



**MYSTERY CAST:** David Edwards (Angel Gabriel), Robin Chambers (king), Jonathan Sharps (Jesus), Edward Ramsey (shepherd), Chris Mapp (Joseph) and Winnie Southgate (Mary). Pictures: JANE DAWSON

# Biblical actors given top roles in city's plays

by Jo Henwood

JESUS is a carpenter and comes from Guilden Sutton.

History has not been rewritten but the director of the 2013 cycle of the Chester Mystery Plays has announced the cast for the production in Chester Cathedral next summer.

The part of the adult Jesus will be played by woodcrafter Jonathan Sharps, of Guilden Sutton.

Father-of-one Jonathan, whose initials are JC for Jonathan Charles, said: "I have lived in Chester all of my life and I think the mystery plays will be an exciting thing to do. I think it will be great for my three-year-old son Harvey to come and see me."

Director Peter Leslie Wild has cast 112 actors in roles ranging from God to Lucifer and the serpent to the Antichrist in the medieval plays which tell Bible stories from the Creation to the Last Judgment. They will be joined in the large community production by musicians and children who will be cast next year.

Hammond School acting student Winnie Southgate, of Mollington, has been cast as Mary and Chris Mapp, of Blacon, as Joseph. Both were in the 2008 cycle of the plays when Winnie was a member of Jigsaw Music Theatre Company and Chris had a number of roles including a devil and a centurion.

Winnie, now 17, said: "I'm very

## Work under way for summer performances as cast is selected

excited to be playing Mary. I told one of my teachers and within seconds everyone knew!"

Former Hammond School student David Edwards, currently playing in Theatre in the Quarter's *A Christmas Carol* at Chester Town Hall, will play the Angel Gabriel for a second time. Now 19, David, of Dogleston, played the same role in the 2008 cycle, when he was just 15. He said: "With Peter's vision, I am excited to be visiting the part in a different light, with a different interpretation."

Chester Mystery Plays stalwart Nicholas Fry, who has acted in four cycles since the 1970s, has been cast as God and one of the youngest members of the cast so far is 13-year-old Edward Ramsey, a pupil of The King's School. Edward will play a shepherd and the disciple John.

Director Peter Leslie Wild said: "I'm really excited by this cast and can't wait to get started on rehearsals. The mix of new talent and old hands is very exciting, and with Stephanie Dale's new script, Matt Baker's original music and Judith Croft's brilliant design we can all look forward to a really exciting show."

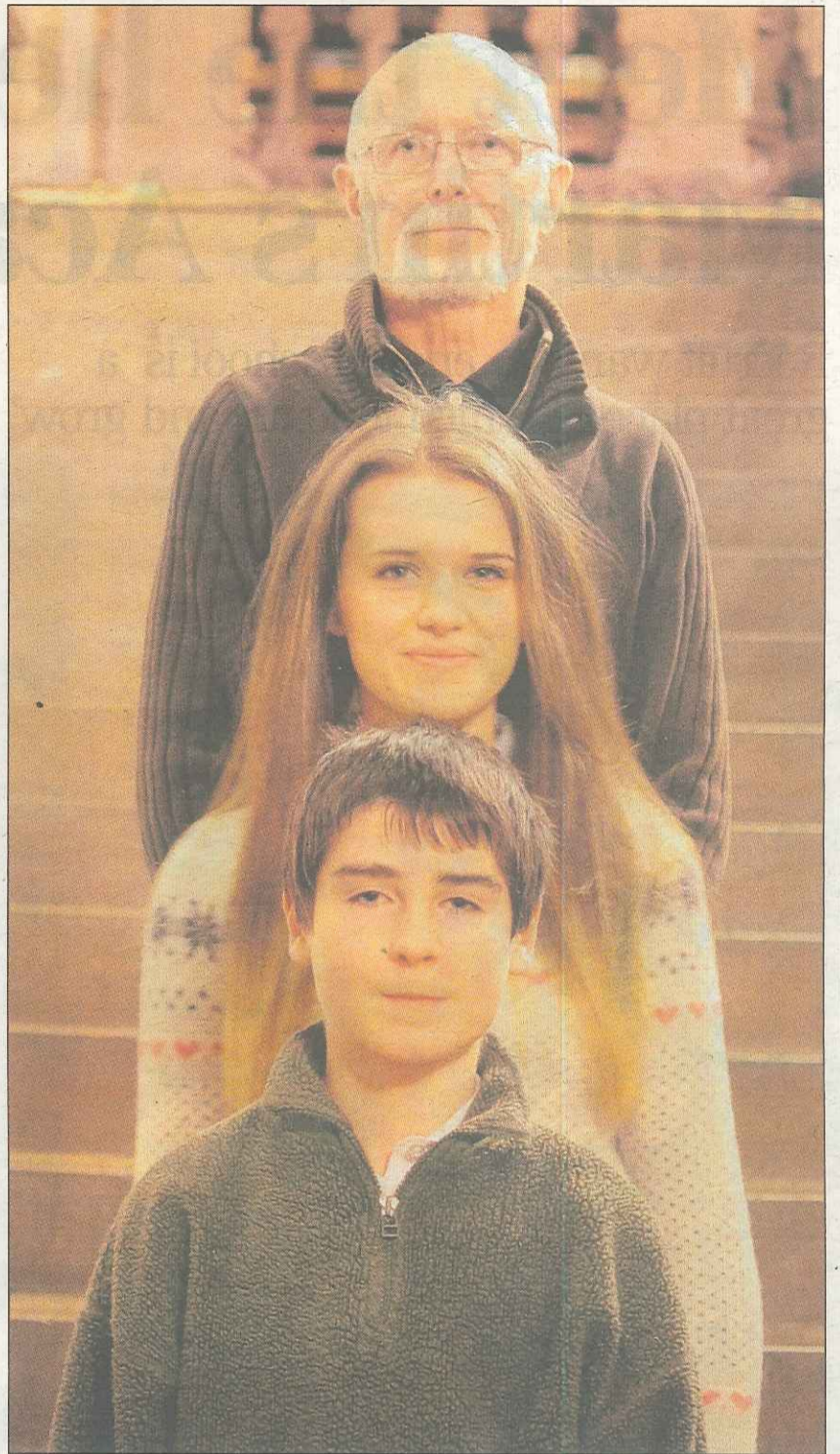
"The casting process has been a painstaking one: we spent a long time

going through the list, and then it took a good while after that for me to fine-tune it. Because Stephanie is writing a new version, it means she can now go away and tailor the script to the cast we have. So everyone will have something to do - and something to say."

"We still have a large number of young people to add to the cast, and such has been the demand from them we'll be running another workshop in January."

Children wishing to sing in the Chester Mystery Plays are invited to attend a workshop on Saturday, January 12, at 10am at Chester Cathedral. Children wishing to act in the Chester Mystery Plays are invited to attend acting workshops on Saturday, January 19. The first workshop starts at 10.30am and is for children attending primary school (minimum age seven). The second starts at 2pm and is for children and young people at secondary school. To attend a workshop, register interest by emailing [info@chestermysteryplays.com](mailto:info@chestermysteryplays.com).

The 2013 production will be in the nave of Chester Cathedral from June 26 - July 13. Tickets are available by telephone from 01244 500959 from [www.chestermysteryplays.com](http://www.chestermysteryplays.com).



**RISING STARS:** Hammond School student Winnie Southgate (Mary), King's School student Edward Ramsey (shepherd) and Robin Chambers (a king).



**ANGELIC:** Former Hammond School student David Edwards is the Angel Gabriel in the 2013 production of the Chester Mystery Plays.