

The Mystery of the Unicorns

An HCT production by Katherine Kerr, inspired by and adapted from "Unicorns! Unicorns!" by Geraldine McCaughrean, with additional material from Miracle Plays, by Anne Malcolmson and the original Chester Mystery Play of Noah's Flood.

CHARACTERS

God: white robe, beard

Noah: any garb, turban? list scroll

Noah's Wife: any garb

Unicorns: mask with unicorn horn; white/silver garb; tails

Hart/Hind: mask with antlers

Butterflies: mask with antenna, wings

Monkeys: monkey masks, tails

Assorted animals: masks made by kids such as:

Eagle, Lion, Wolf, Dog, Dove, Boar, Bear, Panther

Other animals: giraffe; elephant, ladybird

PROPS

Blue/green organza: for sea/foam

Thong: undies and knotted string versions

Rainsticks : tubes, rice, beans, popcorns, foil twisted into spirals

Thunderstick: PVC drumhead and springs

Sea SFX: tambourine with pasta

Rainbow: rainbow scarf to drape over wicker bent

Outlines of narwhals, hippocampi on sticks

SET

Ark bow and stern, with material in between, to be set up as Ark in audience lower stage left.

All non-playing kids with animal masks to wait by stage right for entry, with assorted rain and thunder sticks.

Noah and Mrs Noah in audience at far stage left, with room to their left for the ark/animals.

Two stagehands either side of stage area lay out the blue organza puddled forward centre stage. They will be responsible for moving the organza to represent the rising flood waters. There should be a tongue of water projecting back towards centre stage entrance.

God appears above the right wing, God waves hands during description of size and windows:

Your God, Whom all the world hath wrought,
Heaven and earth, all out of nought,
I see my people, in deed and thought,
Are set most foul in sin.

Mankind I made, and will destroy,
Beasts and worms and birds that fly;
For on the earth they do me annoy,
These folk that dwell therein.

Therefore, Noah, my servant free,
A righteous man, as I doth see,
A ship soon thou shalt make for thee
Of timbers dry and light.

Three hundred cubits it shall be long,
And fifty wide, to make it strong;
Of height fifty. Do thou with thong
Thus measure it aright.

Stagehands construct Ark during the above. Hammer in tent pegs and duct tape end poles as God gesticulates for more length. By play between Noah/stagehand regarding wrong kind of thong and correct measurement.

Add organza "water" along centre stage, give strings on corners to suitably placed audience members, and quietly tell them to hold onto it.

One window work through thy wit,
One cubit of length and breadth make it;
Upon the side a door shall sit,
For to come in and out.

*As above stanza starts, Noah/stagehand hands over rear drop to audience members/kids behind Ark to be unrolled and held up behind Noah; waves at various bits – window and door.
God nods approvingly.*

Noah, take thou thy family,
Within the ship that here I see;
For none so righteous man to me
Is now on earth living.

Of beasts of all sorts thou shalt carry
Two and two with thee to tarry
Male and female that can marry
Their kind preserving.

Of snakes and birds two and no more,
Of each, as with the beasts before
These two shall enter yonder door
Against I send the weather.

God drops behind wing. Flips rainclouds over top of wing.

SFX: Thunder, rain sticks

Noah: *(stands up, feeling the rain on his face)* It's time. *(calling)* Animals! Animals! Come aboard! The flood is coming!

Animals enter from stage right and stream across to sit in/around the Ark. Noah counts them off his list, muttering names and reminders sotto voce ad lib etc.

Noah : Aardvarks, Ants, Apteryx... Bombadier beetles, badgers, brontosauruses?

Noah's Wife *(from Ark)*: Wait a little longer dear. The best beasts are not yet aboard, and if we go without them, the world will lose its Unicorns forever.

Noah *(consults his list, muttering loudly)*: Tigers, Tasmanian devils, tapirUnicorns?
(looks up, calling): Unicorns! Unicorns! Come aboard! The flood is coming!

The Unicorns enter far stage right, looking up and appear to listen hard but uncomprehendingly. The Deer enter slowly from centre stage and get stuck at the water's edge.

Unicorn: Hart and hind, what are you waiting for? The flood waters are rising and the Ark awaits.

Hart: The earth is wet and we are stuck.

Unicorns nudge the deer out of the mud and move them towards the Ark.

Hart: We must hurry and you must hurry.

Unicorn 1: You must hurry yes, but our legs are a little stronger than yours.

Unicorn 2: And though we should not boast, God made us fast on our feet.

Hart and Hind proceed to the Ark, Unicorns turn back to stage right.

Noah: Hart. Hind. Hippopotamus. Unicorns? Unicorns! Unicorns! Come aboard! The flood is coming!

Animals on the Ark: Unicorns! Unicorns! Come aboard! The flood is coming!

The Unicorns left up their heads and start to move towards the Ark.

The Butterflies enter stage centre, showing off their wings, admiring themselves, fluttering around and then drooping as their wings turn wet; they slump to the ground. The Unicorns turn back and circle around the Butterflies.

Unicorn: Butterflies, butterflies, what are you waiting for? The flood waters are rising and the Ark awaits.

Butterfly: We were admiring ourselves in the water's reflection, but now our wings are wet and we cannot fly.

Unicorns breathe on the wings, and they begin to flutter, until standing and waving wings.

Butterfly: We must hurry and you must hurry.

Unicorn 1: You must hurry yes, before the raindrops wet your wings again, but our skins throw off the rain.

Unicorn 2: And though we should not boast, God made us fast on our feet.

Butterflies fly off to the Ark. Unicorns turn back towards to stage right.

Animals on the Ark: Unicorns! Unicorns! Come aboard! The flood is coming!

Monkeys appear above right wing, playing and hooting. Unicorns look up at them, back to the Ark and then turn back to the Monkeys.

Unicorn: Monkeys, monkeys what are you waiting for? The flood waters are rising and the Ark awaits.

Monkey: There's plenty of time, we're having fun. We can always swing through the trees.

Unicorn 1: But the water is rising and the trees are drowning. Don't be silly monkeys, don't be late.

Monkeys look down and screech in alarm. They come down entering stage centre and scamper to the Ark. The Unicorns watch them and pull the organza across the stage. The audience members pull on the string to cover the area.

Animals on the Ark: Unicorns! Unicorns! Come aboard! The flood is coming!

Noah: What's taking them so long, surely they've not been stuck in the mud.

Hart/Hind: No, no, that was us.

Noah: They may be beautiful, but if they spent time admiring themselves in the water, it serves them right.

Butterflies: No, no, that was us.

Noah: That's it, we cannot wait any longer. The Unicorns should have come what I called but they were too silly.

Monkeys: No, no, that was us.

The Unicorns canter alarmed back and forth along the back edge of the organza.

Stagehands/They pull the edges back to the stage curtain. Unicorns retreat through curtains centre stage.

Noah: Over the land the flood is spreading. May God now work his will.

Rain/thunder SFX.

Animals: Unicorns, unicorns, where are the unicorns?

The animals wail, and cry.

God: *(over right wing)*

Forty days and nights the rain

Shall fall to punish mankind's sin.

Destroying all beneath the main

For that it be my will.

SFX suddenly stops.

God:

Here I give my promise fast

That neither man, nor woman, fowl nor beast,

With water, while the world shall last,

I nevermore will spill.

Stagehands pull the organza back through the curtain.

Behind curtain backstage: *Assembly of unicorns, people with unicorn bands holding period hippocampi etc line up behind curtain holding organza up.*

God holds rainbow below him over wing.

God:

When clouds are in the heavenly sphere

This rainbow shall then appear

In token that my fierce anger

Shall no more vengeance take.

The string is fully turned to you,

And towards me is bent the bow,

That such weather shall never show;

And I this promise make.

Stagehands open curtains and those on stage roll the organza for waves and "swim" themselves and the cutouts through the waves.

Noah (pointing): Animals, animals, see the waves, see the arching manes and the prancing hooves.
Even through the driving rain, the angels saw who had stopped to help the Deer.
Even through the rolling thunder, the angels heard who breathed on the Butterfly.
Even through the roar of the flood, the angels knew who had warned the Monkeys.
And God saved them as he may.

Animals (animals stream off the Ark to centre stage, cheering and pointing and hug the unicorns):
Unicorns! Unicorns! The unicorns are here.

All take bows.