

PERUSAL SCRIPT

SAINTS IN REVOLT

A Play in One Act
by Coni Ciongoli Koepfinger



Newport, Maine

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SAINTS IN REVOLT

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Dramatis Personae 4f, 2m

Hildegard of Bingen — the now famous Prophetess of the Rhine, 12th Century Benedictine abbess, healer, preacher, composer, musician and mystic.

Julian of Norwich — English mystic and theological writer; anointed anchoress of the Middle Ages, who lived in the walls of the church with only a small portal to receive Holy Eucharist and to see those who came to her as counselor.

Saint Bridget — 14th Century Swedish mystic who was a channel for John the Baptist and other tormented human souls. While still in the womb she saved the ship her mother was on and from that point became known as a visionary working miracles. The seventh child of a powerful family, she married at thirteen, and before long bore eight children to complete her domestic life.

Saint Benedict — a Roman aristocrat who died in 543, but brought a beautiful blend of sincere devotion with psychological insight with the incarnation of Western monasticism. The music of his mission is again popular in the sounds of Benedictine chants emerging today.

Joan of Arc — the peasant girl who paraded about France in the 1400's wearing men's clothing and proclaiming experiences of saintly visions. At the turning point of the 100 years war, she was subjected to an inquisitorial trial and condemned as a heretic and a witch for her androgynous threat to the military.

Thomas Aquinas — 13th Century Dominican Friar and Parisian professor; A portly Neapolitan aristocrat of sedate disposition who firmly believed that the existence of God could be proved in five ways by the power of human reason and not by feminine intuition. The lost book will serve to prove his life's work in vain, thus he tries to stop its retrieval, ensuing it will cause the ultimate demise of the church law.

SETTING: A Timeless Medieval period — should be stark, otherworldly.

COSTUMES: should be Medieval-ish.

RUNNING TIME: 35-40 minutes

SAINTS IN REVOLT—Light From The Dark Ages A Medieval Metadrama by Coni Ciongoli Koepfinger. A Medieval esprit d'corps bands together to claim conflict against Thomas Aquinas in a metaphysical gender revolution. CHARACTERS: 4f 2m. PERIOD: Timeless / Medieval. RUNNING TIME: 35-40 minutes Hildegard of Bingen, Joan of Arc, St. Bridget and Julian of Norwich return with a mission from the Age of Mysticism, each woman in her own right has a claimed conflict with Thomas Aquinas, our antagonist, in this plot of intrigue, love and faith against the oppressive forces of the Inquisition and sexism. The end of time has come and God has decreed an end to the Age of Secrets. Famed theologian, Thomas Aquinas now fears that his teaching about women will be found erroneous. He calls forth these strong women of his day under the pretense that he has written a play in their honor. Yet when they arrive, they find that he was planning to burn them all at the stake to rid the world all record and memory of their contributions. When Thomas' plan backfires, the women see fit to create their own scenario, casting Thomas and other men in unimagined roles.
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CONI CIONGOLI KOEPFINGER — As winner of the 2021 Olwen Wymark Theatre Award for encouraging artists worldwide by the Writer's Guild of Great Britain, Coni Koepfinger believes that creative energy is never lost - it just changes hands and hearts. Currently she is the host of AIRPLAY/ DETERMINED WOMEN, a virtual theatre program in its 13th season that brings the voices of artists, actors, playwrights from all over the world. As adjunct faculty, Coni has taught theatre and composition at Carnegie Mellon, Penn State and Point Park University. Coni considers herself a global personality as Get the Message was performed in 2023 by high school students in the Philippines; she is also a contributing writer for the Center of Conscious Creativity in LA; a Member of The Dramatists Guild, a former board member and committee chair of the International Center for Women Playwrights and the League of Professional Theatre Women. Working with her writing partner Joe Izen, Coni has scribed powerful commentaries on society with Eve of Beltane -a fresh look at political corruption in the face of ancient Celtic mythology which played in the Broadway Bound Festival (2019); Schoolhouse -an ultramodern musical that takes the young victim of a school shooting through a magical journey; and the new age musical, Kingdom Come, where technology meets its match with TED, the world's first transhuman who falls in love with boss only to reveal a beautiful evolution for humanity, currently being developed by Sia Koskina in Greece. Other productions include Garrett, the Blue Giraffe at Pan Asian Rep's NuWorks 2019; Takin' It Back a ten-minute play for THE ME-TOO PROJECT in Harlem; and Playing House a commissioned play on Bella Abzug for UNTOLD STORIES OF JEWISH WOMEN and Playing Fate in the New Blood Series; My Dinner with Mary, which was streamed-live from The Player's Club in Gramercy Park. Simon Says, won placement in PLAYBILL'S VTF (Virtual Theatre Festival) 2020 and was accepted in Manhattan Rep's STORIES film competition in 2021; Josie in the Bardo (2022) at The Chain Theatre; The Unusal Chauncey Faust (2023) at the Rogue Theatre Festival; Live from the Bardo (2023) read at The East Broadway Theatre Project; and a showcase of Auditioning for Eternity (2023) at Theater for the New City.

SAINTS IN REVOLT

Pre-Show MUSIC can be played.

SCENE: *Black night. A Wasteland somewhere in time. The shadowy figures of FOUR WOMEN bound to stakes centerstage: HILDEGARD, JULIAN, BRIDGET, and as the lights fade in. As the PRE-SHOW MUSIC fades out and the blustery winds die down, SPOTLIGHTS come up on THE FOUR WOMEN.*

HILDEGARD: Look at this place! Gives me the creeps! Who on earth cast a play here?

JOAN: Thomas Aquinas.

HILDEGARD: What? He wrote it. Why is he directing his own play?

JOAN: Who else would direct his morbid realities? Thank the Lord he was taken from time when he was. Can you imagine his continuing contributions to literature...

HILDEGARD: I can't believe I'm here. I should have never been tempted to act again.

JOAN: I know... Me, too. I can't believe I'm going to go through all of this rubbish again. I've already created one of the most exciting lead roles in history.

HILDEGARD: Oh, quit bragging! Hey, I'm making a comeback now too, you know. You're not the only shining star around here.

JOAN: I don't know how he tempted me back on this stage... I was finally at peace.

HILDEGARD: It was that unresolved ending! I couldn't resist it! He said that we could write our own endings. Did he tell you that too? We can set the record straight once and for all!

JOAN: Yes, I guess that's why I came out here, too. I liked the idea that I could have a little say in his story. Ha! His story. History, as opposed to her story or our story. I guess I'll always see things a little differently. I've got a natural bent sense of humor.

HILDEGARD: Such a stark beginning. And the set... Oh, come on... I mean... What's the point? Everyone knows that eternity doesn't look like this. It was proven centuries ago. And these costumes. The man has no sense of aesthetics! None! If I were doing this show, in fact, I thought about this for my ending... I'd concentrate on salvation! Ah! What a blessed thought! Why Thomas has to focus on damnation is beyond me!

JOAN: I know...

(Laughing)

I know. But the real ripper is the title. "SEVEN AT STAKE", it sounds like a take-off on that silly farce, "DINNER AT EIGHT"... But perhaps for those with a bit of a metaphysical appetite. What a washout. I mean you have to wonder where he was when God was handing out inspiration.

BRIDGET: Please ladies, he's not so bad. We must not gossip. No good ever...

JOAN: Here we go again... The commandments according to the Bridge. Oh, ease up.

BRIDGET: *(sighs)* I'm just saying that Thomas is ... Well, we mustn't judge him so harshly.

JOAN: Don't forget that he was one of the ones going around telling people that we aren't as good as men! That women do not have souls!! His teachings were the foundations of the silly laws that had me burned. C'est vrai! C'est vrai!

BRIDGET: But don't you see, you must forgive him...

JOAN: Forgive him! I was burned before.... No! Tres mal! Tres mal! Tres mal! Les miserables!

HILDEGARD: Ladies, ladies please! Ssshhh! You'll wake Julian! She needs her rest, now. Come on. She was up all night with her blessed showings again. And this is a very demanding role, let her sleep for a while longer, at least until the stage manager comes in.

BRIDGET: Oh, come on, Joanie, that was centuries ago... And knock off the French accent, you're beyond that now. Language isn't a problem anymore. Don't recreate that quandary all over again. Thanks to Hildegard we mystics now have our own sacred language.

JOAN: I can't believe I'm here. Hildie, you talked me into this.... If I'd have known it was Aquinas' play, I'd have never auditioned. The guy is an absolute sexist jerk.

BRIDGET: I'm telling you, Joanie, he's changed. He's not the same man. Really, believe me. I know. I've grown to know him intimately. He is gentle now.

HILDEGARD: Ladies! Ssshhh! Here comes Benedict.

(Aside)

Is he cute or what!

JOAN: Talk about a crush.

(Laughs)

You meant it when you said you'd love him forever! I think you should just tell him how you feel, I mean...

HILDEGARD: Never! Ssshhh! No... I think he's going to the other side of the mountain to meditate.

BRIDGET: Men do not accept things like that, Joan.

JOAN: You were in love with him even when he was just an ordinary mortal. What was his name in that show at that little theatre? Denny Martin? Or Dean Martin? I can't remember.

JULIAN: *(wakening slowly)* Did someone say meditate?

JOAN: Girlfriend, you were out cold! Honey you were snorting like a rhino with a...

BRIDGET: Joan! Must you always be so brash?

JOAN: Look Bridget, stop acting like such a girl... Oh here comes Benny!

HILDEGARD: Why my dear Saint Benedict, so very good it is to see you!

(Calming BENEDICT with a gentle hand)

Oh my, why so pale? Why you look as if you've just seen a ghost!

JOAN: *(laughs)* We are ghosts! Be serious.

HILDEGARD: Benedict, just wait till you hear... Only an artist of your genius can appreciate my vision! Oh, just wait till you hear! I've got a great idea for my ending! The song lingers as floating clouds...Holy, Holy Longing! Joy to the Blissful Soul! Adorned with the Heavenly Host, the Human Potential alas rises to the level of Angels! The Lord's order of creation performed! Come, let us nurse at the heart of virtue! Chant we justice by shedding bloody lustful vice! Alleluia ! We shall complete the choir! Supplant the fallen angels! The order was no longer constant! After the fall... Mortals became capricious... Homo Instabilis! Alleluia! Alleluia! God's wondrous hymns of praise! Alas! We come to before Him with the holy deeds of mortals... Thoust order is restored, the balance, Homo Immutabilis! The way it was, is and shall be with the angelic hymn of praise! Glory to God! Glory to God in the Highest!

BENEDICT: O my holy sisters! We have to get out of here. Fast! We have to stop this play! We can't allow this to occur. It will have a disastrous effect upon humanity! Thomas has gone mad! I've read the script! He's mad! He's raving. He's going to kill you all!

JOAN: No biggie, Benny boy. Been there, done that.

BENEDICT: No, it's going to be different this time... Speaking of time – we must hurry. He must be stopped! We must stop him! Hildegard! Julian! Thou art mystics! Thou art visionaries! Why didn't you see this coming?

HILDEGARD: So this is why he never let us read the second act.

JULIAN: No, he said that it was only a one-act play.

JOAN: I remember, he specifically said it was a one-act! Oh, I knew he would burn us again! I had that feeling! Why can't I ever learn to listen to my feelings?

JULIAN: What are we to do, kind Benedict?

BENEDICT: When in doubt, we must stick to the monastic rule. For certain he plans your demise in the second act. And not only in fiction, but in truth.

JOAN: Okay, right. Refresh me, Benny. What would that be?

BENEDICT: “Reprove, entreat, rebuke.”

JOAN: (*touches his forehead*) Are you well? Did you eat today? Skin and bones!

HILDEGARD: Stop riding him, Joanie.

(*To BENEDICT*)

She means well, Benedict. I'll handle her.

BRIDGET: Benedict, kind sir, what do you see that which we are blind of?

BENEDICT: Sheer lunacy! He's plans to burn you ladies, plus three others, seven, in all.

(Pause)

He plans to use the violet consuming flame to remove all record of your existence from the history of mankind.

JOAN: *(screams)* That's exactly it! MAN kind.... Man is not kind at all.

HILDEGARD

What have we done? Why is he doing this?

BENEDICT: To fry the remnants of your very earthly memory! For he believes that women should never speak about God and now he is insisting that your message and your music be removed from the mind of mankind... for all eternity! He is simply of despotic mentality.

HILDEGARD: Remove my records of music! Never! If a beast be mad we take away his gonads... So what if a playwright be mad? What if a director be mad? We must castrate him too! Take away his pen! Burn his manuscripts!

BENEDICT: That won't stop him! Aquinas has plotted this ending so many times... I'm sure that he has it memorized. He's been planning for centuries. And now that God has allowed an end to the age of secrets now everyone will understand the importance of your work. Well, he is

furious!

JULIAN: We must pray together!

BRIDGET: Yes. We must pray.

JOAN: To hell with that! Untie me, man! We must fight this maniac!

(BENEDICT unties the WOMEN.)

HILDEGARD: I bet he gets off on this bondage thing.... We should tie him to the stake.

BRIDGET: No, he's changed, I tell you. He's a different man! You don't know him! I don't believe this talk! It's rubbish! It's gossip and it's deceitful! I won't listen! Thomas is a saint!

JOAN: Would you rather burn?

BRIDGET: This is only a play, my dear... Do not let your fantasies run wild again.

JOAN: Don't even rebuke me, Ms. Bridget... You play with Thomas, you trust a guy like that and you're sure to get burned.

HILDEGARD: Ah, truth at last. They have always made me keep quiet about the healing powers of music. They called it the Dark Ages!

7 MORE PAGES TO END