



Chester Mystery Plays

26th June ~ 19th July 2008



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CHESTER MYSTERY PLAYS

Cathedral Green, Chester
26th June - 19th July 2008

Artistic Director - **Robin Goddard**
Composer & Musical Director - **Matt Baker**
Assistant Directors -
Sian Lesley Phillips & Natalie Diddams
Set & Costume Design - **Judith Croft**
Lighting Design - **Nick Richings**
Sound Design - **Kevin Heyes**
Special Effects - **Paul Dabek**
Choreography - **Rachel Catherall**
Production Management Team:
Stuart Dornford-May, Julie Elston,
Ruth Roberts & Andrew Shone

Chester Mystery Plays Limited

is a company limited by guarantee, formed exclusively for the purpose of presenting the Chester Cycle of plays. The company, which is a registered charity, is non-profit making and any surplus arising from the 2008 production will, after payment of all expenses, be devoted to subsequent productions

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Welcome

The Word was made Flesh.... John 1:14

Mystery Plays were the picture books of the Bible story in Medieval times, staged for the enlightenment of the local community, few of whom were able to read or write. They were performed in Chester at festival time, normally Whitsuntide, by craftsmen of the local guilds who built pageant 'waggon' and scenery and, wearing bold costumes, played out the biblical stories amid the crowded streets.



Such is the scenario we recall for you today in this latest production of the Chester Mystery Plays, one of the original, and certainly most complete of Britain's medieval cycles.

It would be difficult, although not quite impossible, to re-enact the plays in their original style, dragging carts through crowded city streets. Yet this revival has much in common with the first performances. Whilst under professional direction, most of the players, are, like those of medieval times, people drawn from all parts of the community, Chester, Cheshire, North Wales and the Wirral, who earn their livings in almost every profession except the theatre and we are greatly indebted to them for their commitment, devotion and loyalty to this production.

The 300 school children also taking part will never forget the experience and excitement of appearing in the Mystery Plays and some will return year after year as indeed I have myself. Moreover, today's performances are produced by a voluntary team of local enthusiasts who have raised the financial means, with the support of Arts Council England, Cheshire County Council, the professions, commerce and industry in and around Chester as well as other organisations from much further afield. In addition the Plays come to you through the active encouragement and support of today's City Council to whom we shall be eternally grateful and with the warm collaboration of the Dean and the Chapter of Chester Cathedral who once again so generously provide our beautiful setting.

Finally you, the 21st century audience are, like your predecessors, drawn from both within and around the local community whilst now sharing the experience with the many hundreds of visitors to this ancient city, in which we have so much pride.

It is, therefore, my great pleasure on behalf of the directors and the entire company, to welcome you most warmly to Chester Cathedral Green with the knowledge that you are about to witness a rare symbol of Chester's proud heritage.

Jo Sykes

Chairman of the Board, Chester Mystery Plays 2008





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Welcome



The annual re-enactment of Christ's Passion at Oberamegau is possibly the only surviving remnant of the medieval Mystery Plays in continental Europe. Here in England, the tradition was preserved in Wakefield, York, and Chester.

The original reason for the Mystery Plays is quickly stated: in the Middle Ages, few people could read the Latin Bible and so were ignorant of the key Bible stories. The answer to the problem was the presentation of the stories as a series of mini-plays in a City Pageant which passed through the streets; combining comedy, spectacle, pathos, drama, activity, colour and music. Perhaps the nearest equivalent is the highly successful musical, Jesus Christ Superstar!

The Chester Cycle of Mystery Plays included some 25 mini-plays, beginning with the Fall of Lucifer and ending with Our Lady's Assumption. Each mini-play was performed by a different group of townspeople, such as tanners or drapers, and the sequence of plays were presented over several days.

In attending the Mystery Plays, you are participating in a long and living tradition. I hope that you will not only enjoy them, but also experience through them deeper insights into the Bible stories themselves.

The Very Revd Prof. Gordon McPhate

Dean of Chester

A Message from The Patron

Some seven centuries ago when the world was very different, Chester Mystery Plays evolved. The guilds which first staged them continue to be represented by men and women today in the city's Guildhall, and the medieval plays themselves continue to be performed by our 21st-century community.

That the plays have traversed time so successfully speaks volumes for their effect and for the people who value them enough to keep them alive, for each new production brings a freshness to the telling of an ages-old story that is forever meaningful. The continued presentation of the Chester cycle ensures generation after generation will find beauty and enlightenment in this classic yet simple account of the redemption of mankind.

And while paying homage to those guildsmen of medieval Chester who had no idea of the legacy they were creating, I am thankful that such a rare work, recognised and valued the world over, though borne of Chester has long been a treasured part of the cultural heritage of not only Cheshire and England's north west but of Britain as a whole.

We can only ever be temporary custodians of this, one of the most revered works of early English drama, but as such I am proud to be associated with Chester Mystery Plays. I salute every single person who helps make this wonderful event possible, and extend the warmest of welcomes to our audience from near and afar.

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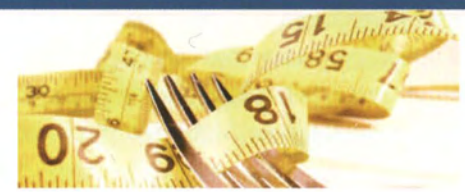
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My 'Vision'



My 'vision' and core approach to the 2008 production is 'recycling' in terms of comparative religions, social events, society culture, environment, life values and life itself.

I recognise their importance as an integral part of Chester's life and cultural heritage. However, as a modern-day director I have to recognise that the Chester Cycle of Plays cannot be regarded as a relic to be preserved in a museum display case or limited to academic study. Their original purpose, in medieval times, developed from an instrument of instruction to a vital form of entertainment for the citizens of Chester. Scripts were updated and religious propriety gave way to secular bawdiness with social and political references thrown in for good measure. In their original form they would please a limited number of academics and historians but I am responsible for ensuring that they appeal to a far wider audience from all age ranges and social, cultural backgrounds. This translation stays true to the original concept but introduces contemporary attitudes to the plays, providing a fresh understanding of the stories, characters and situations while examining the central universal conflict between good and evil.

The plays have been researched, examined, discussed and rehearsed in ways that make them accessible to a modern-day audience, stressing their present-day significance as well as their personal and social motivation and interaction. I have highlighted modern social, moral, political and theological issues and events.

My intention is to make the Plays relevant to a 21st Century cast and audience with a sense of immediacy and dramatic spontaneity.

The performances are designed to provide a theatrical experience which hopefully satisfies the expectations of both the 500+ strong cast and their audiences.

I have been fortunate to work closely with an extremely talented, imaginative and patient Production Team on the project. They have shared my vision and given life to it. The cast have shown commitment, enthusiasm and forbearance throughout their journey from early rehearsals to these performances. I value their faith, trust and understanding along the journey.

This is a unique community theatrical experience which is challenging, experimental, innovative, thought provoking, controversial and relevant to both cast and audience. It includes as many forms of theatrical form, style and expression that we could utilise to enhance the production and breathe life into this important part of Chester's heritage. I am grateful to Jo Sykes and the Board for entrusting the Plays to me for a second time. I hope that this 'second bite' of the apple will provide both cast and audience with the necessary knowledge, skills and inspiration to further their interest in theatrical performance. I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to direct the plays and humbled by the commitment and dedication of my cast, production team and extensive crew of volunteers, without whom this venture would have been impossible.

Robin Goddard

Artistic Director



Robin Goddard began his career in theatre while still studying Drama, Dance and English at Exeter University. He has worked for the Northcott Theatre, Westward Television, Western Theatre Ballet, and The Really Useful Theatre Company. Robin directed the internationally acclaimed production of the **Chester Mystery Plays** in 2003. He also wrote, directed and performed in '**Cheshire Tales**' at Chester Cathedral.

Teaching Theatre Studies full time in Cheshire, Robin also directed productions at residential drama courses at the Menai Centre, Anglesey and was Director of Cheshire Youth Theatre. He went freelance in 1996 as an Artistic Director, script writer, tutor and consultant in theatre arts. Many of his students are now acting, dancing and directing in television, film and the West End. His numerous contracts for both English and Welsh companies and local authorities have included: productions for Royal visits; youth and community projects, and initiating and running a Musical Theatre Course for Merseyside Dance and Drama College in Liverpool.

Previous directing projects for Welsh County Councils have included '**Kaleidoscope**', '**Schools in Performance**' digital storytelling, Summer Schools and Flintshire Youth Theatre

He has directed professional and community productions at Chester Gateway, Rhyl Pavilion, The Lyceum, Crewe and Clwyd Theatr Cymru. He tutors for the Drama Association of Wales and leads both youth and adult workshops on stagecraft and acting.

He is currently the Drama specialist and Project Coordinator for Flintshire County Council's '**Heritage Alive**', involving 24 community groups in performance at Clwyd Theatr Cymru.

He has directed and performed in over 200 operas, musicals, ballet, and plays including '**Sweeney Todd, the musical**', '**Coppelia**', '**Oliver**', '**Oh, What A Lovely War**', '**A Midsummer Night's Dream**', '**West Side Story**' and '**An Inspector Calls**'.

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Notes on the Music

I have drawn upon my wide range of influences and composing experiences and applied them to these plays. I was brought up as a chorister and organist in nearby St Thomas of Canterbury Church, and many will hear the obvious church influences. There is also evidence of my influence in working in far reaching parts of the world, writing music for young people, and for those who know 'A Handbag of Harmonies', you might even detect the odd handbag-esque arrangement.

When the 2003 production received such high acclaim, many people have asked me how I was going to approach writing the music for a brand new cycle this year.

Well, in many ways, I have treated it as a brand new production. There are two plays which were not included in the 2003 cycle: The Purification and The Coming of The Antichrist, which offer brand new musical opportunity. So just as I might go to a new theatre company with fresh ideas, so to have I with the Chester Mystery Plays 2008.

This time round we are blessed with a large number of ensemble performers with a variety of different experiences. Some of them belong to choirs and choral societies, others sing professionally, and others have only sung in the shower. However, all of them have been willing to give it a go, and challenge themselves to sing, harmonise, wail, cry, act, play instruments and dance at the same time.

The musical themes and ideas have developed throughout the rehearsal process. Therefore, I have worked alongside Robin the director, the choreographer, the main characters, the chorus, instrumentalists, drummers and dancers in creating the most effective music for each moment. There is a mixture of rousing choruses, tear jerking arias, exciting dance pieces, comedy items, moving underscore and lots more in between.

The Prophecy

Right from the first moments of the play, Robin and I wanted to challenge any expectations of repeat artistic vision. Therefore The Creation launches with an exciting, upbeat and almost anthemic 'Ego Sum Alpha et Omega', which recurs throughout the cycle. There are solos from God, Lucifer, Gabriel and the Serpent in Adam and Eve.

In stark contrast, Cain and Abel's murder sequence is set to a 5/4 rhythm and the ensemble use a more 'wailing' style of singing.

Noah is an entirely new epic. The music is fast paced, lively and energetic. This time round my intention was for Noah himself to be the only character not to sing, so the contrast between him and everything else is really marked. and the source of much of the comedy in the piece. It has been a delight to travel around so many schools and to teach the 'Animals' their musical parts. In the same way Jigsaw Music Theatre Company, who provide the young sinners and Noah's children, have also learned their vocal score. They all come together with the adult ensemble to make a fresh and exciting musical epic which ends in a 200 strong company singing the final rousing chorus.

The second half of the Prophecy offers a broad range of musical styles. The Nativity opens with yet more young people singing a piece 'When Will he Come' as they are searching for their Messiah. This is followed by four solo-led items featuring Octavius, Sybil, Young Mary (who leads a joyous gospel version of the Magnificat) and Elizabeth (performed by the beautiful voice of Mal Waite). Following a lively Bethlehem chorus featuring several live musicians, the children sing my special setting of 'The Chester Carol' to mark the birth of Jesus. This is counterpointed at the end with a setting of Ave Maria, sung by the angels.

The Shepherds are very Welsh in flavour, and I make no apologies for a bit of plagiarism from the chapel hymn book. The Shepherds also burst into some Gilbert and Sullivan type singing with their 'Let's Go To Bethlehem' patter song.

I used eastern influences with the Magi music, which then descends into a huge musical piece for the Slaughter of the Innocents; almost operatic in flavour, Gabriel sings in counterpoint with the murdering soldiers and the desperate mothers, all of which moves to a huge climax topped by the spine chilling 'Dies Irae' led by one of two fantastic professional sopranos Diana Palmerston and Kathleen O'Connor. After the horror of the murdering is over, one of the sopranos will sing a beautiful aria 'From the Rising of The Sun' which leads us into the final play of the Prophecy.

The Purification opens with a heart-rending setting of the Song of Simeon - 'Lord Now lettest Thou Thy servant Depart in Peace' which is repeated by the whole company in the lead up to the music of the Finale.

The Fulfilment

The Fulfilment borrows a couple of the Prophecy themes, to allow for some sense of wholeness with the cycle. These include the first two themes of the play: 'When Will He Come' and 'Ego Sum Alpha et Omega'. There is a great deal of 'filmic' underscore throughout the Fulfilment, which helps to carry the intensity of the story through.

In the Woman Taken in Adultery we are introduced to two of the main themes which are recurrent throughout the Fulfilment. The first is 'Miracle Maker', heard at the raising of Lazarus and the Resurrection in their fullest versions, but hinted at with guitar underscore and violin here. Miracle Maker is also sung with great irony as it is woven into the chanting of 'Away With Him, Crucify Him' at the climax of The Trial.

The second theme introduced at the beginning is one which I have borrowed and developed from 2003, 'See Him Now'. This is heard most fully during the scene in Gethsemane, where Jesus sings over it in his solo. Sid, who plays Jesus, developed the verses himself, a beautiful theme for which he deserves full credit. 'See Him Now' is used in the most harrowing moment where the cross is being raised. As Christ is hanging on the cross, the chorus sing out 'Son of God, can you be; save yourself from this misery' with full haunting harmonies.

Another theme which I use from the Prophecy is heard at the moment Mary falls at Jesus' feet at the cross. Here the women remind us of the Lullaby (Chester Carol), which we heard when Jesus was in his mother's arms in the stable.

There is an aria, 'Lux Aeterna' which is performed as the crucified Jesus is placed in the tomb, an up-tempo and joyous 'Alleluia' motif which underscores the Resurrection, and a very rousing 'Creed' to end the Ascension play.

The Coming of The Antichrist has been a particularly exciting project. Almost wholly sung throughout, this play stands alone in its musical style. There are hints of burlesque, tango, rock and opera in this dynamic musical fusion.

It is wonderful to have Karamba Samba Band performing in the Fulfilment. They are introduced firstly with carnival style accompaniment to the singing of 'Hosannah!' as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Their rhythms become more foreboding and threatening as they add great weight to the musical sequence at the end of The Trial. After all the singing in the Antichrist play, I thought it would create a fitting musical contrast for Karamba to take over almost entirely in The Last Judgment before they are joined once again by the whole chorus of singers in the Grand Finale.

Matt Baker
Composer
&
Musical
Director



Matthew is delighted to be composer and musical director of the 2008 Mystery Plays in his home city, particularly following the high acclaim for his music in the 2003 cycle.

He has recently returned from composing original music for *James and the Giant Peach* in Southampton. Other composing credits since the last Mystery Plays include *Arabel's Raven*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, *Shoah*, *It Was A Dark And Stormy Night* and *Anthem for Doomed Youth* (Southampton Nuffield), *A Christmas Carol*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Dukes Playhouse, Lancaster). Matt composed the official anthem *From The Ocean to The Stars* for the opening of Liverpool World Museum and has composed several pieces for Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts as well as directing the LIPA Actors' choir.

His international work as musical director with young people has taken him as far as Vienna, Melbourne, Nice, Tanzania, Delhi and Yangon.

Acting credits include 'The Narrator' in Roald Dahl's *The Twits* (UK Tour and London), 'Duke Box' in *From A Jack To A King* (Oldham Coliseum), 'Malvolio' in *Twelfth Night* (Chester Gateway), *Rasputin* (UK/Germany tour), *The Threepenny Opera* (UK tour), *Puss in Blue Suede Boots* (Liverpool Everyman), *Cinderella* (Liverpool Neptune), *Magic Book* (Action Transport Theatre), *Jack in The Junk Box*, *Jack and the Little Fir Tree* (Leicester Haymarket).

TV Credits include the BBC's *Cutting It*, *Merseybeat* and *What Are We Like*, and Yorkshire Television's *Emmerdale*.

Matthew is Director of the ever successful *A Handbag of Harmonies*, *Jigsaw Children's Music Theatre Company* and is Artistic Director of professional and community company *Theatre in The Quarter*.

Matthew is a Director on the board of *Chester Performs*, the dynamic new organisation who have begun to generate exciting programmes of cultural activity in the build up to the city having a long awaited performing arts centre. He says "Watch this space... whatever your age, background or taste, there will be something for you in the months and years ahead; be it film, digital arts, music, theatre, dance or more." Matthew is very anxious that this magnificent city of ours can only thrive if arts and culture are placed far higher on the agenda.





Special Thanks

The Board of Chester Mystery Plays would like to express its sincere thanks to the following, without whose help the 2008 cycle would have been impossible to stage.

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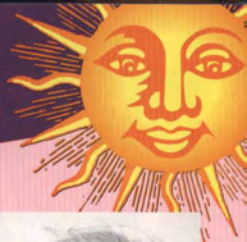
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The Design



"I have always enjoyed seeing the Mystery Plays with my family and, of course, the last ones in 2003 were particularly memorable. In fact my earliest theatrical experience was going with my parents to see the York Mystery Plays.

I am really excited about designing for the 2008 cycle. The sheer scale of the project is so much bigger than a conventional theatre set. It is almost unheard of to be working with a cast in excess of a hundred and to have so many people involved in the production. The siting in front of the Cathedral is a big factor. The set stands apart yet must work with the Cathedral building - certainly borrowing some of its magnificence.

The preliminary set design had a Mediterranean/Palestinian/ Biblical look, which made use of natural materials such as stone, brick and wood. However, I also thought that it may be interesting to incorporate other materials of a more industrial nature, to reflect the "nuts and bolts" of human existence.

The design must allow for the range of stories in the Plays. The set certainly isn't a period piece but incorporates a wide range of influences, from different ages and civilisations. I've also planned for a few surprises!

Lighting also plays a major part in this production. In the 2003 Cycle, the set was really only lit for the second half of the performance, whereas this time more interiors have been created, with lighting effects from the very beginning.

Working outdoors - in all weathers - brings its own areas of expertise. All the flooring finishes have had to be non-slip for the safety of the performers, and we have also had to ensure that component materials will not deteriorate with the weather. The initial estimate for how long it would take to actually build the set was approximately six weeks.

I have really enjoyed working with Artistic Director Robin Goddard. It has proved to be an exciting creative partnership - which is not always the case in the Theatre! We have come up with ideas both individually and together - some of them work brilliantly, and have been incorporated into the design, while others didn't, and were discarded - it is all part of the creative process. Everything can be up for change and development as time goes on, but I hope that what you see in this production will both delight, inspire and surprise you!"

Below: Judith's costume designs, and pages from her sketchbook with the mocked-up set visual (right).



Judith Croft

Production Designer



After training at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Judith Croft worked as Assistant Designer at Northampton. She moved to Chester in order

to work at the Gateway Theatre where she was resident Designer for two years. Judith and her husband Rob have lived in Chester for over twenty years, bringing up their two children here.

During her three seasons at the Gateway she worked on a variety of shows, including **The Elephant Man**, **The Tragical History Tour** and **Habeas Corpus**. She then became the Head of Design at Oldham Coliseum. After going freelance in 1986 her work included **A Midsummer Night's Dream** and **The Snow Queen** at the Gateway Theatre, after which she joined the Library Theatre Company as Head of Design.

Her credits there are too numerous to mention but include designs for many award winning productions including **My Night with Reg**, **The Brighton Beach Trilogy**, **Translations**, **The Memory of Water** and **Someone to Watch over Me**.

Recent work for the Library has included **Faith Healer**, **Waiting for Godot** and **Frozen**.

Judith has also undertaken a variety of freelance work ranging from the opera **Falstaff** for the Royal Northern College of Music, which won a Manchester Evening News Award, to **Laughter on the 21st Floor** which ran in the West End with Gene Wilder in the lead role.

For the last seven years Judith has designed the Rock and Roll Panto at Clwyd Theatr Cymru and is currently working on this year's production of **Cinderella**. She is pleased to have had the chance to design for the Mystery Plays in her adopted home of Chester.

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From Precarious Survival to Brilliant Re-birth

Like the precious Bayeux Tapestry, which records the Norman conquest of Britain in 1066 but was found after the French Revolution being used as a tarpaulin on a market stall, the Chester Mystery Plays came very close to being lost for ever.

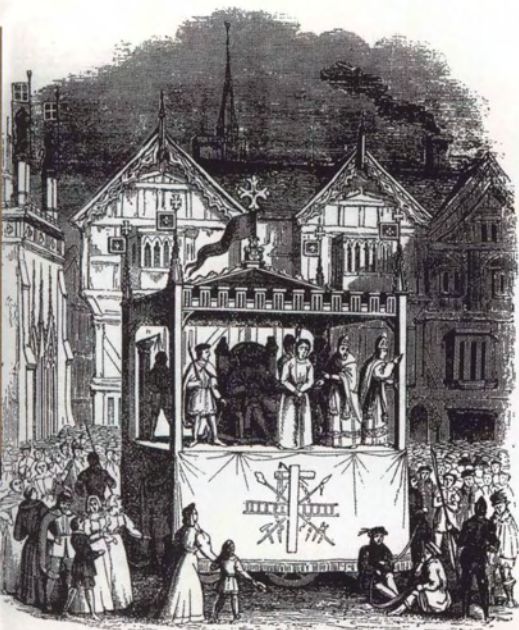
From 1276, for three hundred years the people of Chester annually enjoyed three days of street theatre at Whitsuntide, some twenty four plays in rhyme, telling the Biblical story from Genesis to Revelation. Each play was performed by a different trade guild (see right), after the city took over their production from the monks of St. Werburgh. "Waggons", known as pageants, with a changing room beneath and a stage for the actors above, stopped at different parts of Chester for performances to take place.

Before the performances men, either on horseback or walking on stilts, read out the Banns to announce what was to come. We can note a rough humour in the allocation of particular plays; "Noe and his Shippe" was assigned to the Drawers of Dee water, "King Herod" to the Vintners and "The Crucifixion of Christ" to the Ironmongers and Ropemakers. There was fierce rivalry among the richest guilds; the Drapers decked their waggon "with sundry colours of velvet, satin and damask, taffeta and sarsenet of popinjay green". The account books record that men were paid "three pence for keeping a fire burning in the mouth of Hell, and for setting the world on fire five pence."

Besides destroying fine carvings in many English churches and cathedrals, the Puritans did not rest until the Chester plays were abolished. In 1571 Archbishop Grindal prohibited their production, but the mayors and corporation of Chester continued performances until 1577, and thereby got themselves into serious trouble. Other great cities, such as Norwich, lost the text of their plays for ever, but Chester lost only one, Our Lady's Assumption, a play by the Worshipful Wives of Chester (not guild members).

The Chester Mysteries scarcely saw the light again until Christopher Ede's production in 1951. Since then music has been used for atmosphere, but the 2003 production, directed by Cestrian Robin Goddard and set to music by Cestrian Matt Baker, unified the whole sequence of plays using colour, light and music to offer the audience a total experience that those medieval audiences would surely have thought miraculous.

Douglas Cashin



The Chester Guilds

The scripts for the Chester Mystery Plays Cycle were originally assembled by monastic scholars at the Abbey of St Werburgh, now Chester Cathedral. The Antichrist plays and Balak & Balam are unique to the Chester cycle.

Records dated 1540 list 26 plays:

Mystery Play:.....	Performed by:
The Fall Of Lucifer	Barkers, Tanners
The Creation of the World	Drapers, Hosiers
Noah & His Ship	Waterleaders, Drawers in the Dee
Abraham & Isaac	Barber Surgeons, Waxchandlers
Balak & Balam	Cappers, Wire drawers, Pinners
The Nativity ..	Wheelrights, Slaters, Tylers, Daubers, Thatchers
The Shepherds	Painters, Glaziers, Embroiderers
King Herod (Adoration of the Magi)	Vintners
The Three Kings	Mercers, Spicers
The Slaughter of the Innocents	Goldsmiths, Masons
The Purification of Our Lady	Smiths, Forbers, Pewterers
The Temptation, & Women taken into Adultery	Butchers
The Raising of Lazarus	Glovers, Parchment-makers
The Coming of Christ to Jerusalem	Corvisars
The Last Supper	Grocers, Bakers, Millers
The Scourging of Christ	Bowyers, Fletchers, Stringers,
.....	Coopers, Turners
The Coming of the Antichrist	Dyers
The Crucifixion	Ironmongers, Ropers
Harrowing of Hell	Cooks, Tapsters, Ostlers, Innkeepers
The Resurrection	Skinners, Plastercard-makers,
.....	Hatters, Painters, Girdlers
Castle of Emmaus & The Apostles	Saddlers
The Ascension	Tailors
Whitsunday Making of the Creed	Fishmongers
Prophets Before The Day Of Doom	Shermen
Antichrist	Hewsters, Bellfounders
The Last Judgment	Weavers, Walkers

The Freeman and Guilds of Chester, a united group of trade companies, had been in existence for more than 100 years by then. A powerful force in the city, they protected the interests and welfare of fellow merchants and craftsmen while playing a major part in social, political and economic life. Their influence extended to organising major events, one of which became Chester Mystery Plays. Twenty-three of the ancient company guilds survive in Chester today.

Medieval street theatre - The guilds staged the plays on open pageant waggons. Each waggon trundled through the streets to 'stations' where the audience gathered. The first station was outside Abbey Gate - audiences today pass through the same place to see the modern version of the plays. The medieval route continued down Northgate to the Cross, then along Watergate, cutting next into Bridge Street, then Eastgate.

Men and boys took all the parts.



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Restaurant review - Chester Chronicle

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Diana Palmerston

Soprano

An established oratorio and opera soloist, Diana's performances include Mozart's C Minor Mass at King's College Cambridge, Handel's Teseo at the Royal Opera House, and a Command Performance for the Queen of Thailand. Her performance of Poulenc's Gloria was broadcast from the Bridgewater Hall on Classic FM and she recently sang Aida with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Diana has also broadcast for the BBC, and her live national broadcast of Handel's Messiah for Classic FM was subsequently released on CD.



"Outstanding among the soloists was Diana Palmerston whose performance of the 'Libera Me' was totally compelling". Daily Telegraph

"Diana Palmerston's clear focused soprano put across the music with quiet intensity, with power when required, and was deeply affecting". Manchester Evening News

Kathleen O'Connor

Soprano

Based in Chester since 1993, Kathleen obtained a BMus Hons degree in her home country of N. Ireland, before going on to study singing as a Post-graduate student at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. She subsequently studied with Honor Sheppard. She was a member of Opera Deva, and has made many appearances with The Three British Tenors. Opera roles include both Susanna and the Countess in 'The Marriage of Figaro', Laetitia in 'The Old Maid and the Thief', and the First Lady in 'The Magic Flute'. Recent performances have included a number of charity fund-raising and corporate events across the UK, including Prom Praise at Chester Cathedral. She has recorded with the composer Gary Lloyd, and The Three British Tenors, and features on the recording of Chester's Tsunami fund-raising concert. Kathleen has given premiere performances of songs by Matt Baker on BBC radio. This year's Mystery Plays marks Kathleen's farewell to Chester, before returning to live in N. Ireland.



Diana and Kathleen lead the Company singing the 'Dies Irae' in 'Magi and the Innocents', the sixth play in 'The Prophecy', appearing at alternate performances.



Part One

Street Theatre Performers

Peter Burke	Sam Little	Pippa Ryan
Mike Dix	Brian Pearson	Hannah Schofield
Sarra Elliott	Ieuan Pearson	Richard Spilman
Ronno Griffiths	Ellie Robertson	Derek Taylor
Beth Kenny	Mollie Ryan	Johnathon Taylor

The Company

Radmila Alcock	Jo Henwood,	Sue Pickering
Ann Anderson	Vaughan Hughes	Anna Prochazka
Janice Anderson	Jennifer Jackson	Ruth Roberts
David Anjo	Marc Johnson	Molly Ryan
Barbara Bagley	Alistair Jones	Peter Salmon
Kim Barnes	Catherine Jones	Chris Schofield
Jerome Burch	Poppy Jones	Peter Speirs
Peter Burke	Beth Kenney	Richard Spilman
Douglas Cashin	Harry Kingham	Cameron Szerdy
Meriel Cashin	Mary Lewery	Derek Taylor
Carol Conway	Sam Little	Johnathon Taylor
Duncan Crompton	Sheila Little	Chris Thornton
Gav Cross	Beth Mann	Mal Waite
Paul Dabek	Chris Mann	Peter Watson
Jan Dewhurst	Tim Mann	Rosina Williams
Josh Donovan	Linda Manning	Karin Wolff
Gill Doran	Chris Mapp	Will Wood
David Edwards	Meurig Marshall	Peter Young
Sarra Elliott	James Mathison	
Erin Elston	Fraser Moir	
Christine Evans	Chris Mooney	
Sarah Fairchild	Heather Murphy	
Lauren Faulkner	Richard Naylor	
Clare Fitzpatrick	Geoff Noakes	
Daniel Fletcher	Sandra Noakes	
Mark Gairusso	Lynne Pearn	
Daniel Gordon	Phil Pearn	
Adam Gough	Brian Pearson	
Ronno Griffiths	Ieuan Pearson	

Dancers Students from The Elsber School of Theatre Dance

Sion Williams	Jess Ingham	Faye Spencer
Rachel Harrison	Rachel Larty	Laura Hewitt
Emily Richards	Vanessa Higham	Sophie Davies
Zakhia Reilly	Dan Burke	Chloe Dignam
Deanna Boden	Ami Dickinson	Tegan Rochford
Rhian Cunnah	Leanne Evans-Jones	Donna Parry
Vicky Williams	Lauren Jones	

Jigsaw Music Theatre:

Trees, Planets, The Sun, Animals, and Gawpers Children:	Alex Mcnee	James Ralph
Frances Alcock	Flora McWilliam	Lloyd Ramsey
Rachel Alcock	Emily Meenan	Fern Roberts
Georgia Arthur	Justin O'Brien Manley	Jennifer Williams
Jessica Baker	Holly Pitt-Knowles	Noah's Children:
Sam Baker	Duncan Ritchie	Sam Baker
Katy Baker	Kirsty Ritchie	James Ralph
Tom Barlow	Mary Scott	Jack Little
Olivia Brett	Winnie Southgate	Will Jones
Jenny Dewhurst	Monika Taneska	Justin O'Brien Manley
Sophie Davies	Sean Telford	Sean Telford
Abigail Fletcher	Jeremy Telford	Jeremy Telford
Sara Hirst	Rachel Tompkins	Flora McWilliam
Joe Hogan	Bethan Williams	Jess Baker
Robyn Hurst	Natalie Wearden	Abbi Fletcher
William Jones	Lily Wearden	Mary Scott
Tessa Jones	Ellen Young	Ellen Young
Emma Jones	Amy Bebbington	
Isabelle Jones	Jamie Southern	
Jack Little	Zed Spencer-Milnes	
Olivia Mcnee	Mia Mossley	
	Rosie Mossley	
	Penny Mitchell	
	Lauren Ralph	



James Mathison
Adam
Sarah Fairchild
Eve

Jerome
Burch
Cain

Josh
Donovan
Abel

The Prophecy

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Choirs:

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OVERLEIGH ST. MARY'S:

Frances Alcock, Jasmine Ashley-Jones, Olivia Brett, Hollie Booth, Anna Brodie, Emily Crimson, Charlotte Crimson, Jennifer Graham, Victoria Gresty, Maisie Hogan, Erin Hollingsworth, Isobel Jones, Tessa Jones, Naomi Lush, Faith Lydon, Georgia Meacock, Olivia Mcnee, Danika Moss, Holly Pitt-Knowles, Benjamin Rowland, Lauren Smith, Jessica Stark, Izzy Travis, Megan Witherstone

STAGECOACH:

Luke Abbate, Paige Abbate, Lisa Aldoves, Luke Aldoves, Nicole Aubury, Kira Baker, Zoe Davenport-Ball, Georgia Bartlett, Sophia Bunning, Heather Bunning, Georgina Croasdale, Chloe Davis, Abigail Fisher, Charlie Gruffed-Jones, James Heath, Emma Heath, Catherine Heath, Samantha Hett, Annie Howarth, Matthew Henshaw, Tayler Martin, Jennifer McCord, Victoria McCord, Eleanor McIver, Gemma O'Connell, Jasmine Parker, Jessica Mae Pritchard, Seren Whitley.

The Animals in Noah:

THE ARCHES PRIMARY SCHOOL:

Georgie-Lee Blythin, Aimee Bolland, Courtney Burgess, Daniel Condon, Shannon Coyle, Mellissa Dodd, Bethanie Gaulton, Chelsea Hallal, Brandon Hayden, Michael Hayes, Laura Hignett, Courtney Jackson, Kerrenza Johns, David Johnston, Arron Jones, George Mortimer, Ashley Preston, Kieran Rigby, Jack Rigby, Holly May Robson, Connor Rose, Charlotte Tonnessen, Courtney Ward, Amy Ward, Chelsea Whelan, Todd Williams Matthew Woodham.

ECCLESTON PRIMARY SCHOOL:

James Bowler, Lauren Ellis, Kate Fearnall, Luke Filer, Jessica Jones, Emily Jones, Portia-Hope Kitney, Jake Shaw, Jack Shepherd, Sam Squires, Alexander Thomas, James Warburton, Jennifer Wordens.

THE FIRS SCHOOL:

Hannah Batson, Harrison Balmer, Charlotte Bergin, Oliver Berry, Douglas Brerton, Christopher Ellis, Harriet Fisher, James Halligan, Tiffany Hughes, Hamish Hymes, Elliot Lee, Amy Lewis, Katherine Newman, Natasha Paterson, Stanley Parker, Eleanor Pino, Patrick Regan, Maxwell Reeves, Joshua Roberts, Alex Southall, Bede Timpson, Victoria Vale.

FRODSHAM CE PRIMARY SCHOOL:

Lauren Atkin, Lori Ballam, Kathryn Booth, Adelaide Day-Collett, William Cawley-Gelling, Jonathan Ellams, Millie Frewin, Laura Gardiener, Callum Glarel, Jennifer Hamlin, Jessica Hayward, Matthew Jones, Morgan Kelly, William Littlewood, Lucy Malone, Zoe Moore, Jessica Pollitt, Alanna Powell, Victoria Quellin, Holly Rennell, Nina Treharne.

LITTLE THESPIANS:

Isabella Band, Elenka Bennion, Michael Bolam, Nyall Bolam, Eve Finlay, Isobel Finlay, Eleanor Finlay, Catrin Jones, Eve Lawler, Francesca Noro, Sally Stanford, Laura Thelwell, Ian Whale, Guy Whale, Anna Whyte.

THE QUEENS LOWER SCHOOL:

Katie Amison, Emmeline Bluelock, Emily Bolwell, Laura Brierley, Charlotte Chewin, Amy Clarkson, Louisa Cowell, Charlotte Dean, Natalie Doyle, Rosie Hales, India Hall, Abigail Hudson, Holly Kay, Abigail Lahvis, Louisa Manby, Lilliana Maoudis, Lauren McCormick, Lydia McLoughlin, Robyn McNally, Kimberley Meredith, Isabel Millican, Orlaith Monk, Hannah Morris, Alice Penny, Zoe Rigby, Georgia Rhodes-Bell, Phoebe Rothery, Eloise Spencer-Wolfe, Rhianna Thornton-Reid, Alice Thompson, Rachael Turner, Molly Williams, Jessica Willis, Katherine Woods.

ST.CLARE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL:

Eloise Arnott, Luke Berrington, Francesca Boswell, Luciana Cecere, Alessandra Cecere, Matthew Clewley, Edward Craggs, Dominic Doherty, Natalia Dybich, Jack Ellis, Declan Gentile, Christian Gentile, Curtis Hall, Courtney Haycock, Chloe Hutchinson, Samuel Johnson, Ryan Kerr, Jamie Mann, Chloe Manning, Chloe Massey, Jordan Massey, Jade Matthew, Erin Melarkey, Samuel Pitt, Bronagh Povey, Charlotte Randles, Carmen Lasok-Smith, Adam Smith, Krystian Urbanek, Declan Vickers, Jack Williams, Scott Williams.

LIPTON HIGH SCHOOL:

Sarah Baker, Jemimah Beardwood, Nicola Bowyer, Jade Brazendale, Ellen Blain, Heather Connolly, Jenny Corbett, Charlotte Lee-Codling, Harry Challinor, Eve Davies, Emily Dodd, Beth Dixon, Katie Fozzard, Claudia Galan, Katie Galletley, Ellie Griffiths, Danielle Hershaw, Sophie Jones, Sophie Kiernan, Rebecca Maguire, Charlotte Nicholson, Emily Patchitt, Alex Pourghorban, Charlotte Rawlins, Annabel Reeves, Kristina Roper, Lauren Shand, Rebecca Stroud, Laura Thompson, Chloe Tompkins, Meg Wilford, Leah Wynne, Carly Wynne.

Creation And Fall

Gobbet	Harry Kingham
God.....	Duncan Crompton
Lucifer.....	Paul Dabek
Gabriel.....	David Edwards
Archangel Michael.....	Meurig Marshall
Adam.....	James Mathison
Eve.....	Sarah Fairchild
Serpent.....	Daniel Fletcher
Orders of Angels.....	Sarah Fairchild, Daniel Fletcher,
.....	Beth Mann, Mal Waite,
.....	Linda Manning, David Anjo,
.....	Jenny Jackson, Vaughan Hughes
Devils Angels and Gawpers	
.....	Members of the Company
Trees, Planets and Animals.....	Jigsaw Music Theatre

Cain And Abel

Adam.....	James Mathison
Eve.....	Sarah Fairchild
Cain.....	Jerome Burch
Abel.....	Josh Donovan
God.....	Duncan Crompton
Gobbet.....	Harry Kingham
Ghosts of Abel and Devils.....	Members of the company

Chester Mystery Plays wish to thank all the teachers, support staff and parents who have given time and commitment to helping their students.

Chester Mystery Plays would also like to say a big thank you to all the matrons who have given their time freely to help all our young cast members.



Noah's Flood - The Musical

Supported by Ainsley Common Architects

God.....Duncan Crompton
 Noah.....Gav Cross
 Noah's Wife.....Jennifer Jackson
 Noah's Children.....Sam Baker, Jess Baker
Abbi Fletcher, Will Jones, Jack Little,
Flora McWilliam, Justin O'Brian Manley,
James Ralph, Mary Scott, Jeremy Telford,
Sean Telford, Ellen Young
 Gossips, Angels, Sinners and Flood
Members of the Company & Jigsaw Music Theatre

The Nativity

God.....Duncan Crompton
 Gabriel.....David Edwards
 Salome.....Ronno Griffiths
 Octavius.....Mark Gairrusso
 Preco.....Peter Watson
 Sybil.....Erin Elston
 Mary.....Lauren Faulkner
 Tybil.....Sandra Noakes
 Elizabeth.....Mal Waite
 Joseph.....Will Wood
 Gobbet.....Harry Kingham
 Roman Soldiers, Angels and Gawpers
Members of the Company

The Shepherds

Hankyn.....Vaughan Hughes
 Harvey.....David Anjo
 Tudd.....Pete Salmon
 Trowle.....Ruth Roberts
 Gabriel.....David Edwards
 Joseph.....Will Wood
 Mary.....Lauren Faulkner

Magi and Innocents

Diana Palmerston or Kathleen O'Connor
 lead the Company singing the 'Dies Irae'.
 Jaspar.....Peter Speirs
 Balthazar.....Chris Schofield
 Melchior.....Geoff Noakes
 Gabriel.....David Edwards
 Messengers.....Cameron Szerdy & Jonathon Taylor
 Herod.....Richard Spilman
 Mary.....Lauren Faulkner
 Joseph.....Will Wood
 Lucifer.....Paul Dabek
 Soldier 1.....Jerome Burch
 Soldier 2.....Chris Mapp
 Soldier 3.....Peter Burke
 Soldier 4.....Josh Donovan
 Woman 1.....Beth Mann
 Woman 2.....Meriel Cashin
 Woman 3.....Jan Dewhirst
 Crowd of Men & Women.....Members of the Company

The Purification

Simeon.....Douglas Cashin
 Gabriel.....David Edwards
 Mary.....Lauren Faulkner
 Joseph.....Will Wood
 1st Doctor.....Tim Mann
 2nd Doctor.....Alistair Jones
 Jesus.....Adam Gough
 Gobbet.....Harry Kingham



Ronno Griffiths
 Old Eve /Salome

David Fletcher
 Serpent

Lauren Faulkner
 Mary

Peter Speirs
 Jaspar

Poppy Jones
 A Devil

Erin Elston
 Sybil



Chester Mystery Plays

The Company - The Prophecy



Carol Rannard
Mary Mother

Jenny Jackson
Mrs Noah

Help,
I'm lost
and I
can't find
my beer

Paul Dabek
Lucifer

Vanda Hargen
Mary
Salome

Mal Waite
Elizabeth

Duncan Crompton
God

Will Wood
Joseph / Caiaphas

Josh Donovan
Abel

David Edwards
Gabriel

Sid Mo
Jesus



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Mrs Sue Hughes



Welcome

The Word was made Flesh.... John 1:14

Mystery Plays were the picture books of the Bible story in Medieval times, staged for the enlightenment of the local community, few of whom were able to read or write. They were performed in Chester at festival time, normally Whitsuntide, by craftsmen of the local guilds who built pageant 'waggons' and scenery and, wearing bold costumes, played out the biblical stories amid the crowded streets.



Such is the scenario we recall for you today in this latest production of the Chester Mystery Plays, one of the original, and certainly most complete of Britain's medieval cycles.

It would be difficult, although not quite impossible, to re-enact the plays in their original style, dragging carts through crowded city streets. Yet this revival has much in common with the first performances. Whilst under professional direction, most of the players, are, like those of medieval times, people drawn from all parts of the community, Chester, Cheshire, North Wales and the Wirral, who earn their livings in almost every profession except the theatre and we are greatly indebted to them for their commitment, devotion and loyalty to this production.

The 300 school children also taking part will never forget the experience and excitement of appearing in the Mystery Plays and some will return year after year as indeed I have myself. Moreover, today's performances are produced by a voluntary team of local enthusiasts who have raised the financial means, with the support of Arts Council England, Cheshire County Council, the professions, commerce and industry in and around Chester as well as other organisations from much further afield. In addition the Plays come to you through the active encouragement and support of today's City Council to whom we shall be eternally grateful and with the warm collaboration of the Dean and the Chapter of Chester Cathedral who once again so generously provide our beautiful setting.

Finally you, the 21st century audience are, like your predecessors, drawn from both within and around the local community whilst now sharing the experience with the many hundreds of visitors to this ancient city, in which we have so much pride.

It is, therefore, my great pleasure on behalf of the directors and the entire company, to welcome you most warmly to Chester Cathedral Green with the knowledge that you are about to witness a rare symbol of Chester's proud heritage.

Jo Sykes

Chairman of the Board, Chester Mystery Plays 2008

26th June ~ 19th July 2008



The Company - The Fulfilment



Harry Kingham
Gobbett

Ruth Roberts
Trowle

Geoff Noakes
Old Adam / Melchior

Clare Fitzpatrick
Martha

Adam Gough
Young Jesus

Gav Cross
Mr Noah

Vaughan Hughes
Hankyn

Pete Salmon
Tudd

David Anjo
Harvey



Part Two

May we remind you to please ensure that any mobile phones are switched off, and pagers turned to 'vibrate' mode. There will be one interval of approximately twenty-five minutes.

Street Theatre Performers

Peter Burke
Janet Coyle
Natalie Diddams
Mike Dix
Sarra Elliott

Beth Kenny
Alice Kirby
Chris Mapp
Emily Parry
Ellie Robertson

Mollie Ryan
Pippa Ryan
Chris Schofield
Hannah Schofield
John Townsend

The Company

Jane Ainscough
Radmila Alcock
Penny Allen
Ann Anderson
Janice Anderson
David Anjo
Barbara Bagley
Pam Ball
John Barnes
Peter Burke
Mary Ann Cameron
Douglas Cashin
David Charles-Hendy
Bethia Coates
Janet Conway
Janet Coyle
Duncan Crompton
Paul Dabek
Pamela Dache
Deborah Dickinson
Rachel Dison
Mike Dix
Josh Donovan
David Edwards
Sarra Elliott
Daniel Ellis
Mike Ellis
Erin Elston
Sarah Fairchild
Meryl Fisher
Nick Fry

Clare Fitzpatrick
Mark Gairusso
Adam Gough
Sue Gould
Jeremy Grabge
Vanda Hargen
Sue Hughes
Jennifer Jackson
Muriel Jennings
Marc Johnson
George Kerr
Harry Kingham
Alice Kirby
Bep Le Miere
Sandra Lenel
Mary Lewery
Linda Manning
Chris Mapp
Meurig Marshall
Sandy McCormick
Jenna Mecklenburgh
Dori Miller
Sid Mofya
Fraser Moir
Chris Mooney
Pauline Mulliner
Heather Murphy
Richard Naylor
Anne Naylor
Rosamond Peet
Dave Perkins

Glenys Potter
Anna Prochazka
Carol Rannard
Martin Riley
Pam Roberts
Lisa Rogers
Sandra Rogers
Mollie Ryan
Peter Salmon
Chris Schofield
Julie Sheen
Jenny Spence
Hannah Thelwell
Phil Thomas
Chris Thornton
John Townsend
Sue Townsend
Zoe Vokes
Christopher Walton
Peter Watson
Derinda Watson
David Whaley
Rosina Williams
Karin Wolff
Will Wood
Mike Wood
Ashley Woods
Wendy Wren
Peter Young

The Temptation & The Woman Taken In Adultery

God.....	Duncan Crompton
Lucifer.....	Paul Dabek
Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Peter.....	Mark Gairusso
John the Baptist.....	Jason Sheppard
Woman.....	Mary Ann Cameron
1st Pharisee.....	Douglas Cashin
2nd Pharisee.....	Adam Gough
3rd Pharisee.....	Peter Burke
Gobbet.....	Harry Kingham
Crowd of Gawpers.....	Members of the Company

The Raising of Lazarus

Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Peter.....	Mark Gairusso
John.....	Chris Mooney
Andrew.....	David Charles-Hendy
Thomas.....	Martin Riley
Phillip.....	Mike Dix
Judas.....	Ashley Woods
James.....	Peter Young
James the Less.....	Christopher Thornton
Matthew.....	John Barnes
Bartholomew.....	Michael Beigel
Thaddeus.....	Dave Perkins
Simon the Leper.....	Daniel Ellis
Mary.....	Glenys Potter
Martha.....	Clare Fitzpatrick
1st Pharisee.....	Douglas Cashin
2nd Pharisee.....	Adam Gough
3rd Pharisee.....	Peter Burke
Lazarus.....	Christopher Walton
Gobbet.....	Harry Kingham
Crowd of Gawpers.....	Members of the Company

Dancers *Students from The Elsber School of Theatre Dance*

Sion Williams
Rachel Harrison
Emily Richards
Zakhia Reilly
Deanna Boden
Rhian Cunnah
Vicky Williams

Jess Ingham
Rachel Larty
Vanessa Higham
Dan Burke
Ami Dickinson
Leanne Evans-Jones
Lauren Jones

Faye Spencer
Laura Hewitt
Sophie Davies
Chloe Dignam
Tegan Rochfort
Donna Parry

The Fulfilment



Judas

Simon the Leper.....	Daniel Ellis
John.....	Chris Mooney
Lazarus.....	Christopher Walton
Thomas.....	Martin Riley
Martha.....	Clare Fitzpatrick
Judas.....	Ashley Woods
James the Less.....	Christopher Thornton
Matthew.....	John Barnes
Thaddeus.....	Dave Perkins
Peter.....	Mark Gairrusso
Andrew.....	David Charles-Hendy
Phillip.....	Mike Dix
James.....	Peter Young
Simon.....	David Ellis
Bartholomew.....	Michael Beigel
Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Mary Magdalen.....	Sarah Fairchild
Janitor.....	Mike Ellis
1st Citizen.....	Vanda Hargen
2nd Citizen.....	Anne Naylor
3rd Citizen.....	Muriel Jennings
4th Citizen.....	Ira Theobald
1st Youth.....	Mollie Ryan
2nd Youth.....	Alice Kirby
Caiaphas.....	Will Wood
Annas.....	David Anjo
1st Trader.....	Jenny Jackson
2nd Trader.....	Deborah Dickinson
3rd Trader.....	Mary Lewery
4th Trader.....	Derinda Watson
1st Pharisee.....	Douglas Cashin
2nd Pharisee.....	Adam Gough
3rd Pharisee.....	Peter Burke
Crowd of Citizens.....	Members of the Company
.....	Karamba Samba

The Last Supper

Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Peter.....	Mark Gairrusso
John.....	Chris Mooney
Andrew.....	David Charles-Hendy
Thomas.....	Martin Riley
Phillip.....	Mike Dix
Judas.....	Ashley Woods
James.....	Peter Young
James the Less.....	Christopher Thornton
Simon.....	David Ellis
Matthew.....	John Barnes
Bartholomew.....	Michael Beigel
Thaddeus.....	Dave Perkins
Malchus.....	Pete Salmon
Pharisees and Gawpers.....	Members of the Company



Jason Sheppard
John The Baptist



Christopher Walton
Lazarus



Chris Mapp
Soldier

Ashley Woods
Judas

Peter Burke
1st / 3rd Pharisee

Richard Naylor
Centurion

Erin Elston
Sybil



The Trial

Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Pilate.....	Jeremy Grange
Herod.....	Nick Fry
1st Pharisee.....	Douglas Cashin
2nd Pharisee.....	Adam Gough
3rd Pharisee.....	Peter Burke
Soldiers.....	Christopher Walton
Centurion.....	Richard Naylor
Caiaphas.....	Will Wood
Annas.....	David Anjo
A Damsel.....	Deborah Dickinson
Peter.....	Mark Gairusso
Claudia Procula.....	Lisa Rogers
Entertainers and Gawpers.....	Members of the Company
	Karamba Samba

The Crucifixion

Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Caiaphas.....	Will Wood
Annas.....	David Anjo
Simon of Cyrene.....	Ira Theobald
Pilate.....	Jeremy Grange
1st Woman.....	Jane Ainscough
2nd Woman.....	Deborah Dickinson
3rd Woman.....	Sarra Elliott
1st Soldier.....	Peter Watson
2nd Soldier.....	Chris Mapp
3rd Soldier.....	Phil Thomas
4th Soldier.....	Josh Donovan
Centurion.....	Richard Naylor
Mary, Mother.....	Carol Rannard
Mary Jacobi.....	Anna Prochazka
Mary Salome.....	Vanda Hargen
Mary Magdalene.....	Sarah Fairchild
John.....	Chris Mooney
Joseph of Arimathea.....	Mike Ellis
1st Thief.....	Sam Baker
2nd Thief.....	James Ralph
The Pharisees.....	Members of the Company



Anna Prochazka
Mary Jacobi

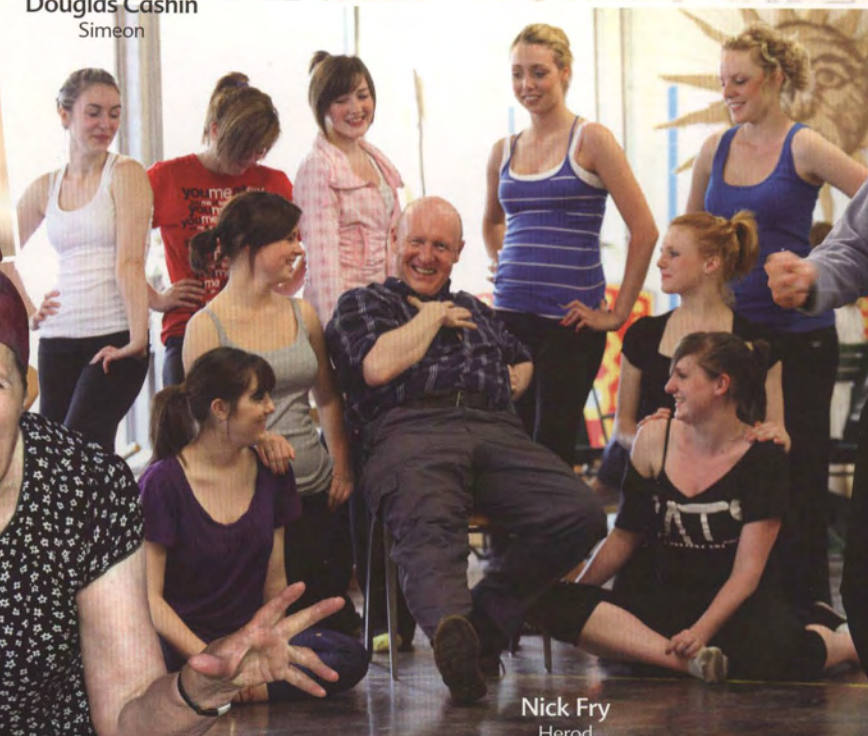


Douglas Cashin
Simeon



Mark Gairusso
Octavius / Peter

Mary Lewery
Antichrist



Nick Fry
Herod

Mike
Ellis
Joseph
Arimath



The Resurrection

Sponsored by SHELL UK

Pilate.....	Jeremy Grange
Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
1st Soldier.....	Phil Thomas
2nd Soldier.....	Peter Watson
3rd Soldier.....	Chris Mapp
4th Soldier.....	Josh Donovan
1st Angel.....	Hannah Thelwell
Mary Salome.....	Vanda Hargen
Mary Jacobi.....	Anna Prochazka
Mary Magdalene.....	Sarah Fairchild
Peter.....	Mark Gairrusso

The Ascension

Peter.....	Mark Gairrusso
Andrew.....	David Charles-Hendy
Thomas.....	Martin Riley
Matthew.....	John Barnes
John.....	Chris Mooney
Thaddeus.....	Dave Perkins
Phillip.....	Mike Dix
James the Elder.....	Peter Young
James the Less.....	Chris Thornton
Bartholomew.....	Michael Beigel
Simon.....	Daniel Ellis
Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Gobbet.....	Harry Kingham

The Coming of The Antichrist

Prophet 1.....	Mike Ellis
Prophet 2.....	Jennifer Jackson
Prophet 3.....	Richard Naylor
Prophet 4.....	Carol Rannard
Prophet 5.....	Nick Fry
Prophet 6.....	Jeremy Grange
Prophet 7.....	Rosamond Peet
Antichrist.....	Mary Lewery
Archangel Michael.....	Meurig Marshall
Dead Soul 2.....	Phil Thomas
Devils, Angels, Dead Souls.....	Members of the Company

The Last Judgment

Sponsored by Allington Hughes Solicitors

God.....	Duncan Crompton
Jesus.....	Sid Mofya
Gabriel.....	David Edwards
1st Saved.....	Meriel Cashin
2nd Saved.....	Sue Hughes
3rd Saved.....	Hannah Fowler
Lucifer.....	Paul Dabek
1st Damned.....	Jennifer Jackson
2nd Damned.....	Vanda Hargen
Gobbet.....	Harry Kingham
Angels, Devils and Souls.....	Members of the Company
	Karamba Samba



Mark Gairrusso
Peter

Chris Thornton
James the Less

Mike Dix
Phillip

Peter Young
James the Elder

Ashley Woods
Judas

Martin Riley
Thomas

John Barnes
Matthew

Dan Ellis
Simon

David Charles-Hendy
Andrew

Chris Mooney
John

Dave Perkins
Thaddeus



The Production Team

Natalie Diddams

Assistant Director

As the Artistic Director of the Basement Theatre Company, Natalie Diddams directed and produced **Find Me** by Olwen Wymark and **My Mother Said I Never Should** by Charlotte Keatley, both of which toured to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Other directing credits include **The Little Shop of Horrors**, **The Tempest** and Willy Russell's **Our Day Out**, all of which were performed at the Warwick Arts Centre.



As an Assistant Director, Natalie has worked on a variety of projects including **Wollstonecraft Live!** with multi-media company: **Fragments and Monuments**, **The Lady of Shallot** with **Revolving Doors** (Blue Elephant Theatre, London) and **Total with Squaremoon** (Brighton Fringe Festival 2008). She has also worked as an Assistant Producer for the Battersea Arts Centre, producing the work of **The Clod Ensemble**, **Gecko** and **Fevered Sleep**.

Nick Richings

Lighting Design

Nick's West End designs have included **A Man For All Seasons** (Theatre Royal Haymarket), **Whistle Down the Wind** (Palace), **Beautiful & Damned** (Lyric), **Money To Burn** (The Venue), **Wait Until Dark** (Garrick), **Cooper - Jus'Like That** (Garrick), **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat** (New London), **Sleuth** (Apollo), **Aspects of Love**, **South Pacific** (Prince of Wales), **Fiddler on the Roof** starring Topol, and **Scrooge** starring Tommy Steele (both at the London Palladium), **The Chiltern Hundreds** (Vaudeville), **Laughter on the 23rd Floor**, **Saucy Jack & the Space Vixens**, **Hot Milkado** (Queens), **HRH** (Playhouse), **Summer Holiday** (Apollo, Hammersmith), **The Importance of Being Oscar**, **Plunder** (Savoy), **Some Like It Hot** (Prince Edward), **The Master Builder** (Theatre Royal Haymarket), **Valentines Day** (Globe) and **Derren Brown Something Wicked this Way Comes** (Winner 2006 Olivier Award Best Entertainment, Cambridge).



International design credits include **Beauty & the Beast** and **The Producers** (Det Ny Teatre, Copenhagen), **Rent** (English Theatre Frankfurt), **Les Liaisons Dangereuses** and **Romeo & Juliet** (Vienna's English Theatre), **The Mystery of Charles Dickens** (Australia), **Grease** and **Hair** German tours and **The Harlem Gospel Singers** in Washington, San Francisco and European tours.

Previous UK Tours that Nick has designed the lighting for include **Kiss Me Kate**, **Whistle Down the Wind**, **Scrooge**, **Travels With My Aunt**, **South Pacific**, **42nd Street**, **Barnum**, **Chess**, **Sweet Charity**, **Fiddler on the Roof**, **The Roy Orbison Story**, **The King & I**, **Summer Holiday**, **Rock 'n'Roll Heaven**, **Charley's Aunt**, **The Sound of Music**.

Repertory theatre and opera include: **The Hound of the Baskervilles**, (Nottingham Playhouse), **Falstaff** (RNCM Manchester, Winner Best Opera Production 2001 Manchester Evening News), **The Consul** (Opera Holland Park), **Il Turco in Italla** (Broomhill Opera), and over 20 productions at the Library Theatre, Manchester.

Sian Lesley Phillips

Assistant Director

Sian studied at the University College Chester and gained a BA (Hons) in Drama and Theatre Studies with Psychology.



During her career she has worked with adults with learning and physical disabilities at the University of Glamorgan on a summer school drama programme. Following this she worked at the Mulberry Day Centre in Chester running drama and dance courses with the clients, this involved organising performances and playing a key role in performances of a devised production of **A Midsummer Night's Dream**. She has also co-written and directed several productions including **The Uninvited Guests**.

Sian has also worked for an organisation called Youth Action Flintshire as a Volunteer Manager, working with disadvantaged young people. Between 2000-2003 Sian was involved with **Chester's Midsummer Watch** parade. Sian currently works for Flintshire County Council as a Job Coach for adults with learning disabilities.

Sian's other work includes BBC Radio Wales – Radio Cymru, the Welsh soap opera, **Pobol y Cwm** and the Graeae Theatre Company in London. Sian was Stage Manager for the **2003 Cycle of Chester Mystery Plays**, and is thrilled to be involved again as the Stage Manager and Assistant Director in the 2008 cycle of the plays. Sian enjoys acting and has performed in **Cider with Rosie** and **Good Vibrations** and **Ruddigore** at Clwyd Theatre Cymru. Sian has performed at Chester Cathedral in a Son Alumier called **The Cheshire Tales** and staged managed **Prom Praise** at Chester Cathedral for the last two years.

Paul Dabek

Special Effects

Paul Dabek is recognised as one of the finest rising stars in the world of magic today.



His dynamic and high-energy style has taken him to across the globe and earned him some of the highest regarded titles in his field.

In 2003 Paul was awarded the title of Young Magician of the Year by the world famous Magic Circle (the governing body for magical arts) in London. September 2006 saw him compete at the International Brotherhood of Magicians convention in London where once again he was awarded the Grand Prix.

As a special effect consultant Paul uses closely guarded magical principles to create unusual theatrical effects for theatre, TV and film.

For more information go to www.pauldabek.com



SETFREE PROJECTS LTD

Kevin Heyes

Sound Design

Kevin came to Clwyd Theatr Cymru in 1984 from Leeds Playhouse to join the lighting and sound department. He has been designing lighting and sound for shows ever since, in the Anthony Hopkins Theatre and the Emlyn Williams Theatre, as well as theatres throughout Wales and in Europe. He also teaches lighting and sound design at Scarborough University College and in various colleges around Wales. He redesigned the sound systems in the Anthony Hopkins Theatre and the Emlyn Williams Theatre, with the latest state of the art sound equipment using full digital systems. A big part of his life is now designing firework displays all over Wales and the North-West.

Some of his lighting designs include **The Way It Was, Flora's War, The Secret, The Ballad of Megan Morgan, Mrs Warren's Profession, Our Country's Good, Misalliance, and My Sister In This House.**

He has now turned his attention full time to sound and all that goes with it. Credits include: **Godspell, Gulliver's Travels, The Norman Conquests trilogy, Flora's War, Hard Times, King Lear, Bedroom Farce, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, Oh What a Lovely War, The Ballad of Megan Morgan, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Hay Fever, Brassed Off, Troilus and Cressida, A Streetcar Named Desire, Sugar, Present Laughter, An Inspector Calls, Beauty and the Beast, and Of Mice and Men.**

Rachel Catherall

Choreography

Rachel trained at The Elsber School of Theatre Dance, Buckley and Merseyside Dance and Drama Centre, Liverpool. After graduating from dance college, Rachel's dancing took her all over the world, from a magic show in Switzerland to cruising the Caribbean, Scandinavia and Mediterranean for Celebrity Cruise Lines. For four years, Rachel performed in the Irish Dance Sensation, **Spirit of the Dance** and has toured the whole of the UK, the USA, Europe, Bahrain, Brunei and Turkey. She was the dance captain and resident artistic director for the European tour and was also assistant choreographer to Alan Harding.



As choreographer, her credits include **Romeo and Juliet, The Four Seasons, A Chorus of Disapproval, Arcadia and The Cherry Orchard** directed by Terry Hands; **A View From The Bridge, Hobson's Choice, Flights of Fancy, The Way It Was, The Voyage, The Grapes of Wrath, The Timeless Myths of the Mabinogion and A Midsummer Night's Dream,** directed by Tim Baker, all for Clwyd Theatr Cymru; **Celtic Dreams** for LM Productions; 10 production shows for Explosive Productions Ltd at Center Parcs, Penrith; **Peter Pan, Cinderella, Aladdin and Snow White** for the Sands Centre, Carlisle; **Love Me Tender, Jump Jive Boogie, West End To Broadway and Way Out West** on board Page & Moy's Ocean Majesty cruise ship and Fred Olsen's Boudicca cruise ship for Mirage Shows & Productions; **Riverdance Experience** for Main Feature Productions; and many one night productions and corporate events, including **An Audience With Paul Daniels.** Rachel was also choreographer and dance consultant for last year's **Barclays Spaces for Sports National Campaign,** fronted by Darren Gough.

Geoff Ford

Set Construction

The set for the Mystery plays 2008, designed by Judith Croft, was built by Geoff Ford of Set Free Projects Ltd, Greenfield, North Wales.

Geoff began his career in 1989, apprenticed to a joinery company. He then enrolled on a two-year stage carpentry course at RADA, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London, which covered all aspects of technical theatre. On completion of the course, Geoff was asked to work with Robert Bachelor, an established scenery firm in London. Here he worked on a number of theatre productions in the West End including **The Rose and Fall of Little Voice.** After a few years, Geoff moved back to North Wales to be closer to family and started his own company, Set Free Projects Ltd, in 1999.

The company has built stage sets for Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Chester Gateway Theatre, The Liverpool Empire, Theatre Genedlaethol and more recently the English National Ballet. It has also diversified to create exhibition stands and conference sets.

Set Free has expanded considerably in nine years and has recently moved premises to a larger 5,000 sq. ft unit, in order to accommodate the machinery acquired, including a new Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) cutting machine which allows for precision work.

Geoff enjoys the challenge of his work, and he and his team take pride in a profession which requires a high level of dedication and skill.

Neil Kendall

Production Photographer

Neil Kendall is an international freelance photographer based in the city. His work in the Chester Mystery plays is particularly relevant to him as he has spent many years documenting ancient and Annual British customs and festivals, including the Padstow 'Obby Oss' May Day Festival, The Green Man in Hastings and Chester Mid-Winter Watch and The Garland King in Derby. Its been a joy to shoot so many dedicated and enthusiastic cast members, they have been totally inspiring to see.



Neil has exhibited in London and Paris and has shot for many magazines including Vogue, Elle, GQ and Time Out. His editorial work has also appeared in The Observer, Sunday Telegraph, Metro and The Sun and more locally he has contributed on a regular basis to Cheshire Life. Neil has recently been shooting Burlesque Performers in Las Vegas for an up coming book and is known for his friendly reportage style approach to his subjects to create portraiture which captures the moment.

www.neilkendallphotography.co.uk

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Background Info...

All the Mirth of the Majesty is Magnified in Me

British poetry has frequently employed repeated consonants (alliteration) for emphasis and emotional impact. We think of Hopkins' "rook-racked, river-rounded" Oxford, of Yeats' "bee-loud glade" and Dylan Thomas' "bible-black night".

Listen, as you watch The Chester Mysteries, for some memorable examples:

In Creation and Fall God is

"Prince principal, proved in my perpetual providence" and "God gracious and glorious"

In The Nativity the emperor Octavius calls himself

"Proved Prince, most of power" and talks of "Leading lordship, lovely law".

In The Shepherds Hankyn begins

"Under the bushes my billet I build From the stiff storms my sheep to shield."

Finally, thwarted by Jesus in The Temptation, Lucifer invites his servants to an eternity of "burning bliss" – a delightful prospect for masochists, perhaps!

Octavius, alias the Emperor Augustus

A dominant character in The Nativity is Octavius, whose decision to hold a census brings Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. Named by Julius Caesar as his heir, Octavius had earlier defeated Cleopatra and her lover Mark Antony in a huge sea battle, and appointed himself the very first Roman Emperor, controlling 60 legions and bringing peace to an empire that stretched from the Atlantic to the Euphrates. During his reign Jesus Christ was born in an obscure Roman province called Judaea. In contrast to the rest of the Eastern Empire, the Jews refused to worship the Emperor of Rome.

The rulers of Rome had always consulted the prophetic Books of the Sibyl at times of national crisis. So medieval legend had it that the mystic Sibyl brought Augustus to recognise Jesus Christ as the true ruler of the world. In The Nativity Gobbet mentions, as proof of this, the church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, which still stands proudly above the ancient Forum in Rome. Michelangelo placed the Sibyl next to the great Hebrew prophet Isaiah on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

While Jesus was in his teens Augustus died, leaving the Empire to his stepson Tiberius. Jesus taught and died while Tiberius' appointee, Pontius Pilate, was governor of Judaea.

In reality several Roman emperors, notably Nero and Diocletian, persecuted Christians. But the peace which Augustus brought, and the lack of any borders, helped Christianity to spread rapidly. In AD 312 the emperor Constantine made Christianity the official faith of Rome.

Nine Orders of Angels

Those new to medieval theology may find the opening scene of Creation puzzling.

"Lord, in grace and might that has us wrought" sing the angels, and proceed to introduce themselves one order at a time.

Here are the nine orders, in descending order of rank;

- 1) The god-loving, six-winged Seraphim, meaning, in Hebrew, "flaming".
- 2) The many-eyed Cherubim, whose name means "effusion of wisdom".
- 3) The Thrones, who pour out God's justice upon earthly judges.
- 4) The Dominions, who teach men to subdue desires and resist temptation.
- 5) The Virtues, who inspire men to heal and train them in patience.
- 6) The Powers, so called because they have power over the devil.
- 7) The Principalities rule the lower angels and raise worthy men to power.
- 8) The Archangels, such as Michael and Gabriel, are heralds of good news.
- 9) The Angels are closest to man, and are appointed to guard each believer.

The Mystery Plays tapestry quilt by B.J. Elvgren

Artist B.J. Elvgren's charming focus on Chester Mystery Plays and the city itself made the tapestry a US national prize-winner before the Chester Mystery Plays company acquired it to present to Chester Cathedral in 1997, since when it has been seen by thousands of people.

In the cathedral a short stroll from Abbey Gate where the original medieval dramas were first performed, and close to the site where the plays are staged today, this striking exhibit makes an apt commemoration of one of the most treasured parts of Chester's cultural heritage. A postcard of the tapestry became a best-seller in the cathedral shop.

B.J. continues her work at her studio in Virginia, USA.

Memories of '03

One evening in the 2003 Cycle, during the Last Supper, it was discovered too late that the Passover Bread had been left in the Kaleyard car park. In desperation, Stage Manager Sian Lesley Phillips substituted a green and mildewed loaf dating back to the Dress Rehearsal. Jesus tried valiantly to break it into portions, failed, and passed it to Peter the Rock to see if he could do better! The disciples' self-control was tested to the limit.

Seeing Pedro heading off to explore the streets of Chester, an actor remarked, "Tell that donkey he's on in ten minutes."

One Thursday evening at precisely 7.05 pm a lightning strike simultaneously stopped the clock on Chester Town Hall and struck the steel scaffolding which supported the set. The cast voted unanimously to continue with the performance, but to avoid touching anything metallic!

Cestrian actor Nick Fry - appearing in this year's Cycle as Herod - has gone from one extreme to the other, having previously played the parts of Pilate, God, Lucifer, and Herod (twice). "I landed up as a disciple in the Last Supper in my first year owing to the fact I worked at the Cathedral. The Dean directed it and the cast was drawn from members of the clergy in Cheshire. However, they were one disciple short so I was drafted in on the grounds that I wore a cassock for work so that made everything alright.

It poured with rain at the dress rehearsal and I remember one eminent churchman wearing a Tesco carrier bag as a rain hat!

Playing God in 2003 was an interesting experience - it's very strange when people introduce you to others with the words "He's God, you know". And it can also lead to delusions of grandeur, such as "I'm sorry I can't stay and chat, but I've got to go and create the world...!"



The Exhibition

Chester Mystery Plays Special Exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum

21st June - 31st August 2008

If you're reading this programme, then you've probably already experienced the 2008 Chester Mystery Plays. Now, why not come and discover the history behind them? Exploring the history of the Mysteries, you can learn more about Chester Guilds, their role in the plays and get a feel for how Chester would have looked when they were first produced. You will be able to see ephemera from the 20th century revival, costumes, models of the 2008 set and images from this year's rehearsal. Most importantly you will get a rare opportunity to see some of the original manuscripts of the plays produced and preserved by the Guilds.

Staging a new vision of the city's most famous old mysteries in 1982.

To tell their story to one thing, but to be presented from devil in Chester, it is a rare chance to see the original costumes worn at the Dean's Field church. The role of an actor's life is being produced for the third time by Peter Dumbell. May, since county drama began in 1952, has been associated with them since 1982.

Robin Goddard — the Jesus of Chester 1982.

CHESTER MIRACLE PLAYS
9th-21st JUNE 1982
IN THE CHESTER CATHEDRAL REFRATORY

Linda Parker-Davies — Peter
Jo Colborne — Mary Magdalene
Frances Clare — Adam
Anna Susan-Parkes — Elizabeth and Mary Cleopas

Above: A cutting from the 28th May 1982 edition of the Chester Observer. Robin Goddard played Jesus Christ (top right), and current Mystery Plays Chairman Jo Sykes played Mary Magdalene (above, 2nd left).

Behind Sacred Doors... the Life and Times of Chester Cathedral

Special Exhibition at the
Grosvenor Museum

5th July - 21st September 2008

As the Mysteries are this year once again played out on Chester's Cathedral Green, come and discover more about this fabulous building and the monks who once lived and worked there.

Taking you on a 'tour' through the building, using reconstructions, objects, paintings and photographs, you will uncover its history. The Chapter House and Cloisters that have left a legacy of magnificent manuscripts. The Refectory where the monks would eat in silence whilst readings were made to them from on high, the beautiful building, with its carvings and inscriptions and, of course, the shrine of St Werburgh, Chester's patron saint.

Where the page meets
the stage in
celebrations of the
written and the
spoken word.

From 6th-24th October 2008, the 20th Chester Literature Festival will combine celebrity guests with local events, aiming to intrigue, inform and entertain with its programme of thought-provoking talks, readings, theatre, workshops and book signings.



www.chesterfestivals.co.uk/literature
Box Office 01244 304618.

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www.chesterfestivals.co.uk/music

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www.riverside-players.org.uk

Special Exhibitions at the Grosvenor Museum

Having enjoyed the Mystery Plays in the shadow of Chester's fantastic cathedral why not discover more about their history? Two special exhibitions mark this wonderful event.

In the 'Chester Mystery Plays' the star attractions are two of the original Tudor play manuscripts, 'along with displays documenting the plays' history. In 'Behind Sacred Doors' you can explore the abbey church, which became the cathedral, through the lives of the monks who once lived and worked there.



Open: Mon-Sat 10.30-5, Sun 1-4,

Admission Free

www.grosvenormuseum.co.uk



**Chester
City Council**

Artist In Residence

Tony Lewery was born in 1941 and was brought up and educated in Brighton, Sussex, although he and his wife Mary have lived in the North West of England since the 1960s. He trained initially as a painter at Brighton Art College but has earned his living with a wide range of practical trades that include carpentry, sculpture, museum design, mural painting and signwriting. Since 1980 he has worked extensively as a theatre designer and props maker, usually on large scale outdoor events, and was a core member of the performance arts company Welfare State International for a number of years. He was the co-ordinating designer for the Chester Mystery Plays in 1987 and 1992 and created a spectacular pageant cart for them in 2000. He continues to work occasionally in this field with the Wren Community Arts Company in Devon and with the D.C.Events Theatre Company in Newcastle on Tyne.



In parallel with this theatre work Tony has pursued a deep interest in the history and practise of folk and popular art in Britain. He has written four books and numerous articles on the subject and continues to research and document the vernacular arts, with a particular concentration on those of the inland waterways. He serves as a trustee of the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port and is well known as a specialist signwriter and decorator of the traditional narrow boats of the English canals. His most recent book is *Flowers Afloat*, a detailed study of the folk art of the canal boat people.

Since retirement Tony has been concentrating on a return to painting and drawing and hopes to develop his skills as an all round artist and sculptor.



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Merchandise



For this production we have a wide range of merchandise and most items have been sourced locally. All items carry our yellow sun logo except the rain ponchos - which will not be needed this year!



Item	Colour	Price
Adult sweatshirt	black or blue	£18
Adult T shirt	blue or red	£10
Child sweatshirt	black or blue	£12
Child T shirt	blue or red	£7
Water bottle	blue, black or red	£6
T-towel	white	£5
Bags	blue	£7
Rain poncho	blue or red	£5
Pens	black	£1
Pencils	yellow or blue	£0.60
Mugs	black	£7

Adult sizes: Small, Medium, Large & Extra Large.

Child: ages 1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/10, 11/12

All items available here today, or alternatively please contact Judy Cheesman, Chester Mystery Plays' Merchandising Co-ordinator, either on 01244 678866 or by email to: judy@cheeseco.net.

Payment by cash or cheque, made payable to 'Chester Mystery Plays.'



Did you know?

The Noah's Flood play in 1997 involved 200 people - at the time the largest cast ever assembled for one play in the history of the Chester cycle.

Princess Margaret attended the Plays in both 1962 and 1977 (below), whilst Prince Edward attended the 2003 production.



Original texts of the Chester cycle are held by the British Library, the Bodleian Library and the Huntington Library in California. One play is in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. The City of Chester also possesses one original text, The Scourging of Christ.

Making European theatre history In 1997, Finnish drama students from Helsinki and Turku were the first group in the history of Chester Mystery Plays to take part from outside the region. In a cultural exchange programme with Chester College (now the University of Chester), they staged The Resurrection, directed by Kirsi Huotari.

The 1977 production, under the direction of Peter Dornford-May, cost a then-colossal £14,000 to stage, including £2,500 spent on the construction of the covered stand, and a further £2,000 on the lighting. Although two grants were received, they amounted to just £600. Ten years before, when the full cycle had last been performed, the cost had been less than half of the 1977 figure... Thirty-one years later, the initial budget proposed for this staging year's cycle was... well, maybe we should leave you to guess!

How things change... From the 2003 production, Mr and Mrs Noah have become shepherds, Lucifer has reformed into both Joseph and Caiaphas, Gobbet is now the Antichrist, God is now a mere King (Herod), while Isaac is now Young Jesus...

I was a Midsummer Mummer!



Sarah Everitt, now a high school teacher and business training consultant in Tokyo, recalls her experience of taking part in the Mysteries.

"In 1987 I was a 15-year-old schoolgirl who was 'plucked' from the cast of a school production of "The Wizard Of Oz" at St Mary's College, Wallasey, by a rather eccentric and fabulous teacher, Mr. Berriman. He ran a medieval theatre group with Alan Hamilton called the Makeshift Mummies and they needed a 'Mary' for their contribution to Chester Mystery Plays, which was The Magi and the Innocents play.

So they asked me, and from then on I seemed to spend the whole summer with them, a happy makeshift band of teachers, artists and aspiring actors. As Mary, I rode a donkey through the middle of Chester while everyone sang and carried torches throughout the evening. It was a magical experience I will never forget, not just for the plays themselves but also for spending the summer of 1987 drinking homemade wine with such an interesting collection of people!

The plays themselves that year were nothing short of incredible. The greatest memories I have of them are 'God' standing on top of pine scaffolding that was the set - a very powerful and charismatic actor. Even more than that, there was the devil in Revelations on the final night - an incredibly wily female careering in on a fire-breathing vehicle that looked like it had come straight out of Mad Max. It was amazing, really awesome.

The whole thing is such an amazing mix of dance, street performance, acting and passion. I personally had to ride a donkey from the stage on Cathedral Green to the town hall, accompanied by flaming torch bearers all singing Unto Us a Child is Born - this was in July and all the audience were following! There is something definitely magical about that, and I appreciate it now far more than I did then!"

Formerly a regular singer at The English Martyr's Church in Wallasey, Sarah also now runs singing workshops in the trendy Rippongi Hills district of Tokyo for Japanese people who want to experience English through Gospel.

The Friends of Chester Mystery Plays

The Friends of Chester Mystery Plays is a group which supports the event in many ways, and always welcomes new members. For a small annual fee (£10 or £15 for couple), you can enjoy a range of social events exclusive to Friends, have closer contact with the production, be involved in fundraising activities and be personally acknowledged in the official programme. However active - or not - you wish to be, just becoming a Friend is a good start and helps support the production. Membership also makes the perfect gift for the arts lovers on your list - it lasts all year, and offers an inside peek into one of Britain's greatest literary and theatrical treasures. Telephone 01244 380172 for further information.



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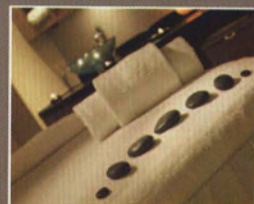


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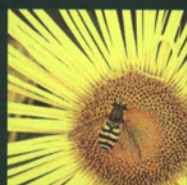
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