

MEDIEVAL NATIVITY PLAY

St. Jude's Junior Church and Junior Choir's Nativity Play on Christmas Eve was based on a selection of 'Pageants' from The Chester Mystery Cycle. The speaking actors, mostly aged eleven, coped well with the medieval-style verse.

Once again, Alys Edwards created a 'heavenly' atmosphere for the Annunciation with a solo on her golden harp. Rosalind Moss was a Madonna who seemed to have stepped straight from a 15th century Florentine painting as she conversed with the angel Gabriel. The choir sang a moving Ave Maria to 'The Procession' from Britten's Ceremony of Carols and Elizabeth Moss as a clear-voiced 'Expositor' set the scene for the Visitation. Katie John played a charming Elizabeth, warmly greeting her cousin Mary before Emma Gregson as a purposeful Preco, the Roman soldier, announced the Emperor's decree.

Frederic Wakefield, dressed as a medieval master-craftsman to play Joseph, declared "The red cow I will take with me, In Bethlehem to be sold", as Tara Francis trotted up. There is an old tradition that Joseph took a cow (as well as the ass) to sell to pay the Roman tribute. Alexandra Moss in the donkey mask supported her elder sister down the aisle to 'Bethlehem' while Davidson sisters Grace and Hannah sang 'Take Heart the Journey's Ended'. Alice Rafferty's Innkeeper reluctantly turned the weary travellers from her door but offered them the nearby stable and once Mary and Joseph were secreted behind rustic doors, two charming birds, a pigeon, Wilhelmina Georgestone, and a dove, Lucy Blunden, fluttered up the aisle to the Czech carol 'The Birds', beautifully played on the flute by Lucy Handley.

Polly Edwards, Holly Blunden and Hannah Davidson provided light relief as the weary shepherds Tud, Sym and Hankin. Hannah caused much merriment in rehearsal blowing her rude horn. "He does not hear so I must blow, My presence to reveal".

Anne-Marie Cunnold as Gabriel kept her self-possession and remembered all her lines while coping with her 'angelic hosts', David (4), Felicity (3) and William (4) who broke into an unrehearsed 'Ring-a-Ring o' Roses' and a little kissing practice. Their sudden appearance startled the shepherds' two grazing sheep, Christine Cunnold and Katie Armstrong.

Sarah Handley, bearing the shining star (she never once complained of aching arms!) led the shepherds to the stable as the choir sang 'Merrily to Bethlehem Tyrlay, Tyrlow'. They arrived to find the Holy Family revealed 'And Jesus Christ, the Holy Child, Softly lapped in hay'. The choir sang the lovely 15th century 'Coventry Carol' then the spotlight picked out three splendid kings wandering, lost, at the west end of the church. Melchior, Hugh Cox; Balthasar,

Stephanie Connaway and Jaspar, Alan Rafferty, glad to find the star, followed her in stately procession while Peter Kingsley, Andrew Cox and Dafydd Edwards sang 'Three Kings from Persian Lands afar'. The Magi presented their gifts explaining their symbolism in verse.

The three shepherds brought the play to a close 'Farewell from you we go now' and after enthusiastic applause and a Blessing from Father Jeremy Bunting choir and congregation sang 'Sing Aloud on this Day'.

Jill Ambrose and Linda Ayers produced the play; Anthea Davidson organised the costumes; Barbara Honeyball and Helen Roose directed the music; Andrew McCrae played organ and piano accompaniment and Robert Ayers and Tomos Edwards controlled the spotlight from high in the West Window. Cathy Ayers was in charge of 'props'.

A retiring collection raised money for the children of Guyana in need.

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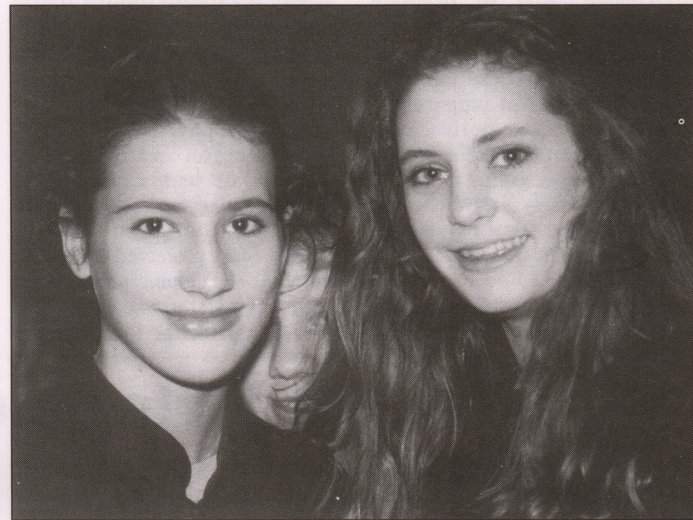
Alys Edwards.



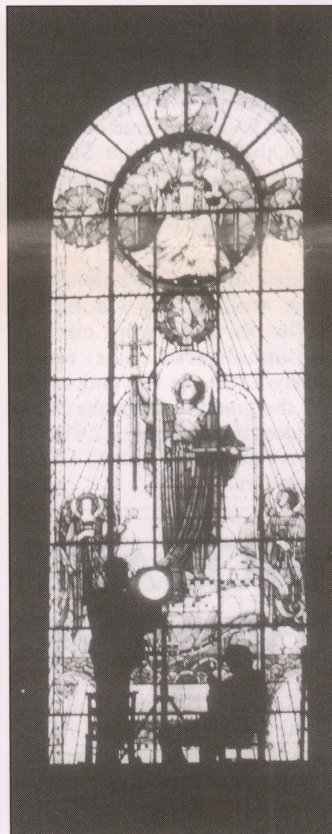
Anne-Marie Cunnold.



Felicity and David, angels.



Anna and Emily.



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