bach swellish is Gwylim.'

'Dear Joshua, I ask you kindly for a loan of thirty sovereigns.'

'Your old cows have trampled on all my little beds.'

'I haven't any yellow gold. I don't know where to get it.'

Lancoch was given to me.'

'Fiery Pool! Where did you get this from? Oh, you've been whoring. You concubine! You slut!'

Betti Joshua you've stolen Lancoch from me!

Dear, dear, what an old Satan you are, man! Bad you are, Joshua!

Look you, so long as there's a roof over Lancoch, I will stop in the house.

Betti *barricades herself inside Lancoch.*

Joshua You talk like an awful woman. Do you not know how you are tempting the Big Man? Be calm, you wicked spider.

Deacon 3 Betti locked the door of her house.

Joshua Almighty God, I ask you to bring into subjection the spirit of this most stubborn of Your creatures.

Deacon 3 In the morning Joshua spoke to Hugh Stonemason.

Joshua Hugh, I have spent the night in prayer. The Big Man has not forsaken the righteous, so whatever happens will be his doing, not ours, Hugh bach. The Lord's will be done.

Go you down to Lancoch now, and take an old ladder with you and climb to the roof, and remove the tiles one by one. Be careful lest any untoward happening may befall my sister Betti, for has not the white little Jesus bidden us love our enemies? Do you see, Hugh bach, that not one slate falls on the head of our sister Betti.

But if one does, well, well, then, has not the Great Male promised to be on the side of His religious children?

A FATHER IN SION (2)

Deacon 6 Three months after Achsah had been put in the loft Sadrach Danyrefail set out at daybreak for Aberystwyth.

Deacon 1 He returned late at night on his iron horse, and, behold, a strange woman –

Deacon 5 – Martha –

Deacon 1 – sat beside him.

Matilda is a pghier maché angel which Sadrach carries around with him.

Deacon 3 And the coming of this strange woman made life different in Danyrefail.

Rachel Little father, why for cannot we manage the house for you? Indeed now, you have given to Martha the position that belongs to me.

Sadrach What mean you, Rachel fach? Cast you evil at your father? Go you and read your Commandments.

Rachel People are whispering.

Sadrach Tut tut, Rachel, Martha is only a servant in my house.

Rachel Rachel knew that Martha was more than a servant.

Esau Had not her transfer letter been accepted by Capel Sion?

Dan And did Martha not occupy Achsah's seat in the family pew?

Will Did she not, when it was Father's turn to keep the minister's month, take a basket laden with a chicken, two white-headed cabbages, a peck of potatoes, a loaf of bread, and half a pound of butter to the chapel house of Capel Sion?

Simon Did she not drive with Father to the market and fair and barter for his butter and cheese and cattle and what not?

Sadrach (*in pulpit*) Danyrefail's possessions spread even to the other side of Avon Berni!

Oh, the Lord is heaping blessings on the head of His servant.

Deacon 6 The congregation elected him to the Big Seat.

Deacon 3 'Sadrach is a tower of strength unto Sion.'

Deacon 6 But in the wake of his prosperity lay vexation. Rachel developed fits. While hoeing turnips in the twilight of an afternoon she shivered and fell, her head resting in the water ditch that is alongside the hedge.

Sadrach Rachel fach, wake you up now. There's lazy you are. Why for are you silent?

Death has come before the milking of the cows.

He places a cross in the graveyard.

HYMN

Words: Henrietta O. Dobree, Mrs Brock's Children's Hymn Book, 1881. Music: William H. Monk, in Hymns Ancient and Modern, 1889.

All Safely, safely, gathered in,
Far from sorrow, far from sin,

Sadrach the Small Esau is kicked by a horse, and is hurt to his death.

Deacon 6 He dies.

Places cross.

All No more childish griefs or fears,
No more sadness, no more tears;

Sadrach the Small Six weeks later Simon gashes his
thumb while slicing mangolds.

Deacon 6 He dies.

Places cross.

All For the life so young and fair
Now hath passed from earthly care;

Sadrach the Small Sarah falls from the top of the Old
Schoolin's wall and cracks her skull.

Deacon 6 She dies.

Places cross.

All God Himself the soul will keep,

Sadrach the Small Daniel develops an illness with sweats
and nightmares.

Deacon 6 He dies.

Places cross.

All Giving His beloved – sleep.

Sadrach the Small Two years went by, by the end of
which period Old Ianto the gravedigger, dug three more
graves for the children of Sadrach and Achsah:

Ioan.

Deacon 6 He dies.

Places cross.

Sadrach the Small Wil.

Deacon 6 He dies.

Places cross.

Sadrach the Small Samuel.

Deacon 6 He dies.

Places cross.

Sadrach the Small Sadrach the Small.

Deacon 6 He die –

Interrupted by:

Sadrach the Small Little father, I desire to wed Dorcas,
the daughter of Old Shemmi.

Wedding procession.

Deacon 6 What occurred in the loft over the cowshed
before dawn crept in through the window with the iron bars
I cannot tell you. God can. But the rising sun found Achsah
crouching behind one of the hedges of the lane that brings
you from Danyrefail to the tramping road, as the wedding
procession came by.

Procession freezes? Achsah appears.

Deacon 2/Achsah Goodness me. There's a large mistake
now. Indeed, indeed, mad am I.

Sadrach and Sadrach the Small.

Sadrach the Small. One child. Others? Esau. Ioan. Rachel.
Simon. Sarah. Daniel. Wil. Samuel. Dear me, where shall I
say they are? Mad, mad am I?

She comes between them, examining their faces.

They are grown, and I don't know them.

Esau and Ioan and Rachel, and Simon and Sarah and Daniel
and Wil and Samuel.

She sees the crosses in the graveyard.

They're all dead. I remember the circumstances attending the
birth of each. Sadrach the Small. Only one left.

I have been a good wife. Never once did I deny Sadrach his
rights.

Sadrach the Small. Only one left.

She leaves. The procession restarts and exits in doorway where Achsah suddenly reappears. Abrupt change in light and sound.

Deacon 1 / Dorcas As Dorcas crossed the threshold of Danyrefail –

Achsah A lunatic embraced her.

Scene Two

AS IT IS WRITTEN

Dorcas / Deacon 1 *slams the door on Achsah and hurriedly introduces next story.*

Deacon 1 A reading from As It Is Written

Deacon 4 / Samson Mali! Be you quick and come, woman. Have I not a letter from your son Dan?

Deacon 2 / Mali Do you wait one little minute and I'll be with you, man!

A writing from Dan, Samson bach?

Samson Dan says he is coming home for a small holiday, and he is bringing a maid with him.

Mali What for you jokes, man! Peer at the letter now, Samson bach, and interpret it to me without deceit.

Samson Woman alive, not joking am I. Do I not speech that Dan and his maid will be home on the third day?

Mali Dan bach and *his maid*! Who may she be?

Samson Curious was Mali your old mother, and curious you are, Mali.

Mali Tell her name, man!

Samson Dear, where is she? Here she is. Alice Wite – that's her name, Mali. Miss Wite.

Mali That's vile English!

String chord.

Doesn't the boy say how much yellow gold she possesses?

Samson No, no, woman.

Mali Then she hasn't got any.

String chord.

Wite, indeed! There's a bad concubine! For what then Dan doesn't throw gravel at the window of some tidy wench who can speak his native tongue!

Shaci, man! Are you deaf? Come you here at once.

Samson Iss, iss, Shaci bach, what talk there is in Shop Rhys about Dan! The religious Respected Bern-Dafydd was there, and did he not say that the abodes of the old English are refreshment places on the way to the Fiery Pool? Grand indeed he spoke. Like a sermon.

Samson *leaves, with Dan's letter.*

Mali Shaci bach, here's disgrace. Put your old head into the words that Dan has written.

Deacon 5 / Shaci He has taken it away.

Mali This thing must not come to pass. How shall we hold up our heads in Capel Sion if Dan weds an old foreign leech?

Say now we got Joshua Llanwen to come and speak to the boy.

Joshua *appears in one of the apertures. Shaci journeys cautiously towards him, Mali watching. Shaci looks back to her, she encourages him on.*

Shaci Joshua Llanwen, I seek your instruction.

Joshua Dan's sins have reached my ears.

Shaci Mali is wanting you to speak wise words to Dan.

32 My People

Joshua By and by I will say phrases to the dear Big Man, and the words of the Terrible One will scorch your son Dan.

Shaci My heart is lightened.

Deacon 4 When he got home Mali was moaning her grief to Bertha Daviss and Sali, wife of Old Shemmi.

Minister and Deacon 4 *throw a shawl over their heads to become Bertha and Sali, the gossiping twins.*

Mali For why does poor Dan bach want to bring home a bad woman from the English?

Deacon 4/Bertha Alice Wite.

Minister/Sali Ach y fi – there's a nasty wench!

Mali The cunning serpent to lure away my boy bach. And I dare wager she is as poor as the rats that ran around Old Nanni's hut, biting and scratching!

Sali Vain are the English women. Did not Tom Hughes, the traveller, say they are all wasteful?

Bertha And little Rhys Shop, did he not say they are barren? Sober! Sober!

Mali My head is thumping like a churn in churning!

Sali And recollect you the female maid who stayed with Wymne the vicar?

Bertha O ics! She washed her flesh on the Sabbath in the Avon Bern.

Sali Iss, she did. Did not word of her doings reach my Shemmi's ears, and did he not hide himself behind Sadrach's hedge to see the shameless woman for himself?

Bertha And she used to take her old pagan dog for walks over the fields on the afternoons of the Sabbath.

Mali *hyperventilating.* **Shaci** *enters.*

Mali The little white Jesus will do me badly if I give the bitch a bed in my house.

Shaci, tell you now what you are going to do with her?

Shaci Joshua Llanwen will prove her.

Minister *casts off his shawl, abandoning the character of Bertha to become Bern-Dafydd, who enters regally.*

Bertha Proper indeed to ask the Respected Bern-Dafydd to speak to her also. Go you off, the two of you together, and speak to him.

Minister/Bern-Dafydd This thing, Shaci, does not please me. Samson Post came to me for guidance, and we agreed that Wite is not a Welsh word.

Ho, sinners, no one in the Book of Words is named Wite.

Mali Mishir Bern-Dafydd!

Bern-Dafydd Not one.

Shaci Awful.

Bern-Dafydd Not one.

Mali Sinful.

Shaci Do him come in the neighbourhood of five in the afternoon and say a speech.

Bern-Dafydd Sure me, I'll talk fair to the wench, and if she bears herself without modesty in my presence then I will deal mightily with her.

Mali The Big Man be with us.

ALICE WITE'S PANIC SONG
With excerpts from Exodus 13 and 14.

Dan and **Alice** *knock on the door. Shaci opens it then goes to hide behind others. Dan presents Alice Wite with his hands. No response, he tries to get one until finally:*

Dan Mam, Father, this is Alice Wice.

String chord. Mali is armed with disingenuous and Bern-Dafydd, wearing white marigolds, stretches out his hand pushing back the aura of the evil spirit.

Bern-Dafydd Halt, you female woman. Why you come here to spoil this godly house?

Dan, who is in a shop draper in Llanelli and who is the son of Mali and Shaci, why must you tempt the Big Man to anger, boy? Mournful is your dirt. Pack you the woman about her business; let her walk in shame back to her own people.

Mali Dost her come here to take our son bach away from us now? Let her him be. Shaci will take her back to Castell-y-bryn in the old cart.

Deacon 1/Alice *does not understand Welsh.*

Joshua Mfshir Bern-Dafydd, you are a great scholar, do you inquire of the fool if she can milk a cow and clean a stable.

Mali And tell the rat of a bitch that Dan won't get a red penny piece after us!

Dan But, Mam fach, what does that matter? Is not Alice the owner of a nice shop draper?

Mali *runs up and hugs him.*

Mali Oh my own boy bach! The son of his mother.

He reconciles with Alice.

Mali There's good you were to come. Dan's maid, dear me, has travelled a long distance this day. Weary she is.

Gracious now, isn't she tidy? English she may be, but has not the Big Man told us to love our enemies?

Shop draper! There's wealth for you.

Shaci, go you off away down to the shop and get white flour. I will make a little lot of pancakes for Dan's maid. Be you fleet of foot!

Welsh national anthem: Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau. The loud sound of rats scratching interrupts.

Scene Three

BE THIS HER MEMORIAL

The style of this story is like a Crimewatch reconstruction: the narrators are eyewitnesses, the action is reconstruction.

Deacon 1 Mice and rats, as it is said, frequent neither churches nor poor men's homes.

Deacon 3 The story we have to tell you about Nanni contradicts that theory.

Deacon 4 Nanni was religious and she was old.

Deacon 1 No one knew how old she was, for she said that she remembered –

Nanni – the birth of each person that gather in Chapel Sion.

Deacon 5 She lived in the mud-walled, straw-thatched cottage on the steep road which goes up from the Garden of Eden.

Deacon 6 In her search for God she fell down and worshipped at the feet of a god.

Deacon 1 Her one joy was being able to listen to the spirit-laden eloquence of the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan, who she helped bring into the world and swaddled him in her own flannel petticoat.

Deacon 6 Unconsciously she came to regard Josiah as greater than God.

36 My People

Deacon 2 God was abstract. Josiah was real.

Deacon 5 Nanni struggled on less than three shillings and ninepence a week, for did she not give a tenth of her income to the treasury of the Chapel?

Deacon 1 The seller of Bibles raised the larch of Nanni's door.

Deacon 4/Seller The Big Man be with this household.

Deacon 2/Nanni Sit you down, and rest yourself, for you must be weary.

Seller Man is never weary of well-doing.

Nanni *dusts for him a chair.*

Seller No no, indeed now, I cannot tarry long, woman. Do you not know that I am the Big Man's messenger? Am I not honoured to take His word into the highways and byways, and has He not sent me here?

He unstraps his pack, shows a brass-clasped volume of the Bible.

This volume you will like, it contains many coloured prints, and has a clasp of brass. Coloured prints throughout: John baptising . . . Christ praying in the garden of Gethsemane . . . frock-coated Moses and the Tablets.

A book which ought to be on the table of every Christian home.

Nanni Speak you now what the price is.

Seller A little sovereign, that is all.

Nanni Dear, dear! The Word of the little Big Man – for a sovereign!

Seller You have heard the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan has discerned the voice of God bidding him go forth into the vineyard?

Nanni Go forth into the vineyard?

Seller Josiah received a call from a wealthy sister chapel in Aberswyth. It has lofts, and clocks, and oilcloth on the floor, and a Band of Hope vestry for the children, and Josiah is moving there to preach.

Deacon 1 Broken with grief, Nanni, the first time for many years, bent her stiffened limbs and addressed herself to the living God.

Nanni Dear little Big Man. Let not your son religious depart.

Deacon 6 Then she recalled how good God had been to her, how he had permitted her to listen to His son's voice; and another fear struck her heart.

Nanni Dear little Big Man, do you now let me live to hear the boy's farewell words. Spare me to listen to the farewell sermon of your saint.

(*To Seller*.) I will buy the book! Take it away with you and have written inside it an inscription. From the least worthy of your flock to the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan, D.D.

Bring it back to me on the eve of the minister's farewell sermon.

Nanni *leaves.*

Deacon 1 She then hammered hobnails into the soles of her boots, so as to render them more durable for tramping to such Chapels as Bryn-Bevan happened to be preaching in.

Deacon 3 Her absences from home became a byword, occurring as they did in the haymaking season.

Deacon 6 'Her labour is wanted in the fields.'

Deacon 4 'It is the property of the community. The community which pays her three shillings and ninepence a week.'

Sadrach I will call at her cottage to commandeer her services for gathering in the hay.

Deacon 6 'Good you are, Sadrach Danyrefail.'

Sadrach I was going to say hard things to Nanni, but the appearance of the gleaming-eyed creature that drew back the bolts of the door frightened me and tied my tongue.

I was glad that the old woman did not invite me inside, for from within there issued an abominable smell such as might have come from the boiler of the witch who one time lived on the moor.

She says she'll be with us tomorrow.

*Nanni reappears with her face bandaged, carrying a newspaper-
wrapped Bible, and passes it down the line so it reaches Minister
Josiah Bryn-Bevan in pulpit. She leaves.*

Deacon 3 Two Sabbaths before the Respected Bryn-Bevan's farewell sermon, Nanni came to Chapel Sion with an ugly sore at the side of her mouth.

Deacon 4 Repulsive matter oozed slowly from it, forming into a head, and then coursing thickly down her chin on to the shoulder of her black cape, where it glistened among the beads.

Deacon 5 On occasions her lips tightened, and she swished a hand angrily across her face.

Deacon 4 'Old Nanni is getting as dirty as an old sow.'

Deacon 5 During the week two more sores appeared.

Deacon 6 Early on the eve of the farewell Sabbath, the seller of Bibles arrived with the book, and Nanni gave him a sovereign in small money.

Deacon 1 She packed it up reverently, and betook herself to Sadrach Danyrefail to ask him to make the presentation.

Deacon 4 At the end of his sermon the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan made reference to the giver of the Bible, and grieved that she was not in the chapel.

Bryn-Bevan Here is a book to be treasured, and I can think of no one who would treasure it better than Sadrach Danyrefail, to whom I hand it in recognition of his work in the School of the Sabbath.

Chapel disperses with hubbub of farewell to Josiah Bryn-Bevan.

Deacon 4 In the morning, the Respected Josiah Bryn-Bevan, bethought himself of Nanni. The thought came to him as he was finishing a tour of the congregation and leaving Manteg. He opened the door:

Deacon 3/Bryn-Bevan Nanni?

Deacon 5 None answered.

Deacon 4 He entered the room.

*Bryn-Bevan enters into Nanni's cottage. Behind apertures, he
walks across until he stumbles over Nanni's body. Ensemble narrate
huddled around pulpit.*

Deacon 4 Nanni was on the floor.

Her hands were clasped tightly together, as though guarding some great treasure.

Deacon 5 The minister prised them apart with the ferrule of his walking stick.

Deacon 4 A roasted rat revealed itself.

Mishuir Bryn-Bevan stood for several moments spellbound and silent.

Sound of rats screeching and scratching.

And in the stillness the rats crept boldly out of their hiding places and resumed their attack on Nanni's face.

The minister, startled and horrified, fled from the house of sacrifice.

*Bryn-Bevan turns around in aperture to face us with a silent scream
contorting his face.*

THE GLORY THAT WAS SION'S

Deacon 1 A reading from The Glory That Was Sion's.

Deacon 3 Twm Tybach was abhorred of Capel Sion.

Bern-Dafydd In all his acts Twm Tybach was evil.

Deacon 1 Twm, at the tender age of six and twenty, was stricken by an illness and told he was in worse shape than the boy in the Bible who took up his old bed and walked, and was like to perish in a few days.

Deacon 2/Miriam Dear me! That blockhead Twm Tybach is passing. He was once a Congregationalist and so we will have to bury him!

Deacon 5/Schoolin' What jobish do you spout, Miriam! What credit is the scamp unto Sion?

Miriam Maybe Twm is no credit but we will have to bury him.

Is not our graveyard the fullest in the land?

Bern-Dafydd You say wisely, Miriam. We must begrudge our last home to no man, we must claim Twm Tybach for Capel Sion. On the Day of the Judgement, when the angels sound the trumpets, our illustrious Capel shall be the fullest in the land.

Men Iss, iss.

Miriam No, no, Respected bach. The graveyard is *full*. We have no space for Twm Tybach.

Men Oh.

Bern-Dafydd I hereby call a meeting to debate upon the matter! What shall we do then?

Deacon 4/Abel Shones We must send a deputation to wait upon the vicar of the Church who can inter Twm's body in the *church* graveyard.

Deacon 3/Old Shemmi Very mad is Abel Shones, males bach. When Twm's sins are forgotten, when the angels sound the trumpet, the Church will claim him as their own.

Bern-Dafydd Schoolin', have you a plan?

Schoolin' Well, well, iss, well, well, no.

Abel Shones At the entrance to Capel Sion, we will put up an old stone on which is written these words:

'Twm Tybach, lieth not here. Twm lieth in the Parish Church. Because the graveyard of Capel Sion was so full that there was no room for further burials.'

Schoolin' What's the use of a tombstone with nothing under it?

Bern-Dafydd Oh you people, you are all wandering on the mooniness. Let them who go to *church* be buried in the *Church* ground. We know where the angel and the trumpet will be – *our* graveyard. Is it not the Glory of Sion? Indeed then, we cannot spare one clay, we must bury him.

Old Shemmi Very suitable is the field over Abel Shones' house.

Abel Shones But friends bach, does not my drinking water come through that field?

Bern-Dafydd None except a dirty old atheist would bring materialism to bear upon a sacred subject. It is the water of life that matters, Abel Shones.

Abel Shones Do not you use the Parables in debate?

Bern-Dafydd Dost thou then not believe in the Parables? Come ye now, speak. O man, where dost *thou* expect to go when thou hast shuffled off thy carnal garments?

Old Shemmi (*kneels and prays*) Please little Big Man, let Abel Shones let us use his field to bury Twm's body so Capel Sion, not the old heathen Church, possess his clay.

42 My People

Abel Shones *(realising what he's doing, kneels and prays)* Please little Big Man, ignore Old Shemmi and instead please don't let Twm Tybach die until this matter is sorted nice.

Schoolin' *(worried, kneels and prays)* Don't you now, little Big Man, be influenced either by Abel Shones or Old Shemmi. They know not what they do.

Bern-Dafydd Brethren, at this moment Twm could be passing into the Fiery Pool.

Miriam I have a scheme. We ask Squire Pryce: 'Squire Pryce bach, nice kind very kind, can we use one of your fields now to bury our brother Twm Tybach?'

Bern-Dafydd Good, very.

Deacon 1 The Squire, who regarded anyone trading under the name of nonconformist as a thief and a quibbler, acted through his lawyer.

Deacon 3 And therefore many days had to pass before the ground would be transferred to Capel Sion.

Bern-Dafydd Meanwhile then, all those who worship in Sion are commanded to pray without ceasing that Twm's life should not end until the new burial place comes into Sion's possession.

Deacons 2 and 5 *turn into Madlen and Twm, around a space which becomes Twm's bedside.*

Deacon 1 Many came to Tybach, greeted Twm's wife Madlen, and prayed by Twm's bedside.

Bringing tins of sardines -

Corned beef -

Red-cabbage pickles -

Home-made jam -

Deacon 3 A bottle of wine -

Twm *drinks it all.*

Deacon 1 Time wore on and the title deeds of the new burial ground were finally made over to the First Men.

Deacon 3 People did not come any more to Tybach, and they ceased to pray for Twm; for they knew he would die, and whether he liked it or not his sinful bones would now rest in the land that was the glory of Capel Sion.

Deacon 1 Late one night Twm told Madlen:

Deacon 5/Twm Read to me about the man who took up his bed and walked.

Deacon 2/Madlen John: Chapter 5, Verse 8. Jesus saith unto him, 'Rise take up thy bed and walk.' And immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and -

Twm *groans and gurgles.*

Madlen The end. Twm bach is in the Jordan.

Deacon 4 His face was grey as if the Angel of Death had cast the down from his wings upon it.

Deacon 1 But then Twm threw back the clothes which covered him, and he went and sat by the fire.

Twm Madlen! Come, make you a cup of tea now. There's slow mule you are!

Deacon 1 From first to last Twm's years were five-and-forty.

Deacon 1 and Deacon 4 Hallelujah!

LAMENTATIONS

Deacon 3 *cuts in:*

Deacon 3 A reading from Lamentations.

Bern-Dafydd The Big Man despises Evan Rhiw.

God said to me: 'Bern-Dafydd, oppress Evan Rhiw.'

'Go you off up and down the land now and say to the people:

'Lo, you animals in the image of the Big Man, God's blast is in the old male of Rhiw who never sacrifices anything unto Capel Sion.'

The ensemble isolate Evan.

Deacon 5/Evan Why must I be confused, dear me, because of that crow without sense, Bern-Dafydd?

TO THE INN!

Drinks beer.

Bern-Dafydd Evan revelled with loose wild men. The day the Big Man chastened him he drank much ale, and, unaware of what he was doing, he sinned against his daughter Matilda.

He closes window. Evan, alone on stage, finishes his wine and walks out. Silence on the empty stage. Next morning:

Deacon 2/Hannah You have made mischief with her. My poor child. You have sinned against Matilda. Why for? Mad you are! And mad I am to be wedded to a sinful, loose beast as you.

Deacon 1/Matilda Clean your smelly flesh in the pond.

Matilda follows Hannah off.

Evan Five over twenty years have I been wedded. When I took Hannah the servant of Bensha to my bed, rich was I. Wasteful has Hannah been with mine. Sad is my lot. Disorderly is the female, and Matilda says this and that about me to my discredit.

Matilda (*from off*) Mam now, the cows fach are lowing to be milked. Mam! MAM!

Bern-Dafydd *walks in with a cross and plants it in the graveyard.*

Bern-Dafydd Evan Rhiw, do you stir yourself. Your old wife has gone to wear a White Shirt.

Deacon 6 The second day that Hannah rested in the burial ground of Capel Sion, Evan rubbed his face and hands with small gravel in the little water, and walked to the house of the Respected Bern-Dafydd.

Evan Respected and religious preacher, full of repentance am I, son of the little white Jesus. Let me make him a nice little offering.

Bern-Dafydd Religious proper, you are, Evan. Not to me, man, not to Mistress Bern-Dafydd you make your sacrifices, but to the Big Man. I keep your gift in trust for Him. What shall I say is the name of the sacrifice, Evan bach?

Evan This day Matilda is churning, and is she not bringing him a pound of little butter?

Bern-Dafydd Evan Rhiw, there is no sound of such a sacrifice in the Bible.

Evan And a tin pitcher full of buttermilk.

Bern-Dafydd Did Abraham offer the three strangers buttermilk, Evan?

Evan And a big cabbage with a white heart.

Bern-Dafydd The Children of Israel, Evan bach, ate flesh.

Evan And a full wheelbarrow of potatoes.

Bern-Dafydd Tarry you awhile, and I will commune with the Big Man.

With Evan he stands in silence. After a while:

Bern-Dafydd This is what the Great One of Capel Sion says: 'I will abate my oppression of Evan Rhiw if he makes sacrifice of a pig.'

Deacon 6 Evan brought the pig and he was admitted unto Sion.

Ensemble flow in, happy that Evan has seen the light. Evan shakes hands with Bern-Dafydd — photo flash. Matilda enters, walks

to the graveyard, sits in the mud and, as if she was taking a bath in it, washes herself with the dirt.

Deacon 3 And for two years he sinned not.

Deacon 4 There was much pious joy in his way, and he prospered exceedingly.

Deacon 3 'Behold now, this man Evan is among the wisest in the Chapel.'

Deacon 2 'And there's rich he is.'

Deacon 4 He has given over feasting on the Devil's brew with loose, wild men.

Deacon 2 He respects those who sit in high places.

Deacon 3 But as the man's possessions multiplied his daughter Matilda got dull and became a cumbersome thing on him.

Bern-Dafydd Evan Rhiw, mouth you your experience.

All Gwêd dy broffad!

Evan Why, God bach is your foot so heavy on me? Am I not religious? Here in your house? Ask you the Respected Bern-Dafydd!

Matilda *leaves graveyard.*

Evan Matilda is strange and amazed in her eyes, and she is set on mischief, and why brawls she loudly about me?

Deacon 3 For this God cursed his belongings

Deacon 2 Two horses sickened and perished.

Deacon 4 Great rain fell upon his hay.

Deacon 3 A cow destroyed her calf.

Deacon 2 Evan went back to drinking.

Deacon 3 And God cursed the congregation.

Deacon 4 'Our hay is rotting because of the bad sin of Evan Rhiw.'

Deacon 3 'A full barrow of sin is in his inside.'

Deacon Deacon 2 'His bad sin is all our ruin.'

Evan *exits.*

Deacon 3 'Respected Bern-Dafydd, speech you now to the Great Harvester about this man Evan Rhiw.'

Bern-Dafydd Children bach, run you about and about, and I will go to the top of the old moor and sing a lamentation to Him.

Ensemble kneel down to watch him speaking to God. Bern-Dafydd senses their awe.

Deacon 2 'Look you now the familiarity between Bern-Dafydd and the Big Man.'

Deacon 4 'Sure, he is as important as God.'

Bern-Dafydd Boys, boys. Glad was the Big Man that I spoke to Him. Do you know what he said?

'Large thanks, Bern bach. Religious are you to remind me of the sin of Evan Rhiw. The man has a clean heart, and an adder in his house.'

'Big Man, don't you vex me,' I said. 'Whisper you me the name of the adder.'

The Big Man said – 'Matilda.'

'Evan may sin again, grievously, but I will restore him to Chapel Sion, and I will bless him abundantly, for his freewill offerings to my temple are generous.'

Deacon 4 Evan had been drinking in the inn, and the ale made him drunk.

Evan, *very drunk, crashes in.*

48 My People

Deacon 4 'What shall we do then to humble him before the congregation?'

Deacon 2 'Let us strip the skin from the horse that perished, which is buried in the narrow field, and we will throw it over his head.'

Ensemble to this, then watch Evan exiting in an exact reflection of before he attacked Matilda. We fear a second attack – there is the same empty time as before.

Finally, Evan reappears, slumping down on the stairs in an absent drunken state. Matilda opens an aperture and sees him.

Matilda Jesus bach.

If the sons of men wear the habit of horses the daughters of God must go naked.

She takes off her T-shirt, then walks across behind the apertures.

Deacon 3 She cast from her body her clothes, and went down the Roman road and into the village.

Deacon 4 The people closed their doors on her, and for four days she wandered thereabouts nakedly.

Deacon 2 The men of the neighbourhood laid rabbit traps on the floor of the fields

Deacon 4 And one trap caught the foot of Matilda.

Matilda collapses behind the apertures. The ensemble rush down to grab her.

All Bern-Dafydd! We have Matilda!

Bern-Dafydd Deliver her into Evan's hands

Matilda slips away. They chase, capture her, and take her to Bern-Dafydd as if a sacrifice. Bern-Dafydd shakes Evan awake.

Bern-Dafydd Evan, drive Matilda before you, in the manner in which a colt is driven, to the madhouse in the town of Carmarthen.

The ensemble chant 'Madhouse! Madhouse!' as Evan takes Matilda away. Bern-Dafydd shakes hands with ensemble proudly.

Bern-Dafydd After that Evan did not sin any more. His belongings increased and his house remained religious as long as he lived.

Just before Deacon 2/Matilda gets through the door, she pushes Evan away, runs to pulpit, chastising them and empowering herself with this story. One by one (scared or shamed) the Deacons exit, leaving Deacon 2/Matilda alone at the very end of her story.

THE DEVIL IN EDEN (1)

Deacon 2 A reading from The Devil in Eden.

On the quiet of a Sabbath eve the Big Man sent a tempter, Michael, in the guise of a tramp, to test the pulled-up and vainglorious Old Ianto. Old Ianto took Michael home.

The tramp fondled Old Ianto's daughter, Dinah, and made mischief with her, and when they had committed their sin, Dinah was revengeful:

'Go your way, Michael! Take to the dunghill, you lout! For sure I will shout your wickedness!'

She seized his head and clawed his scalp, until the tramp's hair was dyed red.

People remarked her, and said things to one another.

Dinah acted. During the month which followed I employed divers methods to rid the house of Michael.

'Off now, you boy bach, and buy two pounds of sugar in Shop Rhys. Take you this little silver sapphire. Go off, now indeed to death, and change these eggs for money at Shop Rhys. A broom I must have. Take a shilling and buy one in Shop Rhys.'

But Michael, to my great distress, performed these errands faithfully.

In the twilight of an afternoon I was preparing Old Ianto's supper. Michael the tramp was sleeping in a chair under the chimney. I turned around, and beheld that Michael's feet were cloven hoofs, and that from his head there came forth two horns. In the twinkling of an eye I knew whom I had been entertaining.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Jesus bach, be with your Ruler in Capel Sion.

'Michael, how say you to a nice cup bach of tea? Oh — there's not a drop of water. Go you and draw some.'

'What shall I fetch the water in?' he asked.

'Bring the water to me in this sieve.'

Since these things happened I have been blessed with second sight and visionary power. On dark nights I go to the well and mock the tempter Michael, who until he performs the task that I set him, will remain upon the earth in the flesh of a tramp!

Black.

Act Two

Scene One

It's hymnmaking season in Manteg; hay and work tools cover the stage. Reality and the world of My People has become one. The ensemble are lying on the hay, drinking tea, eating sandwiches. The Fair Folk song of Act One plays while Deacon 1, heavily pregnant and in a Welsh traditional costume (Hen Fenyse Cydael), dances for the ensemble.

A JUST MAN IN SODOM

Sadrach the Small Come you now, Pedr, give us a little bit of a sermon, man.

Deacon 4/Pedr Think you truly I ought to be a preacher?

Sadrach the Small Oh, Pedr, do we not always say that you ought to judge us in Capel Sion?

Minister/Haymaker Look how his eyes shine with vanity.

Deacon 5/Sadrach Large Preach you to us for ten minutes, and I'll take a hat round for a collection.

Deacon 1/Martha Sadrach!

Haymakers Pedr! Pedr! Pedr! Pedr!

Pedr Boys bach nice, Jesus did speak to me about you, and He did say things of great concern about Capel Sion.

They struggle to hide their laughter.

My dears, do you let Pedr now say a small prayer first.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

For ever and ever. Amen.

Sadrach the Small The sermon! The sermon! Hasto, what a jolt-headed mare you are.

Pedr Wasn't that a fairish prayer?

Haymakers As good as Bern-Dafydd's.

Pedr As good as Bern-Dafydd's!

See you, I am come after little Elijah, and Jeremiah, and Daniel. The white Jesus said to me, 'Pedr, I look to you to save Capel Sion.'

Martha If we let the dog go on blaspheming, the revengeful Big Man will punish us with rain before half the hay is in stack.

Pedr I am a man of God. Hearken you now to my voice, for do not my sayings come from Him whose mercy is as bountiful as the hay around us, and whose anger is as furious as the bull who frightened Achsah the wife of Sadrach into giving birth to Sadrach the Small on the threshold of Danyrefail.

'The children of Capel Sion,' said the little white Jesus, 'are walking in the ways of the Bad Man.'

Sadrach Large Pedr bach, have you care now. Don't you, little male, trifle with the name of the Big Man.

Pedr The Big Man is angry with you.

'Pedr bach,' said the little white Jesus, 'tell you them to turn away from their adulterous ways, for when the Lord hurteeth a man He hurteeth him to death. Tell you them that they are as wicked as the old people of Sodom.'

Sadrach the Small *flings a work tool at Pedr.*

Sadrach Large Now, now, be you calm, my child. The temptation is great, but remember you that Pedr is not sensible in his head.

Pedr O people, listen. Thus said the Big Man: 'Capel Sion has become as a temple of pig buyers; a woman without glory. Pedr bach, do you say to them that I will destroy their crops and rot their bones, that not one male, nor female, nor

child shall rise from the grave when my little servant Gabriel blows on his old trumpet.'

Sadrach the Small There's sayings for you!

Pedr What for you laugh, boys bach?

See you, I am come after little Elijah, and Jeremiah, and Daniel. The white Jesus said to me, 'Pedr, I look to you to save Capel Sion.'

Martha Throw your vain crow out, Sadrach, else sure something bad will hap to me and your father for harbouring him in our land.

Pedr Is not the Judge of the Earth right? Would you laugh at Daniel? At Elijah? Why for you laugh? You will have to change your thinks if you will wear the White Shirts in Heaven.

Deacon 2 So Pedr assumed the mantle of a prophet.

They mockingly dress him as a 'prophet.'

Deacon 3 Children mocked him

Deacon 5 Men and women reviled him, inquiring of him always —

Deacon 1 'How now, Pedr, anything new from the Palace?'

Deacon 6 He left the house where he dwell and went to live on the moor.

Deacon 3 And threw up a mound of earth which he called:

Pedr An altar dedicated unto God.

Deacon 5 The evening of the fifth day after Sadrach's hay had been stacked, a heavy rain fell upon West Wales, and the Respected Bern-Dafydd preached:

Bern-Dafydd Little people, this rain has lasted many days destroying much of your crops. The men of the Big Seat have

54 My People

proved you all and found that Sion is without sin. No sin of ours has brought –

Pedr appears.

Pedr Little people, why value you the things that perish more than the living soul?

Sadrach Large A bad prophet you are indeed. What for you didn't say the rain was coming, man? Prophet! Who made you judge in Capel Sion? Think you the Big Man chooses you before me and the Respected Bern-Dafydd to be His mouthpiece?

Pedr Woe to you, Sadrach Danyrefail. Your dishonour makes the little angels weep.

Sadrach Large spits in his face

Pedr Dear people –

Sadrach Large Pedr, bits of sermons now and again are o'reit, but when you take the name of the Big Man in vain it is very sinful.

Pedr My soul is as clean as the soul of Elijah.

Sadrach Large Hearken you now, Pedr, can you bring the dead to life? Elijah could.

And, dear me, where are your sacrifices? You can't bring an old turnip to life, man.

The people crowd around Pedr and beat him.

Pedr The Man of Justice will punish you for this.

GOD – PROTECT MY SKIN!

He crawls up to his altar to pray, when:

Sadrach the Small Little father! I was out fetching the cows now, and the old bull-calf is lost, man!

Sadrach Large Now careless someone has been. Was the gate shut, Sadrach Small?

Sadrach the Small Indeed, Father, it was.

Sadrach Large Hie you with me to look. But mouth you to no one our mission, recollect that this is the Sabbath.

They go off in different directions to look for the calf.

Deacon 6 That same Sabbath –

Pedr Man bach!

Deacon 6 That same Sabbath morning –

Pedr Man bach!

Deacon 6 That same Sabbath morning Pedr shouted from the moor:

Pedr Do you hurry quickly now, and tell them in Sion to come up the mountain, because this day the Big Creator is manifesting Himself.

Deacon 6 Looking for his calf Sadrach the Large went up the moor where Pedr had his hut.

Blood starts dripping from the ceiling on to Pedr.

Pedr Sadrach Danyrefail, there's joyous I am you've come to Calvary. Sing a hymn of gladness at the altar, Sadrach Danyrefail, for today the Bad Man departs from Capel Sion. Come to the altar and sing a hymn of gladness.

A dead bull-calf slowly lowers from the ceiling.

Sadrach Large Son of hell!

I'll have the law on you in half an hour, even if it is the Sabbath.

Pedr Dear Sadrach, this is the sacrifice that is going to wipe away the sins of Capel Sodom.

But lo, the Big Man is not meanly. He is satisfied with the blood only.

Look you now, I will bring back your old calf to life. The white Jesus will do this for His prophet.

In the name of the little white Jesus, return you to life, little bull-calf.

Jesus bach, do bring this about for the sake of your servant's good name.

Return you to life, little bull-calf.

Return you to life.

Scene Two

THE BLAST OF GOD (1)

A blinding light beams from the doorway where Dai is hanging, casting his shadow across the floor. Shan runs to Dai.

Deacon 2/Shan Return you to life! Return you to life. Dai fach. Owen! For what you think, little man?

THE TALENT THOU GAVEST (1)

At school.

Schoolin' Bore da, blant.

All Bore da, Mishtir Lloyd.

Schoolin' Maggie Shones?

Maggie Here, iss.

Schoolin' William, son of Samson Post the Teller of Things.

William Here, iss.

Schoolin' Dai Tygwyn? ... Dai Tygwyn?

THE BLAST OF GOD (2)

Shan Dai is hanging in the cowhouse. Owen, come you now and see to him.

Deacon 5 Owen, Dai's father, ended the furrow and unharnessed the horse, which he led into the stable and fed with hay.

Unhooks bull-calf and places it on the side of the stage.

Then he unravelled the knot in the rope which had choked the breath of his son Dai.

Owen goes with **Shan** behind the door where **Dai** is hanging and closes it. **Owen** and **Shan** re-appear in apertures.

Shan Eat you your middle-of-the-day morsel now little husband, before you go back to the old plough.

Deacon 1 Having eaten to his liking of the beaten potatoes and buttermilk, Owen resumed his labour, and rehearsed this prayer:

Minister/Owen Dear Big Husband, pity about our son Dai, my face shall be the mirror of my misery, please could we have a male child. Much I promise he will do ...

They go upstairs.

Deacon 1 His petition reached the ears of God, and after twenty months –

Sound of baby meowing.

THE TALENT THOU GAVEST (2)

Schoolin' Noah, son of Bethenia?

Deacon 5/Noah Here, iss.

Schoolin' Sara Jane the bastard daughter of Simon and Beca Penrhos?

Sara Here, iss.

Schoolin' Adam the son of Bern-Dafydd?

THE REDEEMER (1)

Deacon 4 Adam the son of Bern-Dafydd was walking along the Road of the Romans.

Deacon 1 His companion was Lissi, a servant girl.

Joshua Now what for you mean to be here in the dark?

Deacon 4/Adam Goodness me, Joshua Llanwen, are we not going home?

Joshua What a big job you are! The other road is to the Shepherd's Abode. Have I not pledged that this is not to happen?

Adam *tries to dodge Joshua's humiliating punches.*

Adam Dear Josh bach, why then you are so hasty, man? Sure now you have cut my nice face!

Joshua Back you hie, you brazen shut! Turn your wicked eyes and foul heart to Ellen's loom-shed.

Deacon 1/Lissi *exits. Adam goes up stairs to window.*

Deacon 5 Adam scrambles over the hedge and across pastureland and gorse and hurries to his father's house

Bern-Dafydd Bern-Dafydd –

Deacon 5/Lamech – his son Lamech –

Deacon 2/Puah – and Lamech's wife Puah are present.

Bern-Dafydd Here Adam comes.

Perhaps Joshua's sayings have brought reason into the boy's heart.

Adam *is sitting in the window.*

Adam Dear folk, a sober thing has happened to me this night. Seven times did Joshua Llanwen beat my face.

Puah Iss, indeed, there's blood on your cheeks, Adam bach.

Adam What foolish man Josh is!

Lamech Brother Adam, heard you never of the speech of the Man of Terror saying 'Vengeance is mine'?

Adam Lamech, did not Joshua strike me seven times on my nice chin?

Lamech Adam, listen you to me, man. Is it not written 'Hard is the way of the transgressor'?

Bern-Dafydd A period of twelve years divides these two sons of mine. Lamech, the eldest, wedded Puah the widow of a large shopowner, at whose death she inherited the shop, shop sold, Lamech received a call to preach the Word and is now spending a little time here before entering College Carmarthen.

Adam, my younger son is imbued with little understanding. He has never risen above working in Shop Pugh Tailor. Six months before this night he had desired Lissi, the squint-eyed serving girl from Castellbryn Poorhouse.

Adam *closes his window and exits.*

Puah Vile is Adam to covet the flesh of a squint-eyed poorhouse brat.

Lamech Doleful is my heart and anxious.

Puah Joshua Llanwen we will tell.

Joshua! The Big Man wants you to inform Bern-Dafydd of the wickedness of Adam.

Puah and Lamech *close their windows and exit. Joshua speaks up to Bern-Dafydd.*

Joshua Respected Bern-Dafydd, for why he is so blind? One of his own lambs gone astray. If he cannot perceive the enemy in his own household, how expect he to find him among the congregation?

Bern-Dafydd Joshua Llanwen, speak you plain to me now.

Joshua Is not that ram of an Adam courting squint-eyed Lissi, the Poorhouse bitch? Why do Adam and her go each night on the Road of the Romans?

Bern-Dafydd Woe is me! A sinner from my loins! From the Poorhouse?

Joshua Llanwen, be you another Paul. Keep watch over my son on the Road of the Romans. Stay in hiding, and if you see anything wrong, show yourself, and counsel him . . . and drive the evil spirit out of him.

So Adam came home with blood on his chin.

THE TALENT THOU GAVEST (3)

Schoolin' Eben the son of Olwen?

Deacon 4/Eben Here, iss.

Schoolin' What for was your hand up, man?

Eben Did I not want to tell him, little Mislutir, that I am not coming to school any more then? For I am going to the moor to mind the sheep of Shames.

Deacon 5 The next morning at daybreak his mother Olwen sent Eben with a crust of bread and a piece of cheese in his trousers pocket to take up his duties.

Deacon 1/Olwen Do you see now, little Eben, that none of Shames's old sheep go astray, for Shames is quick to anger. Do we not need these pennies badly?

Deacon 1 Eben, having walked over the mile and a half of heather, opened the gate of the enclosure in which Shames's sheep spent the night. This Eben did every day till he grew out of knee-breeches into long corduroy trousers.

Swirls of whispered conversations on the wind, hymns, prayers and sermons.

Deacon 1 He knew many consoling hymns by heart, and these hymns he recited to the shivering heather and the grazing sheep.

Deacon 5 In a dream the Big Man came to him: a white-bearded, vigorous, stern, elderly giant, broad as the front of Capel Sion and taller than the roof.

Deacon 2/Big Man Eben bach. Go you, little son, and dig a hole in the place where stood Old Shaci's hut.

Eben It'll be a big hole, little Big Man, if I must make it the size of Old Shaci's hut.

Big Man There's a boy you are for pleading!

Eben Do you tell me now for what?

Big Man For sure, is there not a talent buried there?

Eben, having found a shovel, dislodges a floorboard to reveal soil, digs, but finds nothing.

Eben Dear little Big Man, there's nothing here!

The Big Man shines a torch where he's been digging.

Big Man Eben bach, here is the talent.

Deacon 1 Understanding broke upon him suddenly.

Eben Dear, dear, this is the talent the Great Male gave me. Sheep bach that belong to Shames, I am to be a preacher bach!

Mam fach, the talent the Almighty gave me is for preaching the Fair Word.

Olwen Eben, why you are so vain?

Eben sings a prayer. Olwen is impressed, prayer underscores

Olwen's conversation:

Eben

In God's name to my bed I go,
God keep the hale and those in woe;

I'll lay my body down to sleep,
I'll give my soul to Christ to keep,
And in the name of God I'll sleep.

Olwen Respected Bern-Dafydd, Eben bach is talking about being a preacher.

Bern-Dafydd Religious hearing, Have I not had sound of the boy's nice prayer?

Olwen Little holy respected, good will it be if in his saintliness he lets a concert religious be held in the Chapel so that Eben bach can be sent to College Carmarthen.

Bern-Dafydd Sure, indeed. I will cry from the pulpit:

'Buy each of you a ticket for Eben's concert. Two silver shillings is the price, people bach!'

THE REDEMER (2)

Adam So Adam, Bern-Dafydd's son, came home with blood on his chin.

Joshua Hence he knew Joshua Llanwen had performed his services faithfully.

Bern-Dafydd And on many occasions Joshua chastised Adam with his tongue –

Puah – and his fists –

Lamech – and with the oaken club he employed to break in horses.

Adam Yet Adam would not leave off courting Lissi.

Lamech Adam! Mouth you to us now, that you will let the bad wench be.

Puah Think you the Big Man has chosen Lissi to be a Bern-Dafydd?

Adam Expect you, Lamech, the Big Father to perform a miracle with Puah? Will she conceive and bear for you a child?

Puah has passed her fruitfulness, and am I not the hope of the Bern-Dafydds?

Puah But dull Adam bach, why do you go low for a female? Mercy me! Lissi a Bern-Dafydd! Repent you now and be a godly boy.

Lamech My wild will sizzle against him in one minute!

Bern-Dafydd Lamech! Little saintly son – go down and examine the dirty clod. Look you for signs if she is indeed with child. The wench may be crafty in the manner of her clothes.

Puah I will go with Lamech, for I am a woman, and do I not understand the signs?

Bern-Dafydd Get you her to admit that others have been with her.

I have searched my soul for some sin that, unknown to myself, I might have committed. Did I find any? No, indeed to goodness now, I didn't. Yet the Big Man's hand is hard on the clean heart of the innocent. Why does the Big Father punish His child so? Perhaps, dear me, Adam has inherited the vanity of his mother.

Puah and Lamech enter Lissi

Lamech Hai, the dirty wench! Walk here and stand forth, you hussy.

Puah The girl's petticoat hangs high, away from her clogs and grey stockings. Ach y fi! Take the stuffing away from your belly.

Lissi Indeed me, not stuffing is here for surely. Full is my skin.

Puah Oh you Jezzebel! Tell me, you ugly creature, how with your squint you tempted Adam bach.

Lamech Speak of the others who have been bad with you.

Bern-Dafydd Lissi stood before them mute as a sheep in the hands of the shearer.

Puah Indeed to goodness now, imagine you that Adam will marry you?

Lissi He'll have to. Ellen says I can petty sessions him if he refuses.

Puah For sure now, Lissi, Adam is not the father of the child.

Lissi What for you talk, for was he not bad with me the night Joshua Llanwen's bull-calf perished?

Puah Iss, Lissi fach, Josh Llanwen did this and that to your flesh.

Lissi No, indeed, he didn't.

Puah Josh has repented. Does he not say 'I am the father of Lissi's child'?

Lamech Sure me, Joshua is the father. His poor old flesh couldn't withstand the temptation. But Capel Sion won't be hard on you, Lissi, nor on Joshua. Isn't he the father, little daughter fach?

Lissi For sure, no, Josh Llanwen is important in Sion. Is not Priscila his wife? The father of the child is Adam Bern-Dafydd. Did not Ellen peep into the shed and see his doings with me?

Puah Be you religious, Lissi. Do you admit to Josh. If you die in childbirth there's glad you'll be that you won't cross the Jordan with a lie in your head.

Lamech Great will be your reward. You can say to the Large Spirit – 'I am the truth'.

Puah I am the truth!

Lissi But Joshua has not been bad with me.

She leaves.

Puah (*to Bern-Dafydd*) For sure she will admit it that Joshua Llanwen has made mischief with her.

Her words pleased Bern-Dafydd, and he marvelled at Puah's skill and prudence.

Bern-Dafydd Dusk having fallen, Puah went over pasture and gorse to the Road of the Romans.

Lamech leaves. Puah hides in hay. Adam enters with Lissi.

Adam Lissi fach, in time my father will understand, he will.

Lissi Kind you are, Adam. Big is my heart for you.

Adam And mine for you. Though it were 'ill' and 'misbecoming', I would not turn aside my gaze nor move from your way. The robin burnt his breast in taking water to a man in hell. So would I for you. I will see you again tomorrow on the Road of the Romans.

Adam kisses Lissi goodnight. They part.

Puah jumps out at **Lissi**, creating terrifying image. **Lissi** screams and tries to run away.

Lamech Lissi saw her thus arrayed and she was overtaken by unfamiliar pains.

Bern-Dafydd The child she delivered – a man child – was dead.

Puah And from her travail Lissi passed into madness.

Lissi veils and crawls across the stage, passing **Deacon 4/Eben** who is transfixed by a light shimmering over where he discovered the talent. **Dracen** to the light, **Deacon 4/Eben** steps into it to continue his story.

The next time we see Lissi/Deacon 1 she will no longer be pregnant.

THE TALENT THOU GAVEST (4)

Deacon 3 Eben's talent is to be a preacher bach. Eben's mother asked Bern-Dafydd to let a concert religious be held, so that Eben can be sent to College Carmarthen.

Bern-Dafydd Buy each of you a ticket for Eben's concert. Two silver shillings is the price, people bach!

Deacon 4 When Eben came away from College Carmarthen his holiness was voiced abroad the land and Capel Salem sent word to come and rule over them.

Eben You chief praying men of Capel Salem, I have summoned you into the Capel tonight, and will summon you every night for thirty days, to entreat the Lord to restore the religious lustre of His tabernacle.

Deacon 2 Their prayers were answered: whereas at the beginning of Eben's ministry the congregation could be counted by the dozen, in two years their numbers were above any in the shire.

Deacon 5 His fame spread, and the people called him 'Eben bach the Singer' –

Deacon 2 – 'exalted over all the judges'.

Deacon 3 But in the high day of his spiritual prosperity Eben's powers decreased –

Deacon 5 – his discourses got to be less songlike

Deacon 2 – he conversed with rather than preached to his congregation –

Deacon 6 – and he wrote out his sermons.

Eben Men of the Big Seat come you in now.

Deacon 3/Ben Well, well, Eben bach, no one wept again the last Sunday.

Noah Indeed to goodness, not one 'Hallelujah' or 'Amen' did I hear.

Ben For what he say that life is more than religion?

Eben Little Ben and Noah, the Palace must be here on earth.

Ben Eben bach, an old atheist he is.

Noah Were he not the ruler, pray for him I would this one night.

Eben Listen you to me now, I have not preached to you at all the real religion. I offered you the White Palace or the Fiery Pool. Men, men, that is not right. If you don't live in Heaven here you won't live in Heaven when you perish.

Noah Think you over this and do you not be a blockhead to throw away your house and one hundred of sovereigns a year.

Deacon 6 So Eben . . . ? Eben bach the singer –

Eben – thought over these things.

Deacon 2 And?

Eben And I will give up my house

Deacon 6 Eben bach!

Eben My one hundred sovereigns a year, and my charge.

Ben Eben?!

Eben *goes and sits inside the soil hole.*

Deacon 6 His name became a proverb and a byword.

Eben *(simple, honest direct address to the audience)* I abhor the righteousness of the Capel, whose tears are less a sign of godliness than a donkey's braying is of bravery. Our works have cornered even God, and He has put us apart in a room for our strange misbehaviours. And the room is Wales. And he said: 'You are beyond Me and I would forget you.' Our religion has been made by the ministers, who teach us how they are God's photographs. The pulpit is a sorry lamp. It guides us to the polling booth. It turns our joy into sorrow. It gives the right to the bad man to pursue the timid man and the praying man to spoil the maid.

I go back home with only half a talent. But it is spotless. And the holder of it is a man – a man with nothing. And the Capel, thank God, has no pew for the man with nothing.

Deacon 2 On a day Ben Shop Draper journeyed to see Eben in Owen's cottage.

Ben Eben, Eben, woeful is the errand I have to speech to you. The new ruler cannot keep the flock together.

Eben Ho, indeed.

Ben You took the temple in marriage. Now you have divorced her, Eben. Dear me, *one hundred* sovereigns and a house, and *eight* Sabbaths off in the year.

Eben How could I preach against my conscience?

Ben Suppose now we give you ten more sovereigns? Ten more sovereigns, Eben. Awake and gather yourself together, and ask the Big Man back to show you the way.

No response from Eben. Ben rejoins group, defeated.

Deacon 5 Eben is surely mad

Deacon 6 He has spewed on his own glory.

Schoolin' *tries his luck at persuading Eben.*

Schoolin' Wicked you are, you black-white cat! Has not the Big Man given you a talent? Shame upon you for throwing it against the Big Man's teeth.

Narrators aren't sure about Schoolin's erratic technique, and get him out before he makes things worse.

Eben But I want to use it.

The congregation won't let me, Schoolin' bach.

So long as I employed half a talent all went well.

Schoolin' *gives up, infuriated. Maggie steps forward.*

Deacon 2/Maggie What you are waiting for, man?

Eben For the Angel of the Lord.

It turns to night. The Deacons exit, and narrate the following through the apertures.

Deacon 5 The angel came towards the close of a day.

Deacon 4 Eben saw him, and hastened over the hearth to the place where Old Shaci's hut was.

Deacon 6 In the darkness he stood over the hole as deep as a grave and of the shape of a coffin.

Eben Big Lord, the talent Thou gavest me brought a great deal of woe with it. Let Thy angel here, O Big Man, bear witness, now that I return to Thee Thy talent. And do Thou let me depart in peace, to make the best use I can of the half-talent which is mine . . .

He opens his hands and spreads his palms as though dropping something into it, prays, covers the grave. Calling Deacons back in:

Beloved brothers, God has told me to resume my labours in Capel Salem. Hallelujah! Amen! I have found the true light. Pray, my beloved, that my labours will be very fruitful among you.

Let not the matter of the little sovereigns engage your minds at this joyful time. Has not our dear brother Ben Shop Draper arranged all that?

All run towards him celebrating: 'Eben! Eben! Eben! Our Ruler in the faith!'

THE BLAST OF GOD (3)

The bright light from the doorway where Dai was hanging cuts across the space again.

As the congregation peel off, celebrating, leaving Owen and Shan on stage, Deacon 3 holds back near the doorway listening to Owen. Shan sits on a haybale working on a patchwork quilt.

Owen Dear Big Husband, pity about our son Dai who hanged himself, but please could we have a male child.

Sound of baby weeping.

Has not the Lord been good to me then? Thanks be to the Big Man I have a son – Samuel. Many good things he will do. In the Seiet Fawr my boy will preach. He will noise abroad the Big Man's Word! The Big Husband has answered my prayer.

Joshua Owen Tygwyn! An old well females wear must divide you from the face of the Big Man. Indeed, like lead is my heart for you. Over-vain you are to expect too much from your brat. He is not of the Lord's giving.

Owen Sober, Joshua, speak you out, dear me, there's a wise little man.

Joshua Well, well, now, ill is my stomach to make speech, but Shan is a miscarrying woman, and a miscarrying woman is dung in the nose of the Man of Terror. Two she miscarried before Dai, Owen bach, and Dai hanged himself to the Fiery Pool in the cowhouse. Ach y fi! Do you be humble.

Owen Iss, Joshua. Shan, we must entreat the Lord continually, and make sacrifices unto Capel Sion.

Joshua His possessions got small and he whipped his spirit into humility and subjection.

Owen For is it not written that the meek shall inherit the Kingdom? We must sell livestock to pay the rent.

Joshua And this stock he was never able to replace.

After the birth of Samuel, Shan miscarried two other children, and the price of two pigs provided them with coffins and graves.

Owen Pity the Big Man has made you such a spoilt curse.

Shan Make you not that speech, little Owen. Have you not Samuel? Did not the Great Husband send him in answer to your prayer? He is alive and well.

Joshua In due season Owen went to Castell-y-bryn and said to the Chief Teacher of the School of Grammar:

Owen Mishir bach, make you room for my son Samuel, the child the Big Husband sent in answer to my groanings.

Joshua The day of the Harvest Fair he journeyed there again, and he drove before him a cow in calf, and one part of the money he got for the animal he gave to the Chief Teacher, and with the other part he caused to be made for Samuel a preacher's coat of shiny black material.

Owen and Shan bent their backs and tilled and turned the soil.

But they reaped less than they sowed.

Joshua For all that Owen and Shan did, Samuel was grateful and having graduated from Castell-y-bryn Samuel told them to leave Tygwyn and its toil, and go abide in the nice cottage against the back of Shop Rhys.

Shan Gift of the Big Father! Good are you.

Joshua The woman shivered in her happiness. Owen and Shan lifted their feet and took all that was in the house and went to live in the place appointed by Samuel.

Shan Three years passed.

Owen I was a power in Capel Sion for the brand was lifted from the face of Shan.

Joshua Then a horrible thing happened:

He sends Samuel away and beckons Berwyn in.

Berwyn Show me the abode of Owen Tygwyn the father of Samuel.

Joshua (*calling them over*) Shan! Owen!

Explain him to us his little errand now, dear stranger.

Berwyn I am Berwyn Morgan, a deacon of Capel Bethel. Our minister – your Samuel – sinned. And has he not hanged himself.

Joshua Ooh, talk you in that manner then?

Berwyn Was not the nanny-goat the father of Ann's child? Was there not a meeting of the First Men last night, and did I not accuse him? 'You put her big,' I speeched.

Joshua What glory has ever come from a miscarrying woman?

Deacon 5/Berwyn Fetch you Satan's carcass away this day. The smelly clay is lying in my barn.

Joshua Owen hired a cart and horse and he placed three sacks and a little straw on the floor of the cart, and Shan said to him:

Shan Take this little patchwork quilt for Samuel. Hide you it under the sacks and straw of the cart. For fear men's eyes will see it and jeer at you.

Owen Go you and dig a grave and have it ready that we can bury your son this night. Leave space between Dai's and his for my coffin.

Joshua When the Big Trumpet tones I will rise early and make excuses to the Angel not to be too hard on your sons as they were born of a miscarrying woman.

Owen and Shan exit, followed by Joshua.

Short blackout.

Sounds of countryside in the morning, cock crows as warm light floods the space.

Scene Three

GREATER THAN LOVE

Deacon 1/Esther Goodness all! Late terrible am I!

Esther *is re-ordering the space to try and look as it did at the start.*
Sam rushes in.

Deacon 4/Sam Talk you like that, Esther, when the old animals are in the close.

Esther The buckets are in the milk-house. Boy bach, hie you away off and make a start!

Sam This is the day of the seaside.

Esther Indeed now, Sam bach.

Sam Esther. Say to me who is carting you.

Esther Who speeched that I was going even, Sam the son of Ginni?

Nice place is Morfa.

Sam Girl fach, iss. Nice will be to go out in Twinni's boat . . . Speak you that you will spend the day with me!

Esther How say Catrin! Sober serious! How will Catrin the daughter of Rachel speak if you don't go with her?

Sam Mention you Catrin what for?

Esther Is there not loud speakings that you have courted Catrin in bed?

Very full is her belly.

Sam Wench fach, others have been into Catrin, not me.

Esther Bring me small fairings home, Sam bach. Did I not give you a knife when I went to the fair of the month of April?

Sam *takes out the knife from his bag.*

Sam Grateful was I for the nice knife. Did I not stick Old Shemmi's pig with it, Esther fach?

Esther Well, well, then.

Sam Look you, there's old mumming that you were taken in mischief with the Schoolin' in Abram Bowen's hen loft.

Esther Boi bach, unfamiliar you are.

Sam Mam did say that I ought not to wed a shiftless female who doesn't take communion in Capel Sion.

Esther Your mother Old Ginni is right. Keep you on with Catrin. Ugly is Catrin with bad pimples in her face. But at least she takes communion in Capel Sion.

But listen you, Sam. A large lady I will be. I don't want louts like you.

Ensemble (Gildas, Sadrach Large, Catrin, Sam) enter with beach bags, ice creams, towels, deck chairs.

All TO THE SEA OF MORFA!

Esther Why stand you there like a donkey?

Sam Esther fach, come you to Morfa.

Esther For sure I'm coming to Morfa. But not with you. Am I not going to find a love there?

Ensemble create a cart and hop on. Singing:

CART SONG

There's a nice cow is Gwen!

Milk she gives indeed!

More milk, little Gwen, more milk!

A cow fach is Gwen.

Esther *gets into the cart, without talking to anyone. Scrimming ensemble leave the cart and take their clothes off to reveal swimwear underneath. They sunbathe near the steps downstage. Their action and words are spoken, not 'acted', the focus being on Esther.*

Minister/Gildas Come you down to the brim! Let us wash our little bodies!

Sam Esther fach, come you now down to the brim!

Esther I will stay in the shadow of the cliff.

Deacon 2/Catrin Better than us she thinks she is.

Sadrach Large Feigns herself above all who comes from Manteg.

Catrin Does she not need a wash indeed?

Hws Morris enters.

Deacon 3/Hws Sure now, come you from Squire Pryce's household? You are his daughter indeed?

Esther Stranger bach, say you like that, what for?

Hws A large lady you seem. Indeed then, speak from where you are.

Esther Did you not say I was Squire Pryce's daughter?

Hws Ho, old boy wise is Squire Pryce.

Deacon 5 Esther turned her eyes upon the bathers.

Deacon 2 Catrin and another woman were knee deep in the water.

Deacon 4 Between them, their hands linked, Sam.

Deacon 6 She heard Catrin crying from the shore:

Deacon 2 'Don't you wet it, Sam fach!'

Hws This. After two thousand years of religion.

They need the little gospel.

Esther Very respectable to be a preacher it is.

Hws And to be a preacher's wife. Great is the work the Big Man has called me to do.

76 My People

Deacon 2 A murmuring came from the women on the beach –

Deacon 4 Sam was struggling in the water –

Hws reveals the hole in the floor containing water, slows and hypnotic,

Esther starts to undress.

Hws Where was you going to them? You was not going to bathe with them?

Esther Why for no?

Hws See you how immodest they are. Girl fach, stay you here. If you need to wash your body, take off your clothes and bathe where no eyes will gaze on you.

Esther steps into the water. **Hws** watches, **Esther** makes him look away. He goes to build a den. She bathes herself, it looks almost like a baptism. **Hws** reveals a cake.

Hws Hungry you are. Return you into the cave and eat a little of this cake.

He uses the cake to lure her into the den, where they have sex.

Deacon 6 Hws Morris led her far inside, so far that they could not see anything that was outside.

Deacon 2 Hws placed his arm over Esther's shoulders; and his white fingers moved lightly over her breast to her thigh.

Deacon 5 He stole her heart.

Sam Esther? Where's Esther?

He runs over to the others, who are putting their clothes back on.

Little females, why is Esther not here?

Catrin Filling her belly is Esther.

Sadrach Large Take him in your arms, Catrin, and take him to your bed.

Sam Speak you Esther is not drowned.

Catrin Drowned! Good if the bad concubine is.

Act Two, Scene Three 77

Sadrach Large Evil is the wench. Remember how she tried to snare Rhys Shop.

Sam Fond little women, say you that Esther fach is not drowned.

Sadrach Large Sam. Indeed to goodness. Trouble not your mind about a harlot.

Sam Foolish is your speech! How shall I come back without Esther?

Sadrach Large Maybe she's sleeping.

Catrin In the arms of a man!

Sam ESTHER!

Catrin Find you her, Sam bach! Ask the Bad Spirit if he has seen her.

ALL TO MANTEG!

Picking up their belongings:

Deacon 5 Sam hastened back to the beach –

Esther and **Hws** reappearing from the den.

Esther Don't you send me away now.

Hws Shut your throat, you temptress.

Esther Let me stay with you.

Deacon 2 The tide was coming in.

Hws For why did you flaunt your body before my religious eyes?

Esther Did you not make fair speeches to me?

Deacon 6 Sam walked through the waters –

Hws Turn away from me.

Deacon 2 – shouting –

Hws Terrible is your sin.

78 My People

Deacon 5 – moaning –

Hws Little Big Man bach . . .

Deacon 6 –lamenting –

Hws Forgive me for eating of the wench's fruit.

Deacon 2 At last, he beheld Esther, and an awful wrath was kindled within him

Deacon 6 As he had loved her, so he now hated her.

Sam storms up to them with his knife drawn.

Sam Out of your head you must be, boy bach, to make sin with Esther!

Deacon 6 Hws Morris looked into Sam's face –

Deacon 2 A horrid fear struck him –

Deacon 6 – and he ran.

Deacon 5 Sam opened his knife and running after him –

Deacon 6 – caught him –

Deacon 2 – and killed him.

Sam and Hws fight over the knife.

Deacon 2 And killed him!

Sam/Deacon 4 stabs Hws/Deacon 3.

Deacon 1 (during **Deacon 4/Sam**) Then he returned to the place where Esther was . . . And her he killed also!

All the music and sounds from everything that has been before crash into the space. 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau' is prominent.

The ensemble plummets into a chaotic, physical frenzy made up of the attributes of all the characters they have played. This should break out into the auditorium.

Deacon 1 chases after **Deacon 4** shouting 'And her he killed also. Kill me. Kill me!' **Deacon 3** is still alive but bleeding. **Deacon 5**

Act Two, Scene Three 79

frantically clears up the space, scrubbing the floor. The Minister is at the pulpit where he speaks excerpts from the sermon muddled with Bern-Dafydd's words and gestures. There is the hint of an exorcism.

Minister

There are only two choices: W. W. W. Dot.

Heaven and Hell. And I know where I want to be.

I will abate my oppression if he makes sacrifice of a pig. Alex Ferguson!

A hundred years ago. Alex Ferguson! Things were different. We live in truth.

Suddenly it's silent, the lights switch to become a chapel again. They have been caught. They look at each other, exposed.

I trying to regain composure and piece together what they had before, the Minister picks up his sermon notes, slowly turns the pages to find his closing line. Clears his throat.

Minister And to close today's service . . . let us all sing Hymn 65.

Deacon 2 presses 'play' on the CD player. Introduction to Sibelius, 'Finlandia' ('Dros Gymru'n Gwlad' – 'Prayer for Wales'), plays.

Intake of breath.

Black.