

Take your seats for plays

Raked seating installed in cathedral for performances

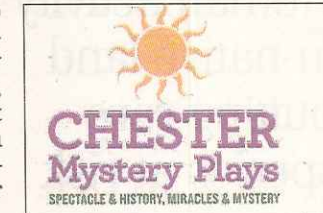
THE 12,000 people expected to turn up to see the city's quinquennial Chester Mystery Plays, which open next week, won't have to worry about missing a single thing as a raked seating has been installed in the historic Chester Cathedral.

Chairman of the mystery plays company Jo Sykes explained the decision: "When we decided that it was going to be essential to request permission of the dean and chapter to perform inside the cathedral rather than outside on the Cathedral Green because of the vagaries of the British summer weather, we soon realised that it was also going to be necessary to do something about the seating.

"You cannot expect people to pay up to £25 to sit in an auditorium where you may just end up behind a pillar or watching the action on a TV screen.

"We therefore included in our request to perform, a request to bring raked seating into the nave.

"I knew this would work because I had performed in a production in 1979 where this had happened, even though on that



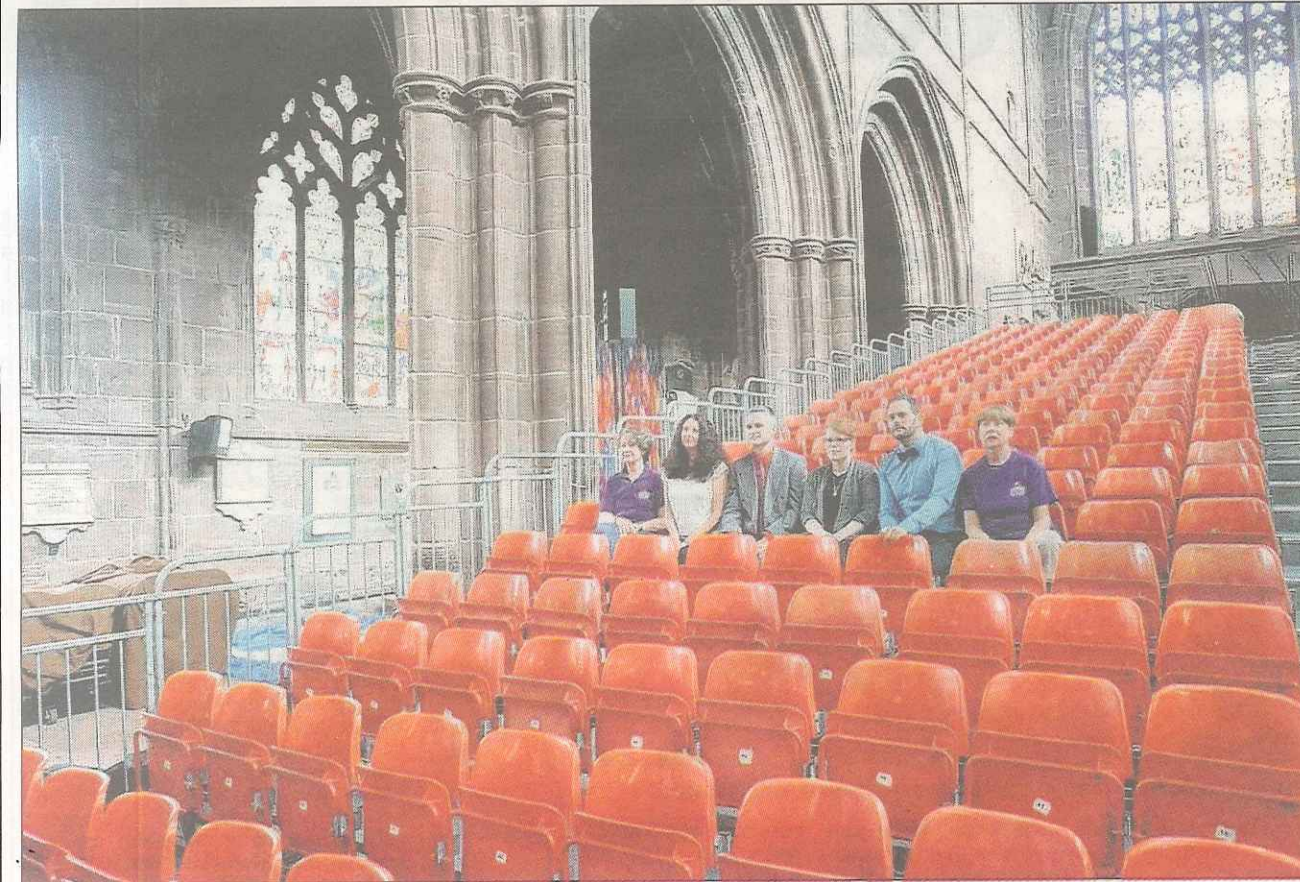
occasion we performed on the west steps."

When permission was granted, Jo chose Arena Seating – a company which has experience of working at St Paul's Cathedral in London and on the Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester.

"We wanted to use a company that had a great deal of experience working inside historic buildings," she added.

Another innovation for the 2013 production is the creation of podcasts to represent plays that have not been included in the modern script, written by Stephanie Dale.

The podcasts of Abraham and Isaac, Lazarus and Mary Magdalene, directed and produced by Peter Leslie Wild, are all available to listen to on the Chester Mystery Plays website at www.chester-mysteryplays.com.



GOOD VIEW: Chester Mystery Plays project manager Jané Dawson, writer Stephanie Dale, actor Jeremy Grange, deputy stage manager Sam Cheadle, composer Matt Baker and chairman Jo Sykes watch the action on stage from the new raked seating in Chester Cathedral.