

The Oberufer Shepherds' Play

The Oberufer Shepherds' Play is one of a trilogy of medieval plays collected from the German island of Oberufer in the mid-19th century. Legacy of a pristine folk tradition, the three plays depict tales from both the Old and New Testaments.

Although the Shepherds' Play is rendered in images specific to the Christmas story, the theme is universally human: the search for our own places in this world, for the meaning of our lives, and for the true meaning of love. The birth of the child at Christmas is one traditional expression of this love, and goes beyond cultural or historical specifics to speak to the child in us all.

The shepherds' humorous camaraderie encourages us all to delight in their innocence, and in their willingness to follow their hearts. Watching, we experience both raucous laughter and deep reverence: In the midst of what may be a frantic holiday season, the play gives us a moment to stand back and enjoy the simple innocence and love expressed through the shepherds, and through our children.