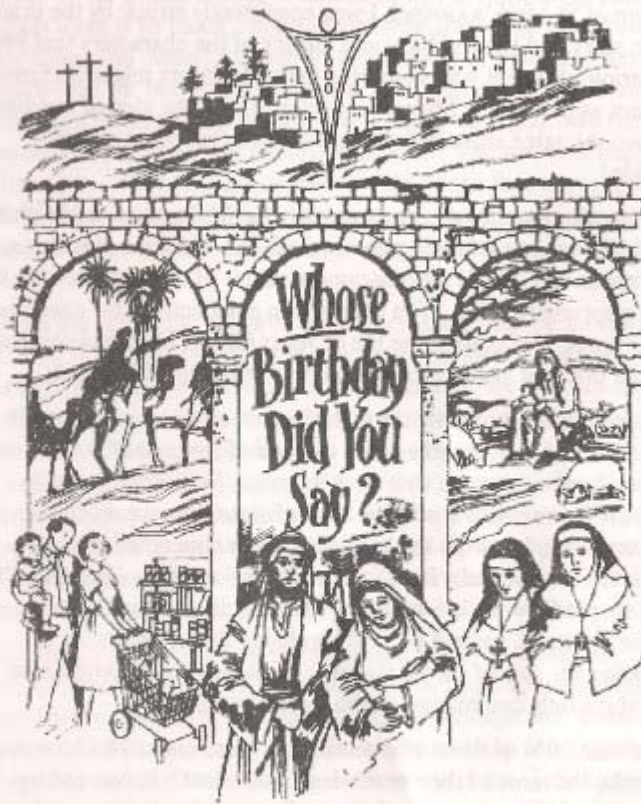


Charlton Kings Community Players
present



An original musical drama by Peter Grainger

*at Balcarras School Hall on
Wednesday 23rd to Saturday 26th February 2000*



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© Peter Grainger drama



THE WRITING OF 'Whose Birthday?'

The original inspiration for writing a life of Christ came from a reading of St Mark's Gospel; I was consistently struck by the drama of the story and the vividness and variety of the characters that kept appearing. When it was suggested that the Players might perform a pageant as part of the Millennium celebrations, the idea of combining the two thoughts arose and the incentive to start writing was provided.

As it became increasingly apparent that the Millennium celebrations nationally were overlooking the spiritual and Christian dimension, a celebration of Christ's birth became a matter of urgency, and the title readily sprung to mind. The Millennium perspective also gave rise to the thought of putting the life of Jesus into its historical context, and the first and last scenes attempt this wildly ambitious task.

The story is told primarily through the eyes of those who came in contact with Jesus, and therefore the role of Jesus does not dominate this production as much as it does in some. Without an actor in mind for the role when we held our auditions, this approach was not too surprising, but from the beginning I was concerned that audiences did not feel, '*But that's not how I see him...*'. I needn't have worried! With 105 attending those auditions and 20 more unable to attend, we had no problem filling the key parts, or in providing the size of crowd that was important to the production and which only community drama makes possible.

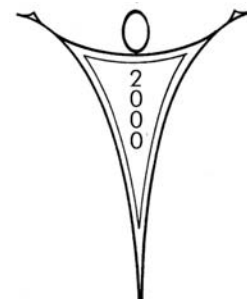
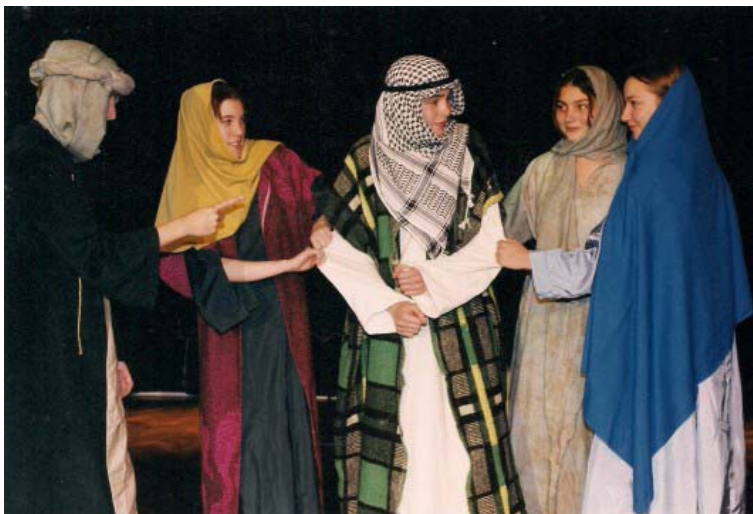
More than 50% of those who auditioned were under 18 - how could we make the most of their enthusiasm and talent? It was not too difficult to add numerous - albeit small - parts for young people, which I hope you will agree adds a particularly entertaining extra dimension to the production. With so many talented dancers of all ages in Charlton Kings it was clear that we must involve as many of them as possible, and with Helen Lewis and Caroline Powell as choreographers, a further young and creative dimension was added.

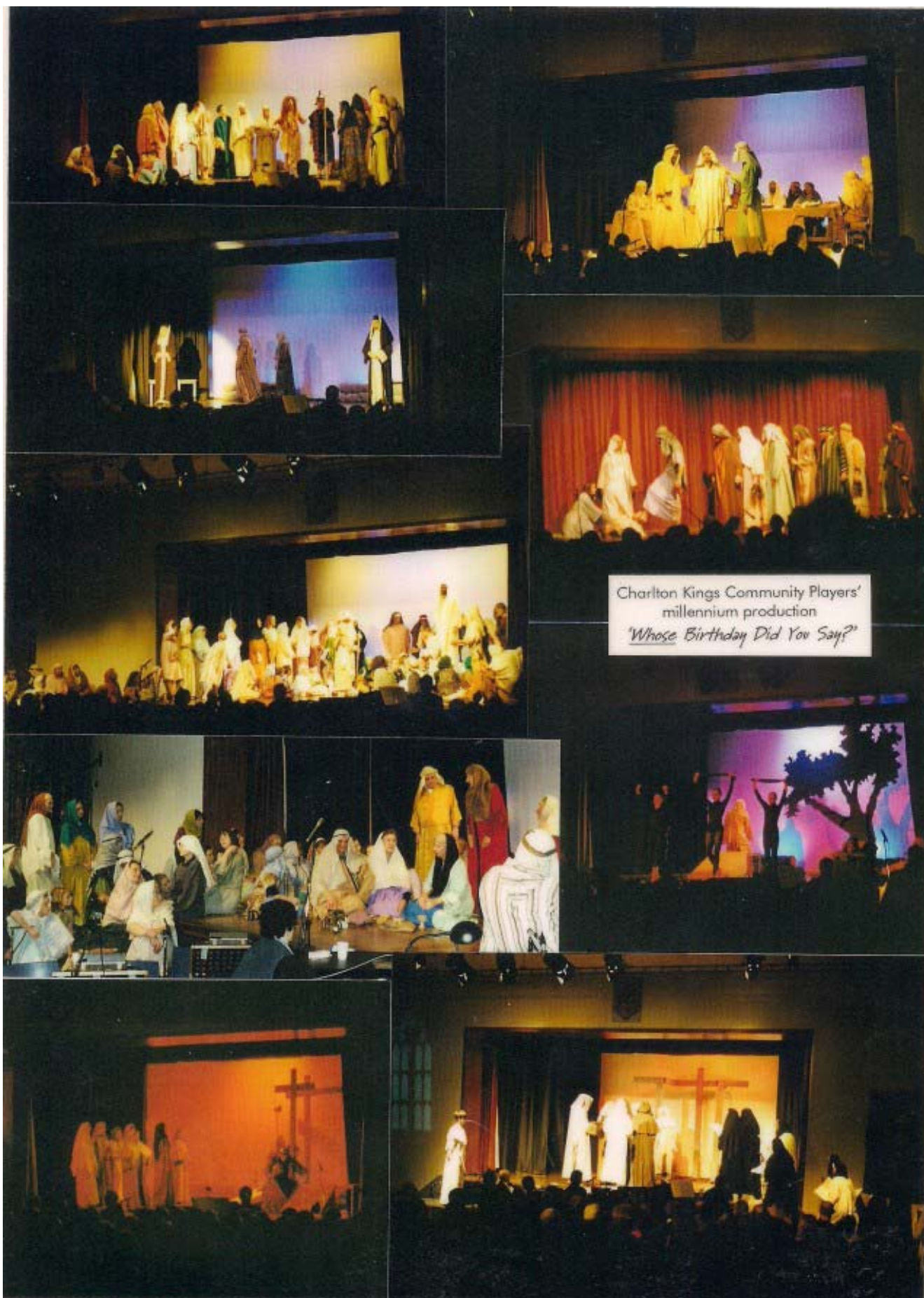
I hoped that we could build in specially composed music since so many of the scenes would be enhanced by the addition of music, and again there is so much musical talent available. The opportunities for songs and dances became so numerous that it became too great a work-load for one composer alone. Through a series of chance meetings Malcolm Dunbar and Sue Trickey emerged with their unassuming talents, and the beautiful music you will hear tonight is the result. But Malcolm and Sue would be the first to recognise Keith Mead's great contribution, not only in preparing the singers and players, but in his sensitive arrangements of music never before heard in public.

From the beginning we have been determined that the production will be accessible to everyone. As far as possible the language used is contemporary; humour and topical allusions are liberally sprinkled around the script and where there is more serious dialogue we have tried to make the proceedings as visual as possible. For those less familiar with the Christian story the most important characters are identified (sooner or later) in the dialogue, and the scene-by-scene cast list should provide adequate back-up. The gentleman who keeps popping up beside the stage to comment on what's just been happening is the wise old prophet Isaiah - he writes pretty well too!

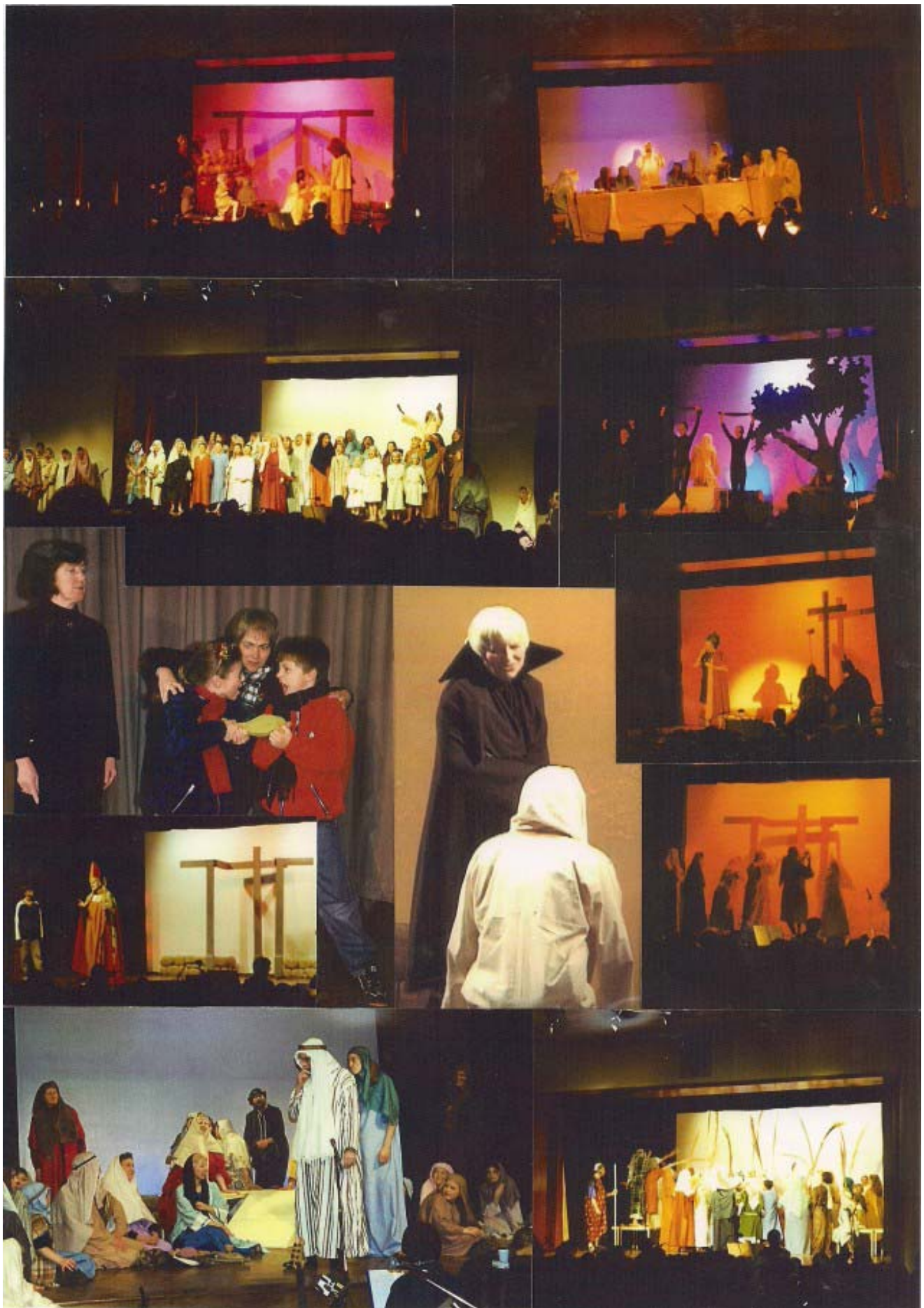
It's been a remarkable experience being involved in such a production, and I would personally like to thank so many people, not just the hard-working cast and all those backstage and 'front of house', but those who have supported in so many ways what together we have been creating in the community. I do hope you have a wonderful evening and thank you so much for being with us tonight.

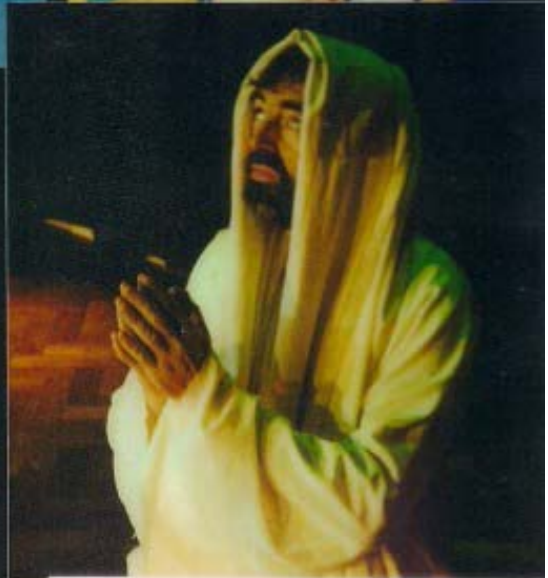
Peter Grainger



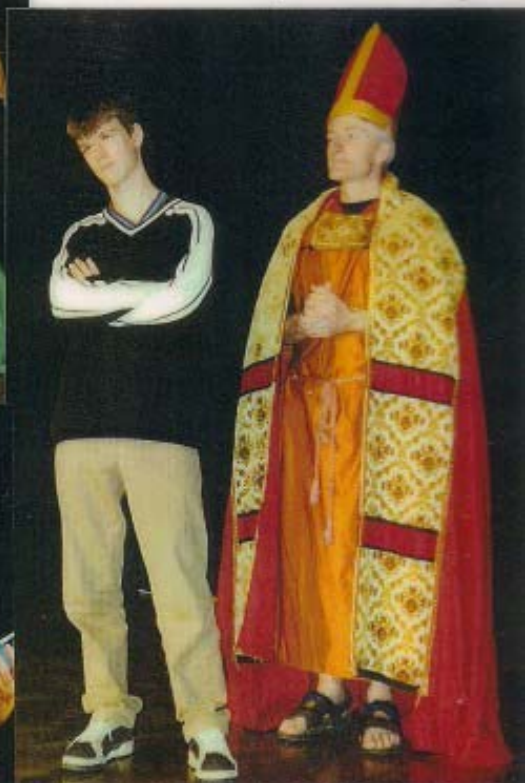








Charlton Kings Community Players'
millennium production
'Whose Birthday Did You Say?'



Copyright Peter Grainger



Charlton Kings Library window display



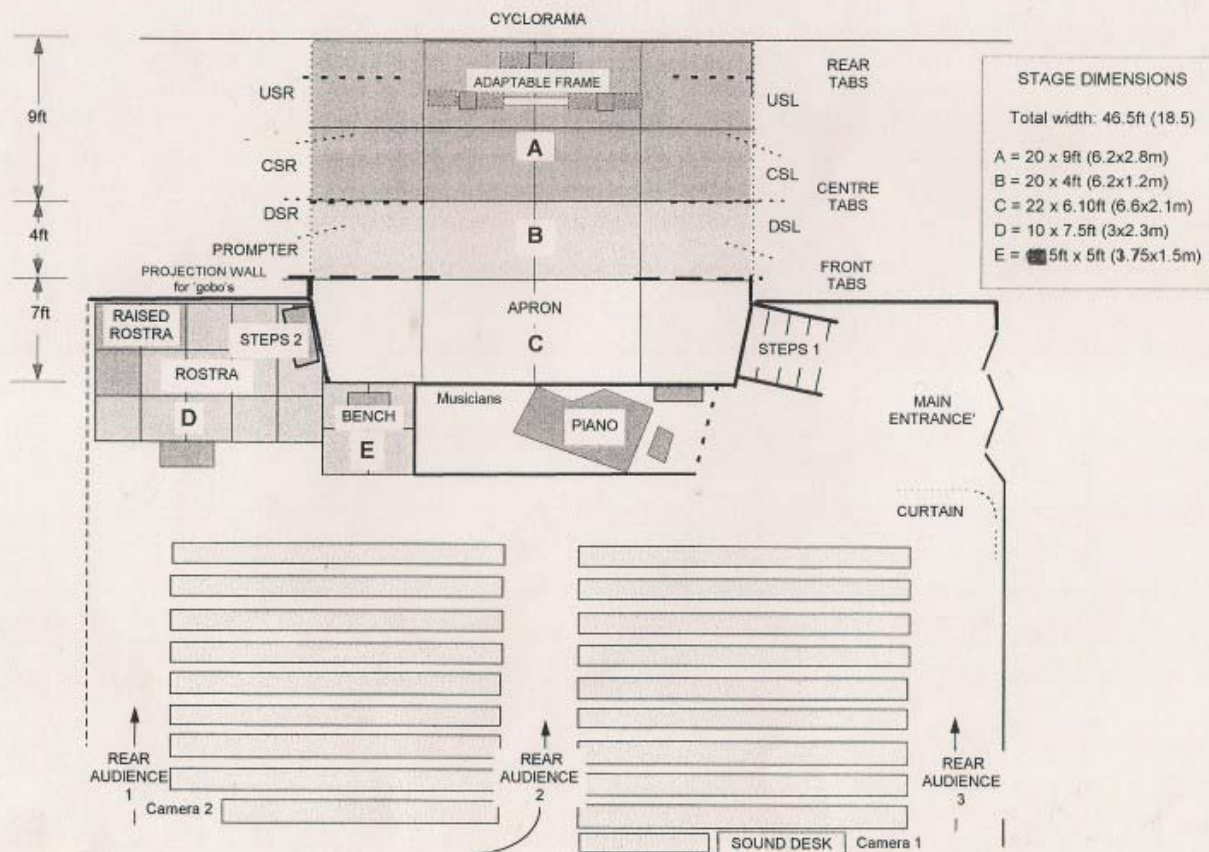
Audience – Balcarras School

Donations to charity and local projects

<i>Listening Post Counselling</i>	<i>£300</i>
<i>Cheltenham Open Door</i>	<i>£300</i>
<i>Playhouse Raise the Roof Appeal</i>	<i>£300</i>
<i>Charlton Kings Youth Club</i>	<i>£300</i>

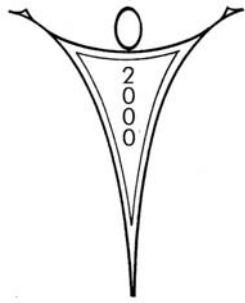


STAGING OF '*Whose Birthday Did You Say?*' at Balcarras School Hall



Copyright: Song and dance music composers and lyricists

<i>Beautiful Dancer</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>Magnificat</i>	(Malcolm Dunbar)
<i>One of Us?</i>	(Malcolm Dunbar)
<i>Voices from heaven</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>Circle Dance</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>He Said 'Follow Me'</i>	(Malcolm Dunbar)
<i>Miriam's Dance</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>The Prodigal Son</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>Love One Another</i>	(Malcolm Dunbar)
<i>Don't Let The Lights Go Out</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>The Agony</i>	(Malcolm Dunbar)
<i>On to Pentecost</i>	(Malcolm Dunbar)
<i>Gloria</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>Gloria (Taize)</i>	(Sue Trickey)
<i>The Good Samaritan</i> (lyrics and musical arrangement to the Shaker song 'Simple Gifts')	(Geoff Ramshaw)
<i>Orchestral Arrangements</i>	(Keith Mead)
<i>Lyrics of songs</i> (set to music by Malcolm Dunbar and Sue Trickey)	(Peter Grainger)



Some thoughts during preparations

Just one more scene not yet rehearsed and still a cast of 100! It's all going extraordinarily well with everyone performing with great enthusiasm and talent. And what is so surprising to me that the script has survive eighteen rehearsals with very minor adjustments, *and the production works*. It is going to be both dramatic and entertaining, so you can sell all those tickets with confidence. I'm so grateful to so many people who have already shown so much real commitment to what we're achieving together.

I am writing this the day after the rehearsal in Balcarras School Hall at which some fifty members – aged from 7 to 70+ filled the stage listening attentively to Jesus' disciples relating their experiences of the Resurrection. They had all just sung very beautifully in two choruses a song composed by an unknown (then) composer, who I remember tentatively playing that same tune to me six months before – “*Will that be all right?*” – he said. All right? It was wonderful and so much what this venture is all about. And at least twelve more people want to have copies of your music, Malcolm, so they can sing it even better next time.

Keith Mead, who has worked wonders with arrangements of all the songs and dances, will be having two special singing rehearsals for those singing parts in the chorus numbers that lend themselves to a four part chorus. We have a list of more than 30 singers who have either expressed interest or who may like to expand their roles in this way – what talent we have available to us.

We already have practically all the major costumes for the production to a very high standard, and with the 50+ that emerged from a long forgotten trunk from ‘*Pharaoh to Freedom*’ (1987) the crowds are taken care of as well. I daren't count the actual number of costumes that are required but incredibly Maggie never seems daunted, despite the loss of her spare bedroom. And, by the way, she is still looking for old sheets to dye – and don't forget the sandals.

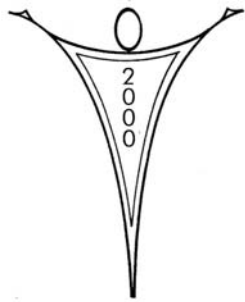
We're delighted that a number of people are emerging to help in all sorts of ways, with costumes, mask, fire and donkey making.

It's now largely a question of bringing all the parts of the production together. The dancers have been working very hard with their extraordinary talent, and this talent and creativity will add a spectacular extra ingredient to the entertainment value on offer.

The lighting and sound equipment is now in place and time to experiment with effects well ahead of the production will make a dramatic difference to the final production.

Peter Grainger

1999 extracts from Charlton Kings Community Players newsletter



Synopsis of 'Whose Birthday Did You Say?'

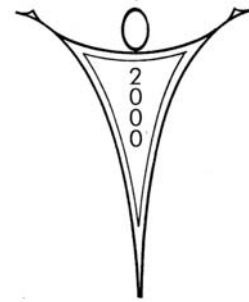
Act 1

- Scene 1*** ***Different Gods***
Scene 2 ***A Special Birth***
Scene 3 ***Who is He?***
Scene 4 ***The Disciples View***
Scene 5 ***The Ministry***

Interval

Act 2

- Scene 6*** ***A Political Pentecost***
Scene 7 ***Message of Love***
Scene 8 ***Impact of the Cross***
Scene 9 ***The Risen Lord***
Scene 10 ***Spreading the Word***



Charlton Kings Community Players
present excerpts from their recent production

Whose Birthday Did You Say?
by Peter Grainger
at

PENTECOST 2000

Saturday June 10th 2000 at 12.30pm in Theatre 1
at Cheltenham Racecourse.

The Players were overwhelmed by the tremendous enthusiasm and support from the audience at this production in February 2000. Here are just two of the comments received afterwards:-

"May I express my great appreciation of the production I attended last night at Balcarras. It really was superb, and I'm not a chap who easily says that of such productions. The content, the acting, singing and dancing and the wide age range and use of so many children was excellent. But it was the spiritual content that struck me as so moving..... I heard many similar comments on leaving."

"I was spellbound and could watch it all over again - such fine acting, such beautiful music, such magnificent costumes - the show could really go on television and reach a wide public. It was indeed a fantastic way to celebrate the Millennium and the wonder of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit were brought powerfully and poignantly home to us.

We look forward to performing the 'Pentecost' scenes again on 10th June.

See you there!

Tickets are available from Cheltenham Town Hall and will admit you to any of the
daytime events

Adults £4.00, Under 16s £2.00, Family ticket £7.00, Single Parent Family £5.00

'Whose Birthday?' at P2k

‘Whose Birthday Did You Say?’ **On The Road @ P2k**

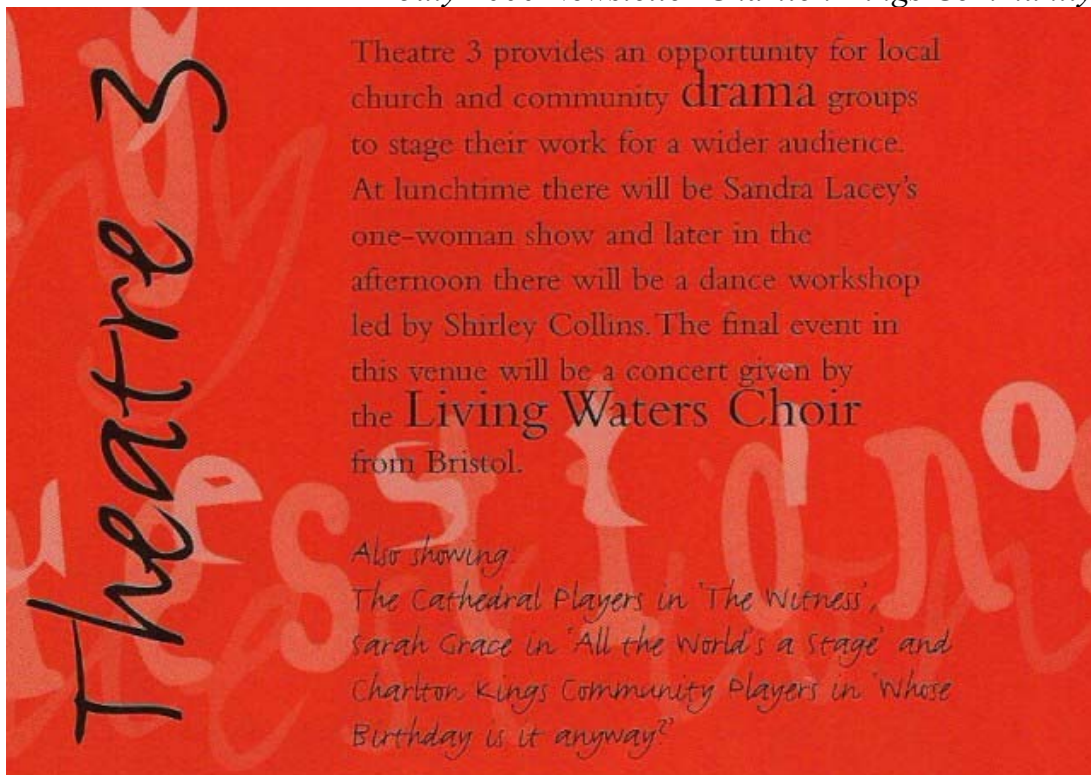
On Saturday 10th June around 15,000 people from around the country packed into Cheltenham Racecourse for the largest millennium celebration in the country. The sun was shining, and by all counts everybody had a brilliant day. There was plenty to see and do, and definitely something for all ages and tastes.

At 12.30 p.m. in a large blacked-out theatre marquee, 40+ of us performed a short extract of ‘*Whose Birthday*’ which had been specially edited by Peter for the event. Just as I was briefing the cast 5 minutes before the start of the show that they shouldn’t be disappointed if we ended up with a small audience, I popped my head into the tent to discover that most of the 200+ chairs were filling up fast. (I should point out that the original capacity of 1000+ was nowhere near reality!) The performance was brilliant – the audience got larger by the minute (partly thanks to a bit of PR by some of the cast in first-century costume walking around and encouraging everybody to come and watch us) and reacted well to the well acted, tight performance.

Half an hour later it was all over, and audience and cast exited the marquee into the glorious weather to enjoy the remaining 9 and a half hours of the event, which ended with a spectacular laser, light and firework show around the main stage. Thank you so much to everyone who was involved with the contribution we made to what many people will remember as an unforgettable occasion. Without all your help and efforts it would not have been the success it was. The Players committee recently received a letter of congratulations from Chris Lammiman (Head of Programming for P2k, Cheltenham) and asked us to pass on the organisers’ thanks to all of you for your contributions.

Gareth Irvine

July 2000 Newsletter Charlton Kings Community Players



Theatre 3 provides an opportunity for local church and community drama groups to stage their work for a wider audience. At lunchtime there will be Sandra Lacey's one-woman show and later in the afternoon there will be a dance workshop led by Shirley Collins. The final event in this venue will be a concert given by the **Living Waters Choir** from Bristol.

Also showing:
The Cathedral Players in 'The Witness',
Sarah Grace in 'All the World's a Stage' and
Charlton Kings Community Players in 'Whose Birthday is it anyway?'