



# Oxford Medieval Mystery Plays

26 April 2025  
St Edmund Hall  
Oxford

## Useful Information

### Filming

The whole performance will be filmed and photographed. 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.

Once ready, the recordings of the Plays will be posted online for your reference, enjoyment, and perusal.

### Detailed Programme

Want to learn more about what you're watching? Check out our detailed programme by following this QR code:



### Oxford Medieval Studies

Mention us on social media with the hashtag **#OxfordMysteries**. Keep up to date with Oxford Medieval Studies by joining our mailing list:



## The Cycle

1. *Fall of the Angels*
2. *Adam and Eve*
3. *The Flood*
4. *Abraham and Isaac*
5. *The Annunciation*
6. *The Nativity*
7. *The Wedding at Cana*
8. *The Crucifixion*
9. *The Lamentation*
10. *The Harrowing of Hell*
11. *The Resurrection*
12. *The Martyrdom of the Three Holy Virgins*
13. *The Last Judgement*



## Welcome to the Oxford Medieval Mystery Plays

Five 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. Today's performance marks Oxford Medieval Studies' fourth—and largest—Cycle so far, comprising 13 plays with 17 directors—also, coincidentally, celebrating the year 1317, in which St Edmund Hall first appears in medieval charters.

Mystery plays were a popular form of drama in the Middle Ages, with different town guilds performing short plays which depict biblical narratives. By the fifteenth century, many English cities hosted regular, sophisticated cycles, often performed on wagons drawn through the city.

While today's *spectaculum* is not performed by guilds, we are delighted by the diversity of those who have come together to perform this cycle: undergraduate and postgraduate students, lecturers, town-people, medievalists, and drama enthusiasts. Some hail from Oxford, while others come from across the country (and from across the Channel) to join us today. Thank you to everyone who is making this Cycle possible.

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*

## The Old Testament

### The Fall of the Angels

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

**Text:**

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

### Adam and Eve

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

**Text:**

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

### The Flood

**Location:** Front Quad  
**Troupe:** The Travelling Beavers

**Text:**

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

### Abraham and Isaac

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

**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.

### Tea Break

*Performances will resume at approximately 1:30 PM.*

## The New Testament

### The Annunciation

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

**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.

### The Nativity

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

**Text:**

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

### The Wedding at Cana

**Location:** Churchyard  
**Troupe:** Pusey House

**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.

### The Crucifixion

**Location:** Grassy Mound  
**Troupe:** The Wicked Weights (Lincoln College Players)

**Text:**

The York *Crucifixion* (Middle English).

### The Lamentation

**Location:** Churchyard  
**Troupe:** St Edmund Consort

**Text:**

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

### The Harrowing of Hell

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

**Text:**

Latin Sequences.

### Tea Break

*Performances will resume at approximately 3:30 PM.*

### The Resurrection

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

**Text:**

The York *Resurrection* (Middle English).

### The Martyrdom of the Three Holy Virgins

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

**Text:**

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

### The Last Judgement

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

**Text:**

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