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The Acting Company

IN

Sir Gawain

and the



Green Knight

OPENING 24 NOVEMBER 1980

The Company

John Francis
Nick Gill
David Pullan

Sue Rider
Jean Rigby
Mary-Ann Robinson

Chris Tugwell - Director

Production Team

Costume & Mask Design

Luke Outler

Costume Execution

Barbara Pullan

Properties & Set Dressing

Bill Field &
Greg Diamantis

Production Management

Chris Maas &
Ray Swift

Acknowledgements

Malcolm Downes; Joan Edge; Pat Grummet; Kym Osborn;
Elsie Rider; Ken Rider; Adelaide C.A. & E. Drama
Department; Hartley C.A.E. Drama Department;
State Theatre Company; State Opera.

THE GUILD

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Professor D.R. Stranks

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SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

The Play

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight comes to us as a long story-telling poem from the Middle Ages. It was written by an unknown author in the fourteenth century, and, of course, in the language of that time. The poet uses a particular technique to strengthen the effects of his language, a technique called alliteration, so that many lines have words all beginning with the same letter. For example, when he describes the Green Knight, the poet says, 'Wel gay watz this gone gered in grene', which means 'Gaily was this Knight dressed in green' or, to put it in a more modern way, 'This Knight was gaily dressed in green'. This, of course, is difficult for a modern audience to understand, and, because of the tongue-twister effect, even more difficult for an actor to say.

Several modern editions of the poem exist, which are easier to read than the original. As the basis for our play, we have mainly used the Penguin edition, translated by Brian Stone. The work of turning it from a poem into a play was done by Malcolm Downes and Chris Tugwell, our director, who have written several other scripts together in the past. As is usual with new plays, the final script as you see it performed has changed during the process of rehearsal, as the members of the company have added their own contributions, in the form of songs, extra pieces of dialogue, and so on. The result is a co-operation of talents over six centuries.

The Story

It is Christmas-time at King Arthur's Court of the Round Table. At once the feasting is interrupted by a strange figure dressed all in green and bearing a large axe. He proposes a Christmas game: he dares any knight to strike him one blow with the axe, as long as he can then return the blow in a year's time. Arthur is astounded. Surely no man could survive such a blow, let alone hit back in a year's time. But Sir Gawain, the most perfect of Arthur's knights, takes up the challenge, and strikes at the Green Knight, with strange consequences.....

THE ACTING COMPANY

In February 1980, The Acting Company was formed as a professional group of actors operating within the University of Adelaide Theatre Guild and based at Unley. It is a community theatre company working with special emphasis on the area of youth theatre, under the general directorship of Sue Rider. The company aims to present work of a high standard with a style of economical no-fuss production, relying not on elaborate stage effects, but on the energies and dynamism of live performers.

In 1980 the company has presented five shows:

- 'The City of Unley Show': local history dramatised
- 'Smile, Smile, Smile: the poetry & prose of war
- 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' by Bertolt Brecht
- 'Macbeth Workshop'
- 'Sir Gawain & the Green Knight'

The programme for 1981 includes:

A new Australian play

- 'Youth Writes': the poetry & prose of young people (for Come Out '81). Contributions for selection in this programme may be submitted until February 1, 1981.
- 'Smile, Smile, Smile'
- 'Macbeth' (complete text)
- 'Hamlet' workshop
- 'Donne and Hopkins': the poets and their work
- 'The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew' by Robert Bolt

For further information about The Acting Company, please phone 271 1574 (Acting Company office)
223 4333 Ext. 2407 (Theatre Guild, Campus Office)
269 2038 After Hours (Sue Rider)

or write to The Acting Company, 82 Edmund Avenue, Unley, 5061.