



# **The Firstborn** Christopher Fry

**“THE FIRSTBORN”** is concerned with Moses’ attempt to free the Children of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The story is told in the book of Exodus, from which the following account is adapted.

The Children of Israel came to live in Egypt at the time of Joseph, who was the most powerful man in the land under the Pharaoh. After the death of Joseph there arose a Pharaoh who was afraid of the Israelites because their numbers were greater than the Egyptians, so he set taskmasters over them and made them build cities for him. But the Israelites continued to multiply; so Pharaoh ordered that all their newborn sons should be killed.

The baby Moses was saved from this slaughter because his mother hid him in an ark of bulrushes, which she placed on the river. This ark was found by Pharaoh’s daughter, who brought Moses up as her own son. When Moses was grown he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand; then he fled from Egypt to avoid his own death.

After the death of the Pharaoh the Children of Israel continued to suffer in bondage. So Moses came with his brother Aaron to the new Pharaoh and said: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go.” But Pharaoh would not.

So the Egyptians were cursed with plagues: first all the water was turned to blood; then came frogs, lice, flies, the death of all the cattle, boils, hail, locusts and darkness. But Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go.

So finally Moses came to Pharaoh and said: “Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.

And it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle.”

And at last Pharaoh let the Children of Israel go from the land of Egypt.

**Designed and directed by Malcolm Brown at**

# **The Firstborn** Christopher Fry

## **CAST:**

<b>Anath Bithiah</b> , Pharaoh's sister	<i>Monica Brown</i>
<b>Teusret</b> , Pharaoh's daughter	<i>Chris Polley</i>
<b>Seti the Second</b> , the Pharaoh	<i>Edwin Barraclough</i>
<b>Rameses</b> , his son	<i>Stuart Mitchell</i>
<b>Moses</b>	<i>Robin Polley</i>
<b>Aaron</b> , his brother	<i>Trevor Money</i>
<b>Miriam</b> , his sister	<i>Betty Triggs</i>
<b>Shendi</b> , Miriam's son	<i>John Biggins</i>
<b>Kef</b> , a Minister	<i>George Little</i>
<b>Overseers</b>	<i>Dennis Stevenson, Neil Newton</i>
<b>Guard</b>	<i>Neil Newton</i>
<b>Israelite Boy</b>	<i>Nicolas Money</i>

## For the Arts Centre:

<b>Stage Manager</b>	Geoff Mountain
<b>Assistant Stage Manager</b>	Jim Young
<b>Properties</b>	Doreen Parker
<b>Music and Sound Control</b>	Gillian Thresh
<b>Sound Recording</b>	Sydney Irving
<b>Prompt</b>	Helen Foster
<b>Front of House Manager</b>	Anita Mountain
<b>Set and Costume Design</b>	Malcolm Brown
<b>Wardrobe</b>	Anne Robinson, Margaret Rhodes and members of the wardrobe team
<b>Publicity</b>	Pam and Gordon Wilson
<b>Box Office</b>	John Pemberton
<b>Bookings</b>	June and Dennis Stevenson
<b>Liaison</b>	Anne Robinson

## For the Civic Theatre:

<b>Theatre Manager</b>	Fred Mower
<b>Resident Stage Manager</b>	Julia Piggott
<b>Lighting Technician</b>	Nick Morris

**the Civic Theatre 28th June to 2nd July 1977.**

# The Firstborn Christopher Fry

This play — begun as long ago as 1938, though not finished until 1945 after four years when circumstances made me neglect it — has a title which at first may seem to quarrel with most of the action, since the chief protagonist is Moses. But I hope, after a little acquaintance, the figure of life which Rameses presents will be seen to take a central place from his first entrance to the end. The character of Moses is a movement towards maturity, towards a balancing of life within the mystery, where the conflicts and dilemmas are the trembling of the balance. In the last scene he suffers a momentary spiritual death *I followed a light into a blindness* at the moment when the firstborn's physical death creates the Hebrews' freedom; and his resurrection from that, to become a great leader, though only hinted at as the curtain falls, carries with it something of the life of Rameses.

*Death was their question to us, and our lives  
Become their understanding or perplexity.  
And by living to answer them, we also answer  
Our own impermanence.*

Rameses lives a boyhood almost identical with Moses' own; he and the Hebrew Shendi between them draw the frontiers of combat altogether differently from the lines laid down by accepted human action. Rameses is the innocence, humanity, vigour and worth which stand on the enemy side, not altering the justice or necessity of Moses' cause, but linking the ways of men and the ways of God with a deep and urgent question-mark.

**CHRISTOPHER FRY, 28th December, 1951.**

The action of the play takes place in the summer of 1200 B.C.

ACT ONE:	Scene One	—	The terrace of the Palace of Seti the Second at Tanis.
	Scene Two	—	Miriam's Tent.
	Scene Three	—	A Room in the Palace.

## INTERVAL

ACT TWO:	Scene One	—	Miriam's Tent.
	Scene Two	—	A Room in the Palace.
ACT THREE:	Scene One	—	Miriam's Tent.
	Scene Two	—	A Room in the Palace.

**There will be one interval of twenty minutes during which the theatre bar will be open. Ice cream will be on sale in the auditorium and coffee will be available in the bar.**

# **The Firstborn** Christopher Fry

## *Next Season*

**LEEDS ARTS CENTRE will present:**

27th Sept. to  
1st Oct. 1977

**Barefoot in the Park** by Neil Simon.  
Directed by Roger Cook.

6th to 10th  
Dec. 1977

**Dr. Faustus** by Christopher Marlowe.  
Directed by Malcolm Brown.

7th to 11th  
Feb. 1978

**The Importance of being Ernest** by Oscar Wilde.  
Directed by Margaret Rhodes.

11th to 15th  
April 1978

**Rookery Nook** by Ben Travers.  
Directed by Stan Smith.

20th to 24th  
June 1978

**Another original musical revue.**  
by David Carrack.

If you would like tickets for any of these shows please enquire at the box office during the interval or telephone Leeds 892346.

You might like to take a season ticket; this gives you the seat of your choice anywhere in the theatre for each of the five shows at a cost of only £2.40. It's a bargain – please ask for details!

The public may leave the Civic Theatre at the end of the performance by all exit and entrance doors and such doors must at that time be open. All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any obstruction. The safety curtain must be lowered and raised once immediately before each performance to check that it is in proper working order.

# LEEDS ARTS CENTRE

**Leeds Arts Centre** was formed in 1945 as an amateur Society to encourage and foster interest in the arts.

**The Drama Group** mounts five productions – usually including a musical or revue type show – at the Civic Theatre.

**The Green Room Group** puts on plays and other forms of entertainment in the rehearsal rooms to give members valuable experience of acting and producing before tackling major parts or productions in the Civic Theatre. Season ticket holders are welcome to attend these performances.

**The Fine Arts Group** meets twice each week throughout the year for drawing, painting and other creative work.

In addition there is a variety of social activities for members, such as theatre visits, outings, parties, etc.

**New Members** are always welcome so if you are interested in acting, drawing, painting (pictures or scenery), set building, making costumes, helping back stage, front of house or even with publicity and think you might like to join the Centre, or would like more information please write to:

*The Secretary, Leeds Arts Centre,  
Stansfeld Chambers, Great George Street,  
Leeds 1.*

**costume hire**

You may not realise that the costumes you have seen tonight and countless others from different periods are available for hire from the Leeds Arts Centre costume collection at reasonable rates.

If you are interested please telephone Leeds 756796 and discuss your requirements with Mrs. Margaret Rhodes, our wardrobe mistress.