

THE EYNHAM MYSTERIES 2010

We are very grateful to our funders for supporting *The Eynsham Mysteries*. With much of the budget secured by August 2010, we were able to plan and implement a very ambitious project involving 100 performers on stage and a further 100 members of the community involved in backstage support including set design, costumes and props, etc.

Participation in *The Mysteries* ranged from six week old baby twins playing the part of Jesus on alternate nights, through children of five years and upwards as animals in the Ark, to several in their 70s with speaking and dancing parts. We were particularly pleased to have teenagers and young people in their 20s – groups whom we know are often hard to engage.



The festival culminated in five performances of *The Eynsham Mysteries* in St Leonard's parish church, which had raised seating giving a capacity of 160 at each performance. Tickets sold well for the first night and after that it was a sell-out – word travelled fast! A total of 771 tickets were sold (661 adults and 105 concessions / children).

In the run-up to the festival, articles appeared in village and church newsletters and the apple theme from the Adam and Eve scene was explored at the Apple Festival. During the October half term, a trail publicised in a tabloid style newspaper "The Scroll – Every Sabbath" led families round 11 scenes with statues.

Clubs and societies were invited to participate in backstage support and most circulated their own members with flyers about the event. Over 1000 people were involved in the production or as audience – about one fifth of the local population. A workshop for 80 students was held in the Primary School, led by Claire Page and four of the cast, and the Sunday School performed a Mini-Mysteries, also exploring the Bible stories. St Leonard's church also ran a sermon series in the mornings on Women in the New Testament.



The play, written by Nick Page and Vanessa Sampson earlier this year, explored familiar stories of the Old Testament from the perspective of the women. The key roles of Eve, Mrs Noah, Sarah and Hagar, Miriam and the midwives, Delilah, Ruth, Bathsheba, Jezebel, Esther, Elizabeth and Mary meant that important parts were taken by women. The part of God was played simultaneously by the Vicar of St Leonard's, the Baptist Minister and the Church Youth worker (representing the Trinity) – giving a strong message about collaboration between the different church communities.

Humour was interwoven into every thread of the play – without obscuring the key messages. Anachronisms abounded – a blackberry message to Elijah, a remote-controlled Moses basket, Bathsheba's bubble bath, and many more. It was clear that the humour appealed to old and young alike.

Those that came to the performances were clearly impressed at the evident sense of community. St Leonard's church provided a most impressive stage space with a very creative set, raised seating in

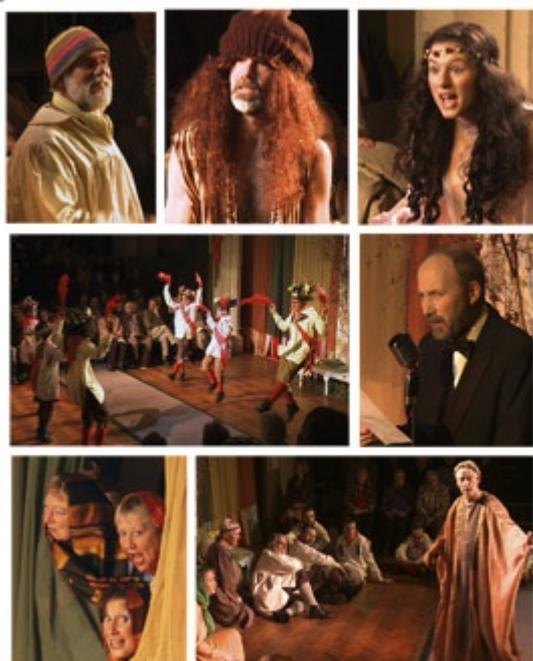
the nave and brightly coloured curtains providing a backstage area on the north and south sides of the nave. The flexibility – and indeed enthusiasm – of the vicar and the church community in working around this complex set for two weeks was appreciated by many who are not involved in the church. It was a powerful demonstration of how a church building can be used for the benefit of the wider community.

Props and stage sets were built, adapted and loaned from across the village – and sometimes beyond. The costumes, designed and created by a team led by a former lecturer at the London College of Fashion, were much admired.

With a cast of this size, there are clearly a number of performers who are not experienced in drama, dance or music and the support and coaching to these people was an important part of the whole production. A new women's chorus was coached by a professional opera singer. They sang high quality, original new music that was composed by two local musicians and will no doubt continue to be sung at future church and community events. Claire Page, as director, gave individual coaching sessions to many of the performers – and it is clear that for some of the younger ones, this will have been a potentially life-changing event, opening up new opportunities.

Eynsham Morris played a key role and the play was opened by their young apprentices, the Morris Minors (aged from 10-16).

The Eynsham Mysteries was a powerful example of active citizens giving time, energies and skills to make things happen. The event has brought people together, created new friendships and links between different organisations. It has built both individual confidences and a collective belief that we live in a strong, imaginative and collaborative community with a wide range of talent.



© The Eynsham Mysteries 2010

A CAT FLAP VIDEO PRODUCTION

Phototechniques Ltd
Oakfield Industrial Estate, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 01865 880645

The Eynsham Mysteries 2010

The Eynsham Mysteries 2010

Directed by Claire Page
Written by Nick Page & Vanessa Sampson
Original music composed by Alastair White & Robert Sale



DVD

Eynsham's unique version of the medieval mystery plays.
Drama, music, comedy.... from Eve to Mary in one bite!

If you missed the performance, *The Eynsham Mysteries* live on