



# The Mysteries for Newport Pagnell

Mystery Plays for 2000

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**Mystery plays** originated in the Middle Ages when the local craft guilds - called "mysteries" as they guarded the secrets of the craft - performed the stories of the Bible in the streets: each guild chose a story in some way related to its particular craft. The stories were told in a down-to-earth, colloquial style so that ordinary people could appreciate them and be inspired by them. Chester, York, Coventry and Wakefield (Towneley) all have surviving mystery play cycles, telling the stories from the creation of the world to the last judgement. They are still regularly performed, though not always as a free, public "edutainment"

**The Mysteries for Newport Pagnell** aims to offer the enjoyment, excitement and inspiration of the mystery plays during 2000, in public, with free access to anyone who wants to watch, be it for ten minutes or for all three hours (current estimate!).

**Performances** will be on:

- Good Friday (April 21st): the Trial of Jesus and the Crucifixion
- Easter Sunday (April 23rd): the Resurrection, scenes with the risen Christ, and the Ascension.
- Saturday June 24th: the whole cycle of plays
- Sunday June 25th: the whole cycle of plays

**The script** takes "The Mysteries at Canterbury Cathedral" as a starting point. This is a modern compilation of texts from several traditional sources: we are editing this down and further modernising the language to avoid problems of comprehension. We are adding our own material to provide additional links between the scenes and to add some scenes (based on original sources). The result will be - in the traditional manner - an original development of a long heritage.

**The performers** - actors, singers, dancers, musicians, jugglers... - are local people performing for the love of it: some will be very experienced performers who are well known in Newport Pagnell and in neighbouring Milton Keynes: for some this will be their third experience of mystery plays: for others both mystery plays and public performance will be new and exciting experiences.

**The production** will be an "in your face", street theatre combination of moods varying from ribald comedy to intense passion: of performance styles varying from spectacle to intimate emotional drama, from slapstick to pageant.

**The setting** will be the streets and parks of Newport Pagnell in North Buckinghamshire: there will be a fallback indoor venue if the weather is really bad!

**The costumes** will be mainly accessories added to a neutral base, to convey status and role rather than to emulate any historical period.

**The directors** are Keith Spence and Jeremy Cooper, who have been very active in several local theatre companies

**The promoter** is The Mysteries for Newport Pagnell Association, specially created for this project.

**The funding** has come, so far, from the Milton Keynes Arts Association and from a Millennium Festival Awards for All grant, for both of which we are most grateful. Other sources of funds will be programme sponsorship and sales, collections before and during the performances, and donations: as the performances will be free to anyone to watch, we cannot count on ticket sales!



**Sponsorship** in money and in kind will be an important factor in raising the quality of this production to the highest level. If you would like to sponsor the Mysteries for Newport Pagnell, please contact *one of the Association members on xxxxx*. He will be pleased to discuss possibilities with you.