

Shepherds see the light in Banns deal



IN TUNE: Chester Mystery Plays composer and musical director Matt Baker at the Reading of the Banns ceremony on Saturday. Picture: NEIL KENDALL

THE Lord Mayor of Chester has given official permission for actors to perform in the city this summer.

Cllr Pam Booher, dressed in full regalia, granted leave to actors from the Chester Mystery Plays to present the 2013 production of the five-yearly spectacle at Chester Cathedral in June and July.

Speaking from the Town Hall steps at noon on Saturday, Cllr Booher approved the performance in a medieval ceremony known as the Reading of the Banns.

Actors playing shepherds and sheep, accompanied by a band of musicians, began their procession at the Eastgate clock.

Singing bawdy songs from the medieval plays, they made their way up Northgate Street to the Town Hall Square where shepherds Douglas Cashin and Paul Williams requested permission to put on the plays.

The shepherds then performed a celebratory dance on the square, choreographed by Alison Scott.

The Chester Mystery Plays are



CHESTER
Mystery Plays

SPECTACLE & HISTORY, MIRACLES & MYSTERY

by Jo Henwood



APPROVAL: Lord Mayor of Chester Cllr Pam Booher with Chester Mystery Plays board chairman Jo Sykes.

Picture: ROB STRATFORD RS110513Mystery-007

performed once every five years. Written in the 14th century by Benedictine monks of the Abbey of St Werburgh (now Chester Cathedral), they tell Bible stories from the Creation to the Last Judgment with a Chester-focused twist.

They were originally performed by the Freemen and Guildsmen in the city streets but for the first time ever this year, they will be presented in the nave of Chester's historic cathedral.

The 2013 production is directed by the award-winning theatre dir-

ector and radio drama producer Peter Leslie Wild with original music by Matt Baker.

■ The Chester Mystery Plays are at Chester Cathedral from June 26-July 13. Tickets from £19 (previews £12) from 01244 500959 or www.chestermysteryplays.com.



PROCESSION: Shepherds and sheep from the Chester Mystery Plays process to the town hall for the Reading of the Banns ceremony. Picture: ROB STRATFORD RS110513Mystery-002



IN STEP: Shepherds from the Chester Mystery Plays dance in celebration of being granted permission to perform. Picture: ROB STRATFORD RS110513Mystery-004



CELEBRATION: Shepherds and sheep celebrate after Lord Mayor of Chester Pam Booher grants permission for the Chester Mystery Plays performance to go ahead during a Reading of the Banns ceremony on Saturday. Picture: NEIL KENDALL



MUSIC MAKERS: Chester Mystery Plays musicians playing at the performance outside the Town Hall. Picture: ROB STRATFORD RS110513Mystery-001