



# Oxford Medieval Mystery Plays

26 April 2025  
St Edmund Hall  
Oxford

# Welcome to the Oxford Medieval Mystery Plays

**F**ive years ago, the first Medieval Mystery Cycle took place at St Edmund Hall; three cycles (and a pandemic) later, this has become a firm Oxford tradition. It started life since Lesley Smith (one of the Directors of ‘Oxford Medieval Studies’, the network of medievalists in Oxford) had experienced first-hand in Toronto how embracing performance brings the academic community together. She found in her Co-Director Henrike Lähnemann somebody eager to use the potential of the medieval grounds of St Edmund Hall (and equally eager to blow the trumpet). This fourth iteration is the largest so far, comprising 13 plays with 17 directors—perfect number symbolism to celebrate the year 1317 in which St Edmund Hall was first mentioned in medieval charters. The two were joined by Antonia Anstatt and Sarah Ware as Co-Heads of Performance for the Medieval Mystery Plays 2025.

Mystery plays were a very popular form of drama in the Middle Ages, with different groups performing short plays telling biblical and other religious stories. By the fifteenth century—and probably much earlier—some English cities were putting on regular and sophisticated cycles. Throughout the day, a variety of guilds would perform different plays on wagons drawn through the city—not unlike modern carnival celebrations! And it was a tradition found in some form or other throughout the medieval world; in

Germany Easter plays were particularly popular which fits well with this year’s performance date during the Easter week.

We are delighted to present a modern version of this medieval *spectaculum*. We might not have a collection of guilds, but we are particularly proud of the wonderful diversity of those who have come together to bring the Cycle to life today: undergraduate and postgraduate students, lecturers, town-people, medievalists, drama enthusiasts, both from within and without Oxford, and even from abroad, ensure that our Cycle will be no less colourful and exciting than its medieval equivalents. We are very much looking forward to journeying through the history of the world with you today, from the Creation right through to the Last Judgment. And of course, we are proud to present a truly international choice of plays in different languages: Medieval and Modern English, High and Low German, French, Latin, and Dutch will all appear throughout the day.

The following pages will guide you through today’s programme. It includes helpful information about each play, its performers, and the troupe’s thoughts about their play and performance. Study it in advance, peruse it at your leisure, or let yourself be surprised by what you’ll see—there is no right or wrong and no requirement other than to enjoy yourselves!



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A huge thank-you to all those who contributed—over a hundred active participants provided time, creative enterprise and energy as actors, directors, musicians, costume makers, props builders, and stewards. A special thank-you to the Principal and Fellows of St Edmund Hall who allowed us to use their wonderful setting, and provided financial and moral support; with particular gratitude to the staff from the porters to the communications team who put up with numerous requests and crazy ideas; to the film team around Ben Arthur for documenting the enterprise; to Jim Harris as presenter of the newly crafted

prologues by David Maskell. After months of rehearsing, emailing, planning, and organising, we are extremely happy and proud to present this day of festivities and medieval fun. Thank you for your energy, enthusiasm, and efforts—without all of you, we would not be here today.

Without further ado: the stage is yours!

**Henrike Lähnemann and Lesley Smith**  
*Co-Directors of Oxford Medieval Studies*

**Antonia Anstatt and Sarah Ware**  
*Co-Heads of Performance for the Oxford Medieval Mystery Plays 2025*

# Introducing the Creative Team

## Directors of Oxford Medieval Studies

Henrike Lähnemann  
Lesley Smith

## Heads of Performance

Antonia Anstatt  
Sarah Ware

## Master of Ceremonies

Jim Harris

## Prologue Writer

David Maskell

## Additional Photography

Freddie Houlahan

## Filmography

Ben Arthur  
James May  
Tea Smart

## Vox Populi Crew

Robert Crighton (of 'Beyond Shakespeare')  
Liza Graham

## Outreach

Tristan Alphey  
Ashley Castelino  
Alison Ray

## David Maskell Prologue Writer

**David Maskell** specializes in both the academic and practical aspects of theatre in Classical and Modern Languages. He is an experienced creative writer, and having written the verses linking between the plays for the Oxford Medieval Mystery Plays 2022 and 2023, we are delighted that he reprised that crucial role for the 2025 iteration, making the medieval languages understandable and the plays accessible for everyone.

## Jim Harris Master of Ceremonies

**Jim Harris** is the Ashmolean Museum's Teaching Curator, and trained as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art before turning to scholarly pursuits. We are delighted to have him back as our Master of Ceremonies, acting as our guide through time and space, from Front Quad to the Churchyard and from the Creation to the Final Judgment.

## St Edmund Hall

St Edmund Hall is the only surviving medieval hall in Oxford, built on the site where St Edmund of Abingdon, name-giving saint, is reported to have been the first to teach Aristotle in England. The well in the Front Quad bears as its inscription his last words. The churchyard around St-Peter-in-the-East has even older roots, going back to Saxon times: St-Peter-in-the-East, the library church of the Hall with its Norman crypt (aka hell-mouth) was built in the 12th century. Watch out for the mix of medieval and modern among its gargoyles—those on the tower portray 20th century fellows of the Hall, among them several medievalists!

# The Old Testament

## The Fall of the Angels

**Location:** Front Quad  
**Troupe:** Angels of Oxford

### CAST

God the Father . . . . . Megan Bruton  
God the Son . . . . . Carys Howell  
God the Holy Spirit . . . . . Helen Dallas  
Seraphyn . . . . . Matilda Houston-Brown  
Lucifer . . . . . Antonia Anstatt  
Cherabyn . . . . . Chloe Fairbanks  
Angelus Deficiens . . . Wren Talbot-Ponsonby

### CREW

Director . . . . . Carys Howell  
Dramaturg . . . . . Matilda Houston-Brown  
Producer . . . . . Antonia Anstatt

### TEXT

The York version of the *Fall of the Angels*, performed in Middle English, with some Modern English elements.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The *Fall of the Angels* is the first play of the York Cycle and as such begins at the beginning: God creates the Universe and

the angels. But in doing so, he also brings discord into the world. The Good Angels praise him, but the Bad Angels are jealous and resent the world's current state of harmony. They are swiftly punished for their crimes . . .

Faced with the difficulty of how to depict Heaven and Hell in the Front Quad of Teddy Hall, we decided to make a virtue of necessity: our version represents the politics and capriciousness of the modern corporate world. The employees' hubris, desire to advance, and personal quarrels on one side, and the limitless power of the tripartite leadership board and their willingness to fire employees at random on the other . . . our version is proof of the universality of medieval and biblical stories.

While mostly performed in Middle English, the Fallen Angels switch to Modern English once they have been banned from Heaven: a symbol of fall and decay, or a representation of freedom from archaic, restrictive, and exclusive traditions? That is up to you to decide!

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## Adam and Eve

**Location:** Front Quad  
**Troupe:** Oxford Medieval Germanists

### CAST

Cherub . . . . . Carl Haller von Hallerstein  
The Lord . . . . . Wilfred Lamont  
Adam . . . . . Henry Nobes  
Raphael . . . . . Timothy Powell  
Michael . . . . . Rahel Micklich

Gabriel . . . . . Henrike Lähnemann  
Eve . . . . . Courtney McNeil  
Lucifer . . . . . Monty Powell  
Belial . . . . . Graham Salter  
Satan . . . . . Laurentien Jungkamp  
Serpent . . . . . Liv Brown

### CREW

Director . . . . . Timothy Powell

## TEXT

Hans Sachs, *Tragedia von schöpfung, fal und außstreybung Ade auß dem paradeyß* (1548), adapted by Timothy Powell and Nina Unland.

## ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Completed on 17 October 1548, Hans Sachs' *Tragedia von schöpfung, fal und außstreybung Ade auß dem paradeyß* begins a particularly fruitful period of religious drama within Sachs' work, comprising 40 religious comedies and tragedies from 1548–1560. It is a fascinating example of a play that spans the threshold of 'medieval' and 'early modern' religious drama. It

displays many features of emerging 'early modern' Protestant religious drama, drawing on the Latin religious dramas of Renaissance humanism, Martin Luther's reflections on religious tragedy in the preface to his translation of the apocryphal Biblical book of Tobit (1534), and the language of Luther's translation of the Biblical account of the creation and fall of humankind in Genesis 1–3. However, these elements coexist and interact with numerous elements drawn from medieval mystery plays, especially the extra-biblical episodes involving the three chief devils that keep some of the more light-hearted aspects of 'medieval' religious drama alive.

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## The Flood

**Location:** Front Quad

**Troupe:** The Travelling Beavers

## CAST

God . . . . . George Rowe  
Noah . . . . . Oli Hardy  
Noah's Wife . . . . . Alice Walton  
Ham . . . . . Ellie Hall  
Shem . . . . Gabriella Berkeley-Agyepong  
Japhet . . . . James Lewin, Adam Szep  
Ham's Wife . . . . Madeleine Bainbridge  
Good Gossips . . . . Amy Jenkins,  
Rowan Wilson, Siân Grønlie,  
George Manning

## CREW

Director . . . . . Minna Jeffrey  
Music and Art . . . . . St Giles' Choir, the  
children of St Giles' and St  
Margaret's churches

## TEXT

The Chester *Flood* play in Middle English, with Modern English pronunciation.

## ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The Chester play of Noah's flood is one of

several flood plays in Middle English, and we chose it because it has the best animals in it (eight stanzas of them) and because of the 'Good Gossips'. It was set to music by Benjamin Britten as *Noyes Fludde*. Although it is in fifteenth-century English, it is easily understandable today, so we have made very few changes to the language. The story of Noah's ark itself is well known, but in this version, Noah's family takes centre stage, especially Noah's relationship to his 'crabbed' and not at all 'meek' wife. The scene with the 'good gossips' is unique to this version: 'gossip' comes from Middle English 'godsib(he)', the godparents of one's child, or a child of one's godparents, but it came to mean one's close friends (especially of women) and did not take on its current meaning of tell-tale before the mid-sixteenth century. The reluctance of Noah's wife to leave her friends behind is framed in the play as disobedience to God and Noah, but modern audiences might feel more sympathy. We felt that this play had a strongly contemporary message given current concerns around extreme weather events, climate refugees, and

climate denial. Noah was able to escape; the good gossips were not so lucky.

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## Abraham and Isaac

**Location:** Front Quad  
**Troupe:** Shear and Trembling

### CAST

Abraham . . . . . George Eustace  
Isaac . . . . . Emily Porter  
Angel/Servant . . . . . Hanyue Wei

### CREW

Director . . . . . Miriam Waters  
Script Adapter . . . . . Miriam Waters  
Costume Designer . . . . . Emily Porter

### TEXT

The text is taken from Clifford Davidson’s edition of the York Mystery Cycle, which closely adheres to the play-text in British Library, MS. Add. 35290.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

This version of Abraham and Isaac, from the York Mystery Cycle, diverges from tradition in having a grown-up Isaac who is “thirty year and more sumdele”—that is, about thirty, the age that Christ was believed to have been when he was

crucified. New problems are therefore posted in the York *Abraham and Isaac* that bring this play closer to the story of the Passion, anticipating the climax of the cycle, performed later in the day. Rather than killing a helpless child, Abraham is asked to kill a son whom he has raised and with whom he has grown old, a strong young man in danger of overpowering him should he fight back.

In our version, we have decided to have the actor playing the angel double as a servant, so that God’s messenger seems to watch over—or perhaps spy on—Abraham and Isaac as they go to the mountain to enact their sacrifice. Since the plays themselves encourage anachronism, enacting a Biblical time that is both historical and in the here-and-now, as well as prefiguring the Last Judgement, we have chosen to get creative with our costumes, drawing on traditional shepherds’ clothing from all times and places, and the idea of the angel as both a messenger and a symbol.

The performance of Old Testament plays will be followed by a short tea break.

*An additional tea break will be held during the New Testament performances.*

# The New Testament

## The Annunciation

**Location:** Statue of St Edmund  
**Troupe:** Low Countries Ensemble

### CAST

God . . . . . Oscar de Wit  
Gabriel . . . . . Johanneke Sytsema  
Mary . . . . . An Van Camp  
Narrator . . . . . Irene Van Eldere

### CREW

Director . . . . . Irene Van Eldere  
Script Adapter . . . . . Godeline Gertrude  
Park

### TEXT

*Die Eerste Bliscap van Maria (The First Joy of Mary)*, in Middle Dutch, based on the text preserved in Brussels, KBR, MS. IV 192.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

From 1348 onwards, the city of Brussels

held an annual procession on the Sunday before Pentecost to honour a statute of the Virgin Mary. A century after its inception, an extra element was added to the festivities: on the Grote Markt, a seven-year cycle of *Bliscap* plays was performed. Each year until 1566, one of the seven Joys of Mary was staged and celebrated.

Of the original seven plays, only two have survived, each preserved in a manuscript in the Royal Library of Belgium.

Our performance brings to life the short-but-pivotal final scene of the first *Bliscap*: the Annunciation itself. This scene captures the moment when the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, delivering the news that she will bear the Son of God.

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## The Nativity

**Location:** Churchyard  
**Troupe:** les perles innocentes

### CAST

Joseph/Satan . . . . . Elisa Pagliaro  
Marie/God . . . . . Aurélie Blanc  
Host 1/Angel 1 . . . . . Anaïs Collonge  
Host 2/Angel 2 . . . . . Antigoni Tasiou  
Host 3/Angel 3 . . . . . Christina Morgan  
Sophron, a Shepherd . . . . . Helene  
Wigginton  
Elpison, a Shepherd . . . . . Carmen  
Vigneswaren-Smith  
Philetine, a Shepherdess . . . . . Marta  
Folegnani  
Cristilla, a Shepherdess . . . . . Inès Trouplin

### CREW

Director . . . . . Elisabeth Dutton  
Assistant Director . . . . . Aurélie Blanc  
Muscial Director . . . . . Antigoni Tasiou  
Design, Props, and Costumes . . . . . Maria  
Papantuono  
Producer . . . . . Helene Wigginton

*With special thanks to Sandy Maillard (Université de Fribourg, Suisse)*

### TEXT

Marguerite de Navarre, *Comédie de la Nativité de Jésus Christ*, abridged and performed in the original (early 16th century) French.

### SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Joseph, travelling on the orders of the



Emperor, seeks accommodation for his heavily pregnant wife Mary. Three 'Hosts' turn them away, but they find a stable where Mary will give birth. God in heaven sends his Angels to celebrate the moment of Christ's coming to earth: the Angels praise Mary and her newborn baby, and Joseph kneels and kisses him. The Angels announce the arrival of the Saviour to two shepherds and two shepherdesses, who sing on their way to the stable and offer gifts to the baby of milk, a flute, and firewood. Satan appears and laments the loss of the power he has held over mankind since Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden. The shepherds and shepherdesses tell him that they have met the Saviour; Satan argues that such an important person would not be found in a stable, but their faith is unshaken. Satan realizes he can nowhere escape God's power, calling on evil spirits to advise him 'how to make shadows eclipse the sun.' God proclaims that the willing sacrifice of His Son, the Lamb, will overcome Satan, and the Angels sing in praise of the Creator God.

**ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE**

Marguerite (1492-1549), wife of King Henry II of Navarre, sister to Francis I, King of

France, and ancestress of the Bourbon kings of France, was a patron of humanists and reformers, and herself an important writer: she wrote poems, a collection of short stories called the *Heptameron*, and the intense mystical poem *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*. She also wrote a number of plays, including dramatizations of scriptural episodes.

Like the *Comédie des Innocents* which les perles innocentes staged two years ago, the *Comédie de la Nativité* is both richly theological, presenting the contrast between divine authority and evil tyranny, and deeply concerned with social justice. Marguerite shows humble people challenging corrupt and bullying powers: ordinary women defied the callous soldiers who murdered their children at a tyrant's command; humble shepherds outface Satan himself, empowered by their newfound faith in a baby who, to their own initial wonderment, has chosen not a great hall but a humble stable as his first home. Once again, Marguerite gives particular emphasis to female characters, portraying female as well as male shepherds, and emphasizing the faith, strength and wisdom of the Virgin Mary.

## The Wedding at Cana

**Location:** Churchyard

**Troupe:** Pusey House

**CAST**

Angel . . . . . Elliott Clark  
 Bride . . . . . Matti Veldhuis  
 Bridegroom . . . . . Ashby Neterer  
 Jesus . . . . . Phillip Quinn  
 Mary . . . . . Ruth Danstål

Master of the Feast . . . . . Alex Christofis  
 Unruly Guest . . . . . Nathan Brown  
 Servants . . . . . Natalie Tiede,  
 Richard Garrard

**CREW**

Director . . . . . Phillip Quinn  
 Script Writer and Adapter . . . . .  
 Phillip Quinn, with help from Elliott  
 Clark

## TEXT

An original composition in Modern English (with some Middle English archaisms), written by Phillip Quinn with help from Elliott Clark. All except for one and a half lines of the York version of the *Wedding at Cana* have been lost, and the other major mystery cycles do not include it.

## SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

When the wine runs out at a wedding in the little Galilean town of Cana, Mary asks

Jesus to step in. His ultimate response is to perform the first miracle of his earthly ministry: transforming several large jars of water into fine wine. In doing so, he heralds the coming of the Kingdom of God and foreshadows the consummation of history in the heavenly banquet at which he himself will be the bridegroom.

# The Crucifixion

**Location:** Grassy Mound

**Troupe:** The Wicked Weights (Lincoln College Players)

## CAST

Soldiers . . . . . Jess Hind, Molly Milton, Kyra Radley, and Alys Young  
Christ . . . . . Petru Badea

## CREW

Directors . . . . Paul Cooley, Molly Milton  
Stage and Script Adapter. . . . . Paul Cooley, Molly Milton  
Costume Designer . . . . . Maureen Abrokwa  
Props Designer . . . . . Tallula Haynes  
Music and Marketing . . . . . Anja Woosnam  
Administration and Assistance . . . . . Rebecca Menmuir, Alison Ray

*With special thanks to  
Mike Hawkins  
(Lincoln College Head Gardener)  
for creating a crown of thorns*

*Jonny Torrance  
(Lincoln College Chaplain)  
for building a cross*

*Lincoln College JCR  
for providing funding*

## TEXT

*The York Crucifixion* (Middle English).

## ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

*Rebecca Menmuir writes:*

“The Wicked Weights,” named after an iconic line in the *York Crucifixion*, are a group of Lincoln College undergraduates studying English, supported by various members of college. We are especially grateful to Lincoln’s chaplain Jonny Torrance, who has built a towering cross on which our Christ will be (safely) crucified. It has been tremendous fun to work with students on something which brings medieval literature to life so vividly!

*Molly Milton writes:*

Our play depicts the crucifixion of Christ, performed by four (somewhat inept) soldiers; throughout the play, they bicker with each other over trivial matters whilst Christ endures his crucifixion with solemnity and without objection. The comedic dynamic between the soldiers contrasts heavily with Jesus’s wholly serious speeches and thus creates a tense atmosphere which toes the line between dark comedy and an exploration of the mundane cruelty of the process of crucifixion. This then invites the audience

to consider their inaction during Christ's active crucifixion.

We are using a manuscript version which has been updated to sound more familiar to the modern English-speaking ear, yet our edition keeps as much of the original language and rhyme-scheme as possible to

remain close to the original version of the play. Furthermore, the creator of our script has also translated Jesus's speeches entirely into modern English from the original Middle English, adding a sense of gravity to his speeches that is wholly unique to our edition of the play.

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## The Lamentation

**Location:** Churchyard

**Troupe:** St Edmund Consort

### CAST

John . . . . . Carlos Rodríguez Otero

Mary . . . . . Montgomery Powell

Mary Magdalen . . . Henrike Lähnemann

Mary, Mother of John . . . Rebecca

Schleuß

Jesus . . . . . Lucian Shepherd

Rector . . . . . Andrew Dunning

*With special thanks to*

*Fr Andreas Wenzel*

*for permission to use the vestments.*

### TEXT

The *Bordesholmer Marienklage*, in Low German and Latin.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The *Bordesholmer Marienklage* is a remarkable dramatic dialogue from the late 15th century, written for performance at the Augustinian monastery of Bordesholm in Northern Germany by Provost Johannes Reborch. It consists of sung and chanted text for a cast of five: Christ, John, and the three Marys.

The sung dialogue is taken from the liturgy, including verses from the 'Stabat mater', to which are at times added Middle Low German adaptations of the same,

sung to similar melodies. The bulk of the action takes place in chanted Middle Low German rhyming verse. A particular feature, unique amongst German Marian Laments, is the survival of detailed instructions which specify that the work should be performed either on Good Friday or on the preceding Monday, and that it should be 'neither a play nor amusement, but lamenting and wailing and devout compassion for the glorious Virgin Mary'. It was therefore intended to form a part in the monastery's liturgical life during Holy Week; moreover, these instructions and the 'personae' throughout continually insist on the necessity of the audience's participation, through compassion, in Mary's suffering. It should be performed either in front of the church choir or—if the weather is fair, as we hope it will be on 26th April—outdoors. The 'personae' should wear liturgical vestments and Jesus and John 'dyademata de papiro' – paper-crowns, of which Jesus' is to be decorated with crosses. Our staging therefore uses the vestments from the St Edmund Hall chapel (as well as crowns from Christmas crackers). For a performance in a church setting, see the extract staged for a workshop day on the 'Sorrowful Virgin', done in St Hugh's Chapel: <https://youtu.be/RVOiQJsmNM0>.

## The Harrowing of Hell

**Location:** Churchyard and Crypt  
**Troupe:** The Choir of St Edmund Hall

### CAST

Angelic Hosts . . . . . Choir of St Edmund Hall

Adam . . . . . Shaw Worth

Eve . . . . . Molly Bray

### CREW

Director of Music . . . . . Carlos Rodríguez Otero

### TEXT

Latin Sequences.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Sequences, complex liturgical songs with a strong poetic and narrative function, are among the most recent, and therefore truly medieval, sung elements of the Christian liturgy, staging particularly in the Easter Night the fundamental miracle of salvation history, Christ overcoming death.

The Choir of St Edmund Hall will pick up the action from the Lamentation and accompany Christ as he descends into hell and rises again. The first sequence is the ‘Cum rex gloriae’, which tells of the host of angels breaking into hell where they are greeted with an ‘Advenisti’ (you have arrived!) by Adam, Eve, and all the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, the so-called ‘Harrowing of Hell’. This will end the second part of the cycle. The choir will then open the last part of the drama by singing another sequence, ‘Victimae paschali laudes’, where Mary Magdalen reports to the apostles about her experience of the empty tomb. The version used for these sequences is taken from the Handbook of the Provost of the Cistercian convent of Medingen, like Bordesholm located in North Germany, which is kept in the Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. liturgy. e. 18. It includes vernacular responses to the Latin sequences, in the case of the ‘Victimae paschali laudes’ arguably the

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## The Resurrection

**Location:** Churchyard  
**Troupe:** St Stephen’s House

### CAST

Pilate . . . . . Oliver Baldwin

Caiaphas . . . . . Lizzy Flaherty

Annas . . . . . Edward Parker-Sunderland

Centurion . . . . . Felix Trimbo

Mary 1 . . . . . Sofia Radaelli

Mary 2 . . . . . Danielle Duncan

Mary 3 . . . . . Amy Taylor

Angel . . . . . Ewan Gillings

Soldier 1 . . . . . Tobias Thornes

Soldier 2 . . . . . Ben Almond

Soldier 3 . . . . . Jonathan Thompson

Soldier 4 . . . . . Madeleine Ridout

### TEXT

The York *Resurrection* (Middle English).

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The York Carpenters’ take on the Resurrection of Christ focuses not on Jesus himself but on three sets of characters who portray three sets of responses to the mystery of Easter Sunday. Our play begins and ends with Pilate and the High Priests. To begin with they are pleased with how the crucifixion went, but the Centurion tells of strange occurrences which suggest all is not as it seems. To make sure Jesus stays dead they set a guard of soldiers to watch the tomb. These same soldiers are then faced with reporting that the tomb is empty! At the tomb, the soldiers are



contrasted with the Marys, who respond to what they find in faith, hope, and love. Meanwhile, Pilate and the High Priests conspire to cover up the embarrassing and disturbing fact of the empty tomb with a story that the soldiers were overpowered by Jesus' disciples, who stole the body away. The ironic framing invites the audience to question whose account they believe: is it all 'fake news', or is he risen indeed?

Our play fits in well with the liturgical traditions of Easter Sunday, particularly the Angel's song, and the meeting between the Angel and the three Marys, the so-called *Visitatio Sepulchri*, is a common theme. It appears that this section of our play reproduces a piece of liturgical drama

in use at the time. On the other hand, the presentation of Pilate and the High Priests is unusual, drawing on speculation in the apocryphal writings, texts which seek to fill in the imaginative gaps left out by the Biblical narrative: what did they really think, and what did they do next? The dramatist's range covers pious devotion, political conspiracy, and the everyday reactions of the soldiers who represent the everyman. Faced with the life-changing reality of the empty tomb, they display the full range of responses from pretending nothing has happened to embracing the truth come what may. The piece is character-driven, often emotive, and finally supremely ironic, drawing the audience in, putting the question, and hopefully eliciting a response.

## The Martyrdom of the Three Holy Virgins

**Location:** Grassy Mound  
**Troupe:** Clamor Validus

### CAST

Emperor Diocletian/Dulcitus' Wife . . .  
Jialin Li  
Agape . . . . . Laura Laube  
Chionia . . . . . Abigail Pole  
Irena . . . . . Loveday Liu  
Governor Dulcitus . . . Andrew Stilborn  
("Stilly")  
Count Sisinnius . . . . . Laurence Nagy  
Soldiers . . . . . Hillary Chua, Ivana Kuric,  
Alex Marshall  
Angels . . . . Elizabeth Crabtree, Marisia  
Czepiel

### CREW

Director . . . . . David Wiles  
Stage Manager . . . . Elizabeth Crabtree  
Musician . . . . . Jessica Qiao

### TEXT

*The Martyrdom of the Three Holy Virgins*, by Hrosvitha of Gandersheim, performed in a mix of Latin and a new translation.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Hrosvitha was an aristocratic tenth-century Canoness, and her six plays are a bridge between the classical and medieval worlds. She had a ribald sense of humour and a strong feminist agenda. Our play depicts the martyrdom of three early Christians whose Greek names mean Love, Purity and Peace. Latin was a language that Hrosvitha used in daily life, and we have been on a journey of discovery into her unique style that falls midway between poetry and prose. We have used modern dress in order to suggest that the impulses driving early martyrs have not vanished in the modern world. For the research behind this production, see David Wiles 'Hrosvitha of

Gandersheim: the performance of her plays in the tenth century,' *Theatre History Studies* 19 (1999) 133–150. The performers are a mixed group of students and members of the Iffley community, and will be performing the play again in Iffley on April 26, and in Wolfson College on May 2 sponsored by the Ancient World Research Cluster.

Our troupe's name, CLAMOR VALIDUS, means 'Forceful Shout,' Hroswitha's Latinization of her Saxon name.

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## The Last Judgement

**Location:** Far side of Churchyard  
**Troupe:** MSt English (650–1550)

### CAST

Jesus . . . . . Alicia Camacho Fielding  
Lucifer . . . . . Daniel Pereira  
Archangel Michael . . . Jasmine Webster  
Angel Gabriel . . . . . Alice Watkinson  
Demons . . . . . Leslie Shen, Lauren  
Allsopp, Olivia Cook

### CREW

Director . . . . . Emma Nihill Alcorta  
Writer . . . . . Ruby Whitehouse  
Producer . . . . . Alice Watkinson

### TEXT

A modern English adaptation of the Middle English *The Last Judgement*, drawing from the Chester, N-Town, and Towneley cycles.

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The end of days is upon us! Adapted by Ruby Whitehouse into Modern English from the Middle English Chester, N-Town, and Towneley Mystery Cycles, this play stages the final salvation and damnation of the souls of earth. Who will Jesus claim? Who will Lucifer drag to the depths of hell? Come look to the future to find out! No matter what, we promise that this final judgement will be full of some good old-fashioned eschatological fun.

## A Final Note

We hope you enjoyed the performances as much as we did putting them together! We would be very grateful for any feedback you could provide.

There is a visitors book at the entrance (and any feedback will earn you a sweet treat!) but we would also be delighted for any feedback via email to [medieval@torch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:medieval@torch.ox.ac.uk), mentioning on social media under the hashtag [#OxfordMysteries](https://twitter.com/OxfordMysteries) or simply a chat after the performance—we will be around until Evensong starts at 6.15pm. If the enterprise has whetted your appetite for medieval studies in Oxford, sign up for the medieval news mailing list under [medieval.ox.ac.uk](http://medieval.ox.ac.uk):



The whole performance will be filmed; while the camera will naturally focus on the actors, occasional glimpses of the audience might occur. If you would not like to be visible in any footage, please let the steward at the entrance know.