City is looking for a new saviour

Organisers of Chester City Passion 2022 are recruiting for the major role of Jesus Christ in their forthcoming production

The organisers of one of Chester’s high profile cultural events are confident of a return this Easter. Chester City Passion organisers are putting plans in place to deliver the epic piece of theatre on the streets of Chester for the first time in five years. The play tells the story of Jesus Christ’s last few days on earth, including his arrival in Jerusalem on a donkey, the last Supper, his arrest and trial and concluding with his crucifixion on the cross. Told by a cast of community actors, singers and musicians, the City Passion uses many of the unique features of Chester’s historic city centre as a set to tell the story, with the audience finding themselves playing the role of people of Jerusalem, standing close to the dramatic events as they unfold.

The play will once again be directed by Matt Baker. Matt says, “With obvious caution I am very excited that we can once again bring this epic story to life on the streets of Chester. It is a spectacular event in which iconic city features such as the Eastgate, the mediaeval rows, The Cross, the Town Hall steps and the Cathedral join forces with our Town Crier, our Roman soldiers as major characters in the play.” This year Matt will be holding auditions in order to fill all the key roles, including that of Jesus Christ. Matt explains, “Although the play is only performed once, it draws huge numbers of people. I will be looking for people who would like the challenge of playing these iconic roles in an iconic location, travelling through the city streets. The commanding role of Jesus is obviously very significant in the play; we see Jesus arriving through the Eastgate, tearing down the stalls in Jerusalem, sharing his Last Supper with his disciples on The Rows, being arrested by the romans at The Cross, facing trial on the Town Hall steps and carrying his own cross to his death outside Chester Cathedral.” Matt will also be looking for community actors to audition for other main roles including Mary, Mary Magdalene, the twelve disciples, the High Priests, Herod, Pontius Pilate and Barabbas.

In addition to the main characters, Matt will be recruiting people of all ages to form a chorus which sings at key moments throughout the story at various locations. Matt said, “There are several chants and songs which add to the drama of the piece, and I will welcome people of all ages and backgrounds who wish to be part of the story as either a singer, or indeed a musician.” Auditions for all roles in the Chester City Passion will take place at the beginning of March, with an intensive rehearsal period involving weekend and occasional week night rehearsals taking place in the following 5 weeks leading up to Good Friday.

Chester City Passion is delivered as a partnership between Theatre in the Quarter, Chester Mystery Plays, Link Up and Churches Together in Chester. Chair of the steering committee Andy Glover has been working with a small team behind the scenes, raising funds and keeping the momentum of the project alive despite the setbacks caused by the pandemic. Andy said, “We have just received a vote of confidence in a substantial grant from the Passion Trust as well as a donation from Chester Cathedral. This means that we are confident in reaching our funding target, with less than £3000 left to raise which we hope we can achieve through support from a variety of trusts, individuals and churches.”

Chester City Passion precedes the next major production of the Chester Mystery Plays which is to take place in the summer next year. Many of the 100 strong community cast are likely to take part in the production which will be directed by John Young with another new score composed by Matt Baker.

In the meantime, if anyone wishes to know more about the Chester City Passion, or if they would like to register for the auditions, then please contact chestercitypassion@gmail.com

ENDS

For immediate release

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