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Noah and the Flood. A play for 3rd
Grade by Eugene Schwartz
Black and White Drawing in the 11th Class
By Jünemann and Weitmann

Waldorf Clearing House
17100 Superior Street
Northridge, Ca 91325

NOAH AND THE FLOOD

Prologue in Heaven

(GOD in His Throne. Around him the Archangels URIEL, GABRIEL, RAPHAEL and MICHAEL move in a circle. Behind them stands the CHOIR OF ANGELS, singing a hymn of praise).

GOD: (Raises his hand) Uriel, thine untiring gaze
Has looked upon Earth since ancient days
Say, how fare those Sons of God
Who joined themselves to earthy sod?

(As each Archangel replies he moves around one quarter of the circle).

URIEL: In the Fall of Man they share
And Man's sinful burden bear.
Judged by what they are meant to be
Men are sour Fruits, Fallen Far From the tree.

GOD: And Gabriel, mine Angel, dost thou see aught of worth?

GABRIEL: None out of Love are brought to birth,
And with their first breath they curse the Earth;
Neither parents nor teachers will nourish their souls
So all soon grow wasted, and withered and old.

GOD: Raphael, unto thy soul's eye what is revealed?

RAPHAEL: So harsh and hardened are men's feelings
There's little hope for help or healing.
The weak Earth shrivels along with men
And hastens, sickly, to its end.

GOD: And Michael, warrior Angel mine,
What of Man's Spirit dost thou divine?

MICHAEL: Man's mind conjures e'er more powerful ways
To baby his body and lengthen his days;
He's busy creating new cravings and wishes -
His Spirit's enslaved to his needs and his riches!

GOD: O Heavenly leaders, my Archangels four,
All that you say makes my heart grow full sore.
Mankind, the intended Crown of Creation,
Must die in a deluge of dark devastation.

(Choir of Angels gasp)

GOD: All we have given we shall take away -
Let the Angel of Death rule the Earth's sad last day!

URIEL, GABRIEL,)
RAPHAEL, CHOIR) In this, as in all things, we speak as one,
On Earth, as in Heaven, thy will shall be done.

MICHAEL: Alas, must there be undone all of Creation
Because of the sins of these Last generations?
From one godly man there could spring a race
That would redeem Earth's evil and Man's Failings erase!
(Thoughtfully) Here, in God's Heaven, there rests a pure soul,
Ripe to return to an earthy abode,
One who has dared to live and to die ---

GOD: But if such a soul in Heaven now bides,
Why choose again Earth's sorrowful life?

(The SOUL OF NOAH steps forth from the Choir of Angels)

SOUL OF NOAH: O God, if such a sacrifice
Would save the race of men
I gladly would leave Paradise
And live on Earth again.

RAPHAEL: Thy voice resoundeth throughout Heaven -
Raise the Earth with they birth's leaven!

GABRIEL: Wait! Ere you make this bold decision
Of the life ahead you must have a vision;
For every life has its sorrow and pains
And you may in Heaven still wish to remain.

(Gabriel takes the Soul of Noah by the hand and makes a sweeping gesture with his arm)

GABRIEL: O Darkness! O Light! Weave well a tapestry
Fortelling in truth his human destiny!

URIEL: Behold, O Soul, what is to come -
Does it make your tremble? Does it strike you dumb?
Have you the courage to face such a life
Filled with such hardship and danger and strife?

SOUL OF NOAH: Wild and wicked is the world of Man
I see before me like a dream,
But if I true and upright stand
Then through me can goodness stream
I will descend into human birth
And unite my Spirit with Mankind and Earth.

GOD: Then go, my child, whom NOAH I name,
Forget not it is Heaven from whence thou came!

(Choir of Angels repeats hymn of praise)

MICHAEL, IRIEL,)
GABRIEL, RAPHAEL) Remember our voices -- thou wilt hear them again --
Rolling like thunder --- rattling like rain ---

(As Soul of Noah descends - thunder - lightning - darkness)

THE WORK

(The three sons of Noah, SHEM, HAM AND JAPHETH, are at work on the Ark. A CHORUS OF TOWNSCHILDREN, dressed in dirty and dingy clothes, approaches. Many carry sticks or stones in their hands.)

CHORUS: Shem, come put your gouge away
And join us in our romp and play
Must your work from dawn to dark
Upon your Father's stupid Ark?

SHEM: (continues working)
My Father's work, though long and hard,
I do at the command of God!

CHORUS: What a cruel God yours must be -
Our gods let us run quite free! (They run and laugh)

But Ham, come put away your saw,
And join us in our games of war;
We all throw stones at everyone -
The more we hit, the more's the fun! (Laugh)

HAM: I work well, and work with love,
For I do the work of God above!

CHORUS: Your God makes you work all night -
Our gods let us scream and fight! (they scream and fight)

But Japheth, put your hammer down
And run with us all through the town;
The sick and the old we'll mock and taunt,
We'll steal whatever food we want! (laugh)

JAPHETH: My Father's work is what I do -
Go home and help your parents too!

CHORUS: Our parents, don't want us and we feel the same,
So come, sons of Noah and join in our games --
(Mocking) or are you afraid it might start to rain? (laugh)

SHEM, HAM, JAPHETH: Away with you all, and your gods made of clay!
You act brave enough in the light of the day;
But wait until God sends some dark rainy nights -
Then you'll run scampering home full of fright!

CHORUS: (mocking) Rain, rain go away
Noah's babies just won't play
Working hard both night and day ...
(they raise sticks in the air)
Until some sticks were thrown their way! --

(NOAH appears before the ark. The Chorus flees)

CHORUS: Help! O help! Don't let him catch us! (They disappear)

JAPHETH(To Noah): Father, forgive us for speaking so proudly
But the others mock God and laugh at us loudly.

- HAM: Our love they spurn, and return hate,
I fear they are doomed to an evil Fate!
- SHEM: So hard and heartless have they grown
From sinful seeds that were scornfully sown.
- NOAH: My sons, you speak wisely and all too well;
By forgetting Heaven men turn the Earth into Hell.

But now, my good workers, come, tell me right true -
Have you done what you set out to do?
- JAPHETH: Aye, Father Noah, all that and more!
I've fully sealed up the lowest deck floor -
With pitch I patched every crack so tight
That a heard of cattle could stay dry tonight.
- HAM: My work on the mid-deck is almost complete,
It's walls are of gopher wood, fragrant and sweet.
Like orderly soldiers its beams and joists stand,
Full ready to shelter the beasts I command.
- SHEM: Upon the third deck I labored all day
The eagles swooped over its roof in their play;
And two open windows I've gouged in the walls,
So that we may see the great rain as it falls.
- NOAH: How well, my three sons, have you done God's Commands -
And none too soon, for the time is at hand!
Tell your wives all your goods now must come on the Ark,
While you three should be busy before it grows dark.
From the hills, woods and valleys, two by two you shall bring
Every flying, leaping, cawing, crying,
Fleet and slow, loud and low,
Furry, feathery, scaley, leathery
Beast and fowl, chirp and growl,
Two by two of everything!
- SHEM: I'll search all the treetops and scale mountain heights;
No birds shall elude my sharp eagle-eyed sight!
- HAM: I'll stalk through dark forests the lions to find
No sharp-toothed beasts will we let stay behind!
- JAPHETH: The cattle come slowly, but the horses are fleet,
The donkeys will balk and the shy sheep will bleat!
- NOAH: As swift as the wind, my sons, be on your way,
For soon must the Ark be all filled - and away!

(Shem Ham and Japheth run off in different directions. Noah stands before the altar, eyes closed, arms raised in prayer)

(Uriel, in Man-Form; Michael, in Eagle-Form; Raphael, in Lion-form and Gabriel, in Bull-form, gather round Noah)

- URIEL: O Noah, still thou wonderst why
The children of God are doomed to die
From God, who formest everything
We come, and heavenly wisdom bring.

MICHAEL: Know that only bodies die.
Souls return to Heaven on high,
Man's Spirit lives and does not perish,

RAPHAEL: But is reformed, renewed, refreshed.
Whatever ill the soul's mirror reveals
Man's spirit will work for long ages to heal.

GABRIEL: Even those that today they warning spurn
May once again to Earth return,
And Honor you, Noah, as a mighty sage,
Forgetting how once they mocked and raged!

URIEL, GABRIEL,) Now, Noah - go! Preserve but the best,
MICHAEL, RAPHAEL) And to well-deserved ruin leave the rest!

(The Archangels withdraw)

THE FLOOD

(NOAH'S WIFE, SHEM'S WIFE, HAM'S WIFE, JAPHETH'S WIFE approach the Ark, carrying burdens of household goods).

SHEM'S WIFE: Where could those men be?

HAM'S WIFE: Something's happened, I fear!

JAPHETH'S WIFE: Ha! The moment the work's done
Is when they'll appear!

SHEM'S WIFE: Ah, while we sweat and struggle
And our feeble strength share,
They roam the woods with nary a care!

HAM'S WIFE: 'Till home they return, tracking mud and manure -
But such are the hardships all women endure!

JAPHETHS'S WIFE: Know well that when the Flood's ended
And its story is told
All you'll hear is of the men,
And their deeds brave and bold ...

SHEM'S WIFE: But hardly a word will you hear of their wives -
Except that they somehow escaped with their lives!

ALL: A woman's work is never done,
From morn to noon to setting sun;
Through fairest days and rolling flood -
The mean do the talking - but we do the good!

NOAH;S WIFE: Now stop all your talking
And look over our store
On the journey we're taking
We can't purchase more.
Have we our pots and our pitchers of oil
The grain that we winnowed with our harvest's toil?

NOAH'S WIFE (continued) Have we dried figs and dates plump, ripe and sweet?
Have we nuts, fruits and olives? Have we fish, have we meat?
Have we the bounty that Sun and Earth gave?
Have we the seeds that God wants us to save?

HAM'S WIFE: All's stowed in the Ark with order and care.
But why take such pains and be so well prepared
To meet no one at all on a trip to nowhere?

JAPHETH'S WIFE: No one to dress up for

SHEM'S WIFE: No one to see

HAM'S WIFE: No one to gossip with over our tea!

JAPHETH'S WIFE: No one to trade with for oil or grain

SHEM'S WIFE: No one to bargain with for loss or for gain

HAM'S WIFE: No one to complain about, no one to complain!

ALL: No one, no sun, nothing at all! (They weep.)

NOAH'S WIFE: Oh, stop your weeping, do not whimper or bawl,
For in that Nothing will we find our All!

(Noah appears)

NOAH: The time has come!
Your husbands arrive,
All the beasts before them drive.
Lower the gangplank, unfasten the hatches,
Open the windows and release the latches -
By evening we must load the Ark,
For rain will come as it grows dark!

(Japheth appears with bulls, horses and other ruminants)

JAPHETH: Come aboard, o come aboard!
Enter bulls and cows so slowly,
Heavy, study, softly lowing;
Rambling lambs, the rams' horns meeting,
Come then sheep, and cease your bleating.
Goats, you boisterous bearded fellows,
Don't try to butt or the bulls will bellow!
Whoa, ho, my colts, though now you're nervous
When you're grown up you'll do us service.
Catering mares and stallions steaming
Work horses' coats damp with sweat all gleaming -
Neigh and snort now, gallop and roll,
Once in the Ark how calm you'll grow!
So come aboard, O come aboard!

(Ham appears with Lions, other carnivores and small animals)

HAM: Come aboard, O come aboard!
Lions, lead on to the middle deck,
Where with kingly pride the beasts you'll protect;
Tigers, jaguars, panthers, lynxes,
Green eyes glowing strange as sphinxes,
Softly stalking, come aboard
And serve King Lion as Ladies and Lords.
Nor shall we forget housecats -
They'll laze about - but keep down the rats!
Wild wolves, growling fierce at the sky,
Come into the Ark, where you'll stay warm and dry.
Clever foxes, coyotes, and of course - loyal dogs!
Bristly boars, squirrels, monkeys, racoons, rabbits
and groundhogs!
Come aboard, O come aboard!

(Shem appears with eagles and other birds.)

SHEM: Come aboard, O come aboard!
Eagles, glide on your proud pinions,
Bid farewell to old dominions,
High hovering hawks, now find a perch,
For food you need no longer search.
Squawking parrots, plumage bright,
Don't be talking half the night!
Cardinals, skylarks, chikadees
Your songs of praise to God we'll need;
Owls and chickens, ducks and doves,
Hoot, cluck, quack and coo your love.
Feathers ruffled? Don't squeal or screech -
There's room enough at the top for each,
So come aboard, O come aboard!

(As the last animals go up the gangplank, the Wives follow. Noah stands, ready to close up the ark)

NOAH: Come aboard, O come aboard!
Scamper, scatter, bark and chatter!
Growl and whimper, whine and simper,
Snort and chortle, freeze and startle!
Put your hungers, fears aside,
Here in peace must each abide -
In harmony the beasts will dwell
'Till all the world's again made well -
So come aboard, O ALL ABOARD!

(Noah's last call is echoed as a clap of Thunder. The rain begins)

(The Storm and Flood can be done eurythmically, accompanied by music. The Four Archangels can raise the lower blue veils to show the moving waves. Those in the Ark sleep through the Flood. The waves withdraws and Noah awakens, stands staring out to sea.)

THE PROMISE

NOAH: (gazing into the distance)

Naught see I but sea and sky -
As God decreed, all had to die.
I've sent forth a raven, as a scout,
Who flew to and fro, for no land was about.
A dove sent out later returned in good time,
But of no dry land did she bear a sign.
Seven days have passed, so again will I try
To see if the mountains at least have come dry.

(He sends out a dove)

O gentle dove now fly high and free,
Then with good tidings return unto me!

(The doves flies about, disappears, then returns with an olive branch in her beak)

NOAH:

An olive branch! Then land is dry
And breezes through treetops can sweetly sigh;
Ah, blessed dove and branch new grown,
From this day forth you shall be known
As signs of peace and the world's fresh start,
Of hope e'er renewed in the human heart!
Hear the wind whispering, soft as a breath,
"As the dawn lightens darkness, so Man conquers death!"

(He calls into the Ark)

Land ho! Look east! See the shy blushing Earth
Aroused by the Sun to watch Mankind's rebirth!

(All others in the Ark arise and stand behind Noah)

NOAH:

Lower the gangplank! Unfasten the hatches!
Open the windows and release the latches!
The Sun's overcoming the clouds and the dark -
'Tis morning - and we must now unload the Ark!

(Noah's Wife and the three Sons' Wives first leave the Ark)

NOAH'S WIFE:

Oh see the fresh world,

SHEM'S WIFE:

The sky is so blue

HAM'S WIFE:

The grass is so green

JAPHETH'S WIFE:

The stones sparkle with dew.

NOAH'S WIFE:

The breeze blows so free

SHEM'S WIFE:

The clouds are so white

HAM'S WIFE:

The flowers are so fragrant

JAPHETH'S WIFE:

Each crystal bursts with light!

ALL:

Bright World, full of wonders
To praise and adore
Why weren't we grateful for all this before?

(The animals, led by Noah's sons, begin to leave the Ark. Noah remains, calling out to them.)

NOAH: Now please your manners, good animals all -
You must never push, or jostle, or call
Loudly to others, telling them they should move
While you most impatiently butt, kick or shove;
Walk out two by two, in lines neat, straight and double
And once you're on land try to stay out of trouble!
You got along well all these days without end -
Remember - you're cousins and meant to be friends!

(The animals form a chorus behind Noah's Wife, Sons and their Wives)

NOAH: Now to God we offer praise
For sparing us from the storm's wild waves.

(As all are praying, two RAINBOW-BEARERS approach, holding the colored veils of the Rainbow between them)

RAINBOW-BEARERS: Noah, know that God has placed
His Bow into the heighs
A bridge of color spanning space
Glowing and lustrous bright.
Seek us again when the wind and the rain
Have grown calm, and the shining sun
Unfurls the veils fo the mists as they curl
And the Light and the Dark merge as one!

(The four Archangels appear. Michael stands next to Shem; Raphael next to Ham and Gabriel next to Japheth.)

MICHAEL: Shem, to the North and the West you must go,
Where, out of cold and the blood-chilling snow,
You and your race shall become those who know.

GABRIEL: Japheth, no man could work harder than you -
Go to the East, to your God remain true;
You and your race shall become those who do

RAPHAEL: Ham, lion-brave yet as mild as a dove,
Go to the South, where the Sun burns above;
You and your race shall become those who love

URIEL: No one brother apart has been given full might
To redeem earthly darkness through God's loving light.
Not one race alone - oh, no, but all three
In brotherhood will stive for good
And help Man become loving and Free!

ALL THE PLAYERS: Seek us again when the wind and the rain
Have calmed, and the shining sun
Unfurls the veils of the mists as they curl
And the Light and the Dark merge as One!

THE END