

**FOUR  
MYSTERY PLAYS**

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Four Mystery Plays by Rudolf Steiner

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**RUDOLF STEINER**

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# Four Mystery Plays

BY  
RUDOLPH STEINER

Translated and Edited with the Author's Permission  
by H. Collison, M. A. Oxon., S. M. K. Gandell,  
M. A. Oxon., and R. T. Gladstone, M. A. Cantab.



The Portal of Initiation  
The Soul's Probation

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HARRY COLLISON



## INTRODUCTION

THE four plays here produced in an English translation in two volumes, are perhaps best described as Christian Mystery Plays. They are intended to represent the experiences of the soul during initiation; or, in other words, the psychic development of man up to the moment when he is able to pierce the veil and see into the beyond. Through this vision he is then able to discover his real self and carry into effect the cryptic injunction graven on the old Greek temples Γνωθὶ σεαυτόν, know thyself. At a later stage he comes to 'realize' himself, and finally learns the true significance of the Second Advent of our Lord. This process is known as the 'Rosicrucian' initiation—an initiation specially adapted to modern days—the time and manner of which depend on the individual nature and circumstances of each person.

The four plays form one continuous series, and the characters portrayed are of quite an ordinary kind except that they take more than the usual interest in spiritual matters, their first desire being so to improve their own mental and moral state as to make them able to benefit their fellows.

We find amongst them many types—the occult leader and the seeress who explains the coming of Christ. We are shown the spiritual development of

an artist, a scientist, a philosopher, a historian, a mystic, and a man of the world; and we hear too the scoffing cynicism of Germanus and the materialistic views of Fox. We are led to realize how the characters are connected on the physical as well as the spiritual plane; and we learn also about the nature of elementals and the twin forces of hindrance known as Lucifer and Ahriman; the former of whom may be described as an embodiment of the spiritual impulse to action, an impulse always necessary but often distorted to bring about self-glorification rather than the ambition to do good; the latter as an embodiment of an influence which seeks to materialize everything, thus hindering true spiritual growth and freedom. These two influences are given to man that he may gain free will by having perfect liberty to guide them in the one direction or in the other.

With regard to the writing and production of the plays, Doctor Steiner's habit is to write a play whilst the rehearsals are actually in progress, finishing it a few days before the first public performance, and the first play was written and acted in this manner in August, 1910, the second in August, 1911, the third in August, 1912, and the fourth in August, 1913. It was not until then that the complete key to the development of the characters was attainable. The last play explains the progress of the other three, and, following out the hint given in the second play by the account of the previous incarnation in the Middle Ages, traces the characters right back to their earlier incarnation in ancient Egypt.

The plays were performed in Munich every summer



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under the personal direction of the author and were acted by men and women of several nationalities—all students of his teaching. The audiences numbered some two thousand and were composed entirely of his followers.

In 1913, owing to the difficulties and expense incurred each year in securing an appropriate theatre, his supporters acquired a plot of ground in Munich, and plans were designed for a theatre of their own, but the Munich authorities after much prevarication and delay finally prohibited its building, exhibiting in their treatment of Rudolph Steiner the same illiberal spirit as they had shown at an earlier date in the case of Richard Wagner.

Because of this, and because of the hostility which his writings and lectures had aroused in other parts of Germany, Doctor Steiner was led to set up his theatre in Switzerland at the little village of Dornach—not far from Bâle. Here a theatre is being built in accordance with his own designs and it is hoped that the plays will be performed there regularly as soon as the edifice is complete.

In conclusion I should like to express my gratitude to my friends and fellow students R. T. Gladstone, M.A., Cantab., and S. M. K. Gandell, M.A., Oxon., for their most valuable help in the very difficult task of translating the plays into English verse. Only a translator can appreciate the difficulties involved in preserving both the sense and rhythm of the original, and it is no exaggeration to say that without their aid the production of these works in English would not have been possible at the present time.

I should also like to take this occasion of thanking Doctor Steiner himself for permitting me to attend the rehearsals and assist in the performances of the plays. It was a great privilege and pleasure for which I can never feel sufficiently grateful. And last, but not least, I have to thank him for his ever kind and patient attention to all my questions on the subject of these plays and of spiritual science in general.

H. COLLISON.

NEW YORK, 1919.

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