

CMP/8/20/79

Praise spotlight falls on Mystery tradition

BBC programme takes a closer look at city's medieval plays



CHESTER
Mystery Plays
SPECTACLE & HISTORY, MIRACLES & MYSTERY

ON CAMERA:
BBC Songs of Praise presenter Diane Louise Jordan with Nicholas Fry, who plays God in the Chester Mystery Plays, filming at Chester Cathedral. Picture by Ian Cooper
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SUNDAY evening's Songs of Praise programme on BBC1 will focus on a centuries old Chester tradition.

Broadcast on BBC1 at 5pm and titled *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, the programme will focus on the 2013 production of the medieval Chester Mystery Plays, which run until Saturday at Chester Cathedral.

by **Jo Henwood**

Producer Mark Warburton said: "It was inspiring to see hundreds of volunteers give their all, their heart and soul, for several months, to be part of the production.

"We talk to a few of the actors and the production team and have recorded action from the cathedral.

"We were particularly keen to talk to Nicholas Fry who plays what is perhaps the most challenging role of God."

Mark also spoke to director Peter Leslie Wild, writer Stephanie Dale and composer Matt Baker:

He said: "We have woven the story of the plays around previously recorded hymns, some at Chester Cathedral, and you will also hear Matt's music."

The Chester Mystery Plays were originally written by monks at the Abbey of St Werburgh

(now Chester Cathedral) in the 14th century and were performed in the city for more than 200 hours before they were banned during the Reformation. They were revived in 1951 to celebrate the Festival of Britain and have been performed approximately every five years since then.

Chairman of the Chester Mystery Plays Jo Sykes said: It was a great pleasure and an interesting experience to work with Mark and we are all very excited about the programme.

"It will be something for the cast to look forward to the day after their final performance. "This has been an amazing journey for them and to be recognised on *Songs of Praise* feels like the ultimate accolade for these wonderful people.

"I am so proud of them."
■ THE Chester Mystery Plays company hosted a gala reception for sponsors in the Bishops House on Thursday, July 4. In attendance was the company's patron The Marquess of Cholmondeley.