

GALA PERFORMANCE

TUESDAY 5th JULY, 1977

in the presence of

Her Royal Highness The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon

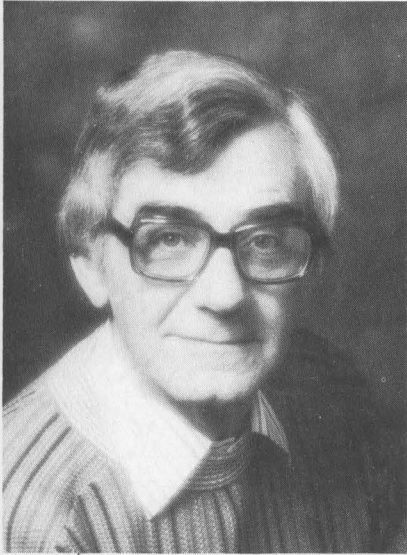


1977

The Chester Cycle of
Mystery Plays




P. D. May



Peter Dornford-May, a Yorkshireman, is married with three sons, two of whom are training for a career in professional theatre. From an early age he was interested in theatre and after service in the Army he trained as an actor at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Before completing the course he decided that he wished to become a teacher and taught in schools in Yorkshire and became Lecturer in English and Drama at the Lady Mabel College of Physical Education. He was appointed the first County Drama Organiser for Cheshire Education Authority in 1962. During his time in Cheshire he has seen tremendous developments in drama and established the Cheshire County Drama Courses for Young People. Peter Dornford-May serves on a number of National Drama Committees, has adjudicated at most of the major Drama Festivals at home and abroad and is a Senior Examiner for The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Whilst serving in Egypt he became the Resident Announcer of the English Service of Egyptian State Broadcasting and compered one of the first Television programmes to be shewn from Manchester. He considers himself a very fortunate man in having a profession which is also his hobby. In addition to his enthusiasm for all forms of theatre he is the Honorary Secretary of the Chester and West Cheshire Branch of the N.S.P.C.C. Although this will be his fifth major production of Mystery Plays he feels very privileged and honoured to be responsible for the Silver Jubilee Production of the Chester Cycle of Mystery Plays.

Photograph by Gary Talbot.



Gala Performance

in the presence of

Her Royal Highness, Princess Margaret,
Countess of Snowdon

Music & Royal Fanfares

The Cheshire Constabulary Band
(Bandmaster Mr. C. Holt)

Replicas of The Queen's Beasts
Christleton High School

Bouquets by

Flower Designs, Chester

Floral Decoration

Cheshire Education Committee

Reception Stewards

C (Cheshire Yeomanry) Squadron
The Queen's Own Yeomanry

Wines by

Mr. Piers Dutton of George Dutton & Sons

Confectionery by


Mr. Frank Weinholt, Handbridge

Floral Decoration in Bishop's House by
Margaret France

Music

The Cestrian Male Voice Choir
(Musical Director Mr. Frederick Warren)

At the conclusion of the performance Her Royal Highness will walk by the cast and depart through a procession of torchlights provided by Societies, detailed overleaf, who participated in the Chester Festival Jubilee Procession.



Torchbearers:

23rd Artillery Brigade (v)
The British Red Cross Society (Chester Branch)
Cestrian Male Voice Choir of Chester
Chester and District Badminton League
Chester Council of Churches
Chester Crime Prevention Panel
Chester Epilepsy Club
Chester Grosvenor Girl Guides
Chester St. Andrews Society
Chester Theatre Club
Christleton High School
Deva Judokwai (Chester Judo Club)
Pickering's Dairies
5th Royal Inniskilling Dragoons
Royal National Lifeboat Institution
Miss Selfridge Limited
Wakefield Grange School
Werburgh Glade
Westlea County Primary School

The Christleton Players present



The Silver Jubilee Production of

The Chester Cycle of
MYSTERY PLAYS

on the Cathedral Green, Chester
(by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter)

Adapted and Prepared by
Betty and John McCulloch and Donald Hughes

Settings Designed by
Richard Berry

Costumes designed by
David Dean

Properties Designed by
Stephen Pyle

Music Composed by
Winston Barraclough

The Production directed by

Peter Dornford-May



Stage Directors	William James, John Roberts
Stage Manager	Stuart Dornford-May
Staging made by	Richard Berry, William James, John Roberts, Brian Cox, Geoffrey Steel, Peter Steel, Moira Oldfield, Gerald Bartlam, Steven Woolley
Costumes made by	David Dean, Anne Clayton, Frances Shore, Meg Ewing, Julia Neustein, Peggy Cox, Moira Oldfield, Mary Salter, Margaret Townsend, Stella Wilkinson
Properties made by	Stephen Pyle, Robert Smith, Julie Feedam, Margaret Bates, John Roberts, William James, Geoffrey Steel, Ralph Fairbanks
Lighting designed by	Frank Walker
Lighting supplied and installed by	Lancelyn Lighting, Oxford
Lighting operated by	Peter Catherall, Bart Cosgee, Carius Bonner, Marco Vianello, David Bundy, Martin and Richard Davies
Make-up	Lilian Akhurst assisted by Betty James, Maureen Barraclough, Veronica Smart, Patricia Hill, Shirley Crawford, Sylvia Wilson, Kay Whieldon
Sound composed and selected by	Winston Barraclough
Sound Technician	Gus Roose
Sound operated by	Simon Booth, Mark Reynolds, Peter Neary
Sound equipment supplied by ...	Milton Sound Services
Scaffolding supplied and erected by	Ellesmere Port Scaffolding Co.
Printing by	S. G. Mason (Chester) Ltd.
Masks for animals made by	Westlea County Primary School, Sybil Garth, Staff and Parents of Westlea County Primary School
Bar	Brian Lambert, Peter Tilston
Bar Supplied by	Higson's Brewery
Box Office	Grishilda Wasley
Front of House Manager	Robert Crawford
Programmes	Agnes Crawford
Publicity and Information Officer	John Perry
Motif and Programme designed by	Malcolm Speakman
Portable buildings loaned by	Thomas Warrington & Sons Ltd.
Wigs and beards	Wig Creations, London
Timber supplied by	Joseph Musgrave & Co. Ltd.
Cast Catering	Mary Cleeves, Elaine Smith
Donkey loaned by	James Posnett

Associate Producers:

**HILARY EGAN
BETTY HASSALL
FRANK WALKER**

Production directed by:

PETER DORNFORD-MAY

Part One

The Old Testament

The Fall of Lucifer
The Creation
The Garden of Eden
Outside Paradise
The Flood
The Sacrifice of Isaac
The Nativity
The Slaying of the Innocents
The Temple

Part Two

The New Testament

The Temptation
The Woman Taken in Adultery
The Raising of Lazarus
The Box of Spikenard
Palm Sunday
Cleansing of the Temple
The Garden of Gethsemane
Before Pilate
The Sepulchre
The Last Judgement

Cast

Part One

GOD	Kevin Catchpole
LUCIFER	Robin Goddard
GABRIEL	Stephen Janes
ANGELS	'Students of the Hammond School of Dancing'
ADAM	Richard Bennett
EVE	Christine Williams
ADAM, The Elder	Brian Wright
EVE, The Elder	Stella Wilkinson
CAIN	Jonathan Wilkins
ABEL	Michael Fair
NOAH	Derek Smith
Mrs NOAH	William Kennerley
HAM	Stephen Cool
HAM'S WIFE	Deborah Perry
SHEM	Warren Woods
SHEM'S WIFE	Linda Houlbrook
JAPHET	Andrew Wilkinson
JAPHET'S WIFE	Gillian Williams
FIRST GOSSIP	Alma Perry
SECOND GOSSIP	Joy Saltman
THIRD GOSSIP	Lottie Lunt
ABRAHAM	John Keay
ISAAC	Christopher Dornford-May
MARY	Jenny Hindmarch
ELIZABETH	Audrey Shepherd
JOSEPH	Dave Wackett
TAX COLLECTOR	Jonathan Wilkins
FIRST MIDWIFE	Joan Keay
SECOND MIDWIFE	Helen Jackson
FIRST SHEPHERD	William Kennerley
SECOND SHEPHERD	Warren Woods
THIRD SHEPHERD	Derek Smith
SHEPHERD BOY	Colin Banks
FIRST KING	Patrick Gee
SECOND KING	Michael Fair
THIRD KING	Richard Bennett
HEROD	John Williams
FIRST SOLDIER	Peter Steel
SECOND SOLDIER	Andrew Wilkinson
THIRD SOLDIER	Stephen Cool
FIRST WOMAN	Carole Bowness
SECOND WOMAN	Anne Keates
THIRD WOMAN	Anne Fitzpatrick
SIMEON	John Keay

ANIMALS IN THE ARK: Pupils of Westlea
County Primary School

Part Two

JESUS CHRIST	Mark Dornford-May
DISCIPLES:	
PETER	Dave Wackett
JOHN	Warren Woods
JUDAS	Michael Fair
MATTHEW	John Rafferty
THADDEUS	Peter Crabbe
ANDREW	Andrew Wilkinson
JAMES, the Less	Nicholas Wasley
JAMES, the Elder	Jack Kelly
THOMAS	Stephen Wright
PHILIP	Neil Wrench
SIMON	Alan Darlington
BARTHOLOMEW	Gavin Jones
FIRST JEW (played as Lucifer) ...	Robin Goddard
SECOND JEW	John Keay
THIRD JEW	William Kennerley
WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY	Moira Oldfield
MARY	Hilary Roberts
MARTHA	Anna Stewart-Forshaw
LAZARUS	Stephen Cooil
SIMON, THE LEPER	Derek Oldfield
MARY MAGDALENE	Joan Wren
MERCHANTS	Stella Wilkinson, John Williams Jenny Hindmarch
CENTURION	Richard Bennett
FIRST SOLDIER	Jonathan Wilkins
SECOND SOLDIER	Peter Steel
ANNAS	Derek Smith
CAIAPHAS	Brian Wright
PILATE	Patrick Gee
NICODEMUS	John Williams
SIMON OF CYRENE	Stephen Cooil
FIRST WOMAN	Mary Cleeves
SECOND WOMAN	Joan Keay
MARY MOTHER	Muriel Craine June Lancelyn-Green (June 26, 29, July 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7.)
JOSEPH OF ARRAMATHEA	Andrew Hamill
MARY CLEOPHAS	Audrey Shepherd
SALOME	Alma Perry
FIRST THIEF	Christopher Dornford-May
SECOND THIEF	Derek Oldfield

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The Chester Cycle of Mystery Plays

by Peter Dornford-May

Whilst being an undoubted part of our heritage, the Mystery Plays have experienced a very chequered career. Originally intended as a vehicle to teach the masses the Christian faith in the vernacular they were banned by the Church and became the responsibility of the Guilds.

Although they were presented with great artistry and skill they gradually fell into disuse, and it was not until the Festival of Britain in 1951 that modern audiences were able to see the greatness of these plays.

The Festival of Britain inspired many people to look back into dramatic literature with consequential productions of many plays normally only studied by students of literature. The immense popularity of the full cycle of Mystery Plays in Chester and York during that year gave assurance that they would not return to the archives for another four hundred years.

It will be remembered that Chester was a very thriving port when the plays were originally presented. The people of Chester, like the rest of Merry England, delighted in spectacles and pageants of every kind. Known as the "Whitson Plaies", they were performed as part of the Whitsuntide festivities. Beginning as a four line playlet, they were performed by the priests and monks as a means of instruction. The services in the churches of that time were in Latin and the populace did not comprehend much of the meaning until they used the dramatic form of presentation. Having been starved of "entertainment" for so long, the people revelled in these plays, the clergy enjoyed playing them and although they became popular the production was often considered unseemly and outrageous and they were dismissed from the body of the

church to a place outside — usually the West Door. It was here that the form of presentation began to become established. The platforms were on two levels, the lower part acted as a dressing room and the upper part was the stage. The scenery and costumes became much more ornate with each production.

Eventually the clergy became too involved with the plays and the "high authority" forbade any further participation, so that the plays became the responsibility of the City Guilds. From the French term "mystere" meaning craft guild, comes of course their description as "Mystery Plays" to distinguish them from those plays of the miracles associated with the Virgin Mary.

Undoubtedly the Guilds experienced much competition in their presentations and no expense was spared in the scenic and costume effects. Traditionally the members of each Guild were supposed to perform in their craft play but it is known that actors were hired by some of them to ensure the success of the Guild image. The settings of the plays were no longer simple, every known mechanical aid was used. We have records of people being lowered from heaven to hell by the use of a winch and the staff of Moses bursting into bloom. Medieval audiences certainly saw many wonderful scenic effects.

For the citizens it was a great feast of rejoicing. The plays were given over a period of three days. Three days before the performance a proclamation was made throughout the city by mounted messenger, informing the citizens of the plays to be given. They were also informed to be of good behaviour and reverent!

"Who so comyth these plays
to see

With good devocon merelye
Pertely welcome shall he be
And have right good chere"

The proclamation was read in every street and the concourse of spectators from all the countryside must have been very considerable.

The city trades made much profit from the visitors and high prices were paid for convenient places to view the performances.

As the popularity of the plays increased the opposition grew. One Archbishop of York made formidable objection, in opposition to the Mayor of Chester Sir John Savage who allowed a performance to take place in 1576; from the very quiet beginnings in the Church to the vast populace of the city, and then back to obscurity; from simplicity to magnificent opulence; from the amateur to the professional performers to the amateurs of today. After the dark ages the drama began with the liturgical drama witnessed by Shakespeare and, perhaps, an inspiration to him.

As in the past, I have endeavoured in this production to give wide scope to the visual effect of the plays. A revolving stage will represent the various pageants, properties will be ornate but everything will, I believe, be pervaded with a spirit of sincerity and belief. The impact on the plays of those taking part is a tribute to the spirit and energy of the creators of the plays at a time when this City, in the view of an American expert, could not have contained more than 450 households.

Even in this modern age there is room for the re-telling of the "story" of man's creation, his fall and his resurrection. It has been a privilege and honour to have an opportunity of creating this production.

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