

**THE YORK
MYSTERY PLAYS
FESTIVAL
2026**

**THE WAR IN
HEAVEN**



YORK GILD OF FREEMEN



HIDden Theatre

in partnership with

The Gild of Freeman of York

form a

Guild of Waifs & Strays

to bring forth the Tanners' Pageant of

The Fall of Angels

as

The War in Heaven

Adapted by Alan Heaven for

**The York Mystery Plays Festival
2026**

Synopsis

The War in Heaven is the story of God's first creation: heaven and hell, and the beings who dwell in them. The angels are created as God's worshipful companions, given heaven as their blissful home so long as they remain loyal to God. He singles out a particular angel, Lucifer ("light bearer"), as first among the angels. Lucifer reacts to this distinction by growing in pridefulness until he decides that he can compete with God to be ruler of heaven, at which point God sends him down to Hell, along with any angels who have become his followers. In hell, Lucifer is surrounded by misery, demons, and fallen angels who are furious with him for leading them astray. When Lucifer tries to put the blame onto them, they attack him viciously and drive him further into the depths of hell. Meanwhile, in heaven, God laments what has occurred. He elevates the angels who have remained loyal, and, with his first creation ruined, begins again, leading us into the following story, *Creation*.



Director's Notes

Our play for the 2026 Mystery Plays, traditionally called *The Fall of Angels*, was originally owned by the Tanners' Guild. Tanning was an integral part of any urban space, as leather goods were necessary for a wide variety of uses, but tanning itself was a messy process, filled with rot and stench as the hides were processed. It is likely that the Tanners were given this particular play because its depiction of hell seemed aligned to the hellish, odiferous environment in which the Tanners lived and worked.

While our hell hopefully gives at least a hint of the muck, our heaven reached for higher things, metaphorically, and started from the point of medieval art. Bosch's "The Garden of Earthly Delights", which, despite the word "earthly", is clearly a fantasy paradise, informed our heaven, which is a place of gentle colours and softness. The weird demons depicted by Bosch and his follower Bruegel, represented by puppets, help to make our hell a strange, unsettling place.

The central question of our play is about the origins of good and evil. Both our angels and fallen angels reflect that: while the demons aren't human, the angels, both fallen and those remaining in heaven, essentially are. Even God and Lucifer intentionally reflect humanity, God as a kindly being who reaches out to you, Lucifer as the narcissistic braggart all too visible in the current world. The Mystery Plays reflect a medieval, and perhaps more general, very human desire to see God, saints, and biblical characters, including Jesus, as relatable figures: by putting ordinary citizens, people you know, into these characters, the line between divinity and humanity is blurred. But it's unavoidable that in making them approachable, the characters representing evil also come closer to us as well.

The theological, philosophical, and purely logical questions that a play like this present have come out repeatedly in our planning meetings and rehearsals. The text doesn't offer up easy answers. In keeping relatively humanoid angels, both fallen and heavenly, we suggest that whatever God's intentions may have been, the power to bring good or evil into the world lies not within some other realm, but largely in us and the choices we make.

- Laura-Elizabeth Rice

The Guild of Waifs & Strays

The Guild of Waifs & Strays is a role taken on by one or more groups within any Mystery Plays year. While many organisations that participate have a continuous membership beyond Mystery Plays years, people who are interested in getting involved with the plays may not have an obvious “home” among the companies. Groups which become Guilds of Waifs & Strays open their doors to these people, taking whatever talents come their way and working to give them a fantastic experience of this historic event. Some people may carry on with their adopted organisation in other, future projects, or future Mystery Play years, while others simply stop by for the single event. Because so much of our work is about bringing historical drama to the public, it felt like a logical role for HIDDEN to take on, and we have been richly rewarded with meeting many new talented cast and company!

Cast

(in order of appearance)

God	Ehren Mierau
1 st Angel	Jacob Carhart
Lucifer	Colin Hayes
2 nd Angel	Imogen Lisle-Clarke
3 rd Angel	Will Seddon
Angel Ensemble	Freddie Amy
1 st Fallen Angel	Sue Whyte
2 nd Fallen Angel	Robin Denley Bowers
3 rd Fallen Angel	Oliver Eardley
Fallen Angel Ensemble	Christopher Bradshaw



Creative Team

Script adapted by	Alan Heaven
Director	Laura-Elizabeth Rice
Designer	Laura-Elizabeth Rice
Composer	Samuel Fernandes Morais
Musical Director	Samuel Fernandes Morais
Puppet Director	Catherine McRae
Assistant Director	Irem Saticioglu



Production Team

Company Stage Manager	Ian S. Murphy
Stage Manager (on the book)	Tea Prata
Costume Supervisor	Laura-Elizabeth Rice
Costume Makers	Mark Burghagen, Mary Denley, Robin Denley Bowers, Imogen Duke, Irem Saticioglu
Puppet Makers	Imogen Duke, Rose Gaynor, Catherine McRae, Tea Prata, Laura-Elizabeth Rice, Irem Saticioglu
Set Construction	Ian S. Murphy
Scenic Art & Set Decoration	Imogen Duke, Laura-Elizabeth Rice
Waggon Master	Ian S. Murphy
Waggon Crew	Les & Karen, Mary Clatworthy, Imogen Duke, Steve Hedges, Graeme Symington, Kate Thomas
Production Photography	Jon Murphy
Rehearsal Space	Southlands Methodist Church, Costa Coffee (Haxby)



Cast

(In order of appearance)



EHREN MIERAU (God) studied for an MA in Medieval Studies at the University of York in 2006/07 and has been involved in medieval drama ever since. For the waggon productions he has previously played Elijah in *The Transfiguration* in 2010 and Jesus in *The Baptism* in 2014. He also played Judas in the 2016 Mystery Plays production in York Minster.



JACOB CARHART (1st Angel) has a background in theatre and film from an early age, including extra work playing in *Beetlejuice* when he was 17, as well as a distinction in his solo Acting Trinity grade 8 exam. He has worked with National Youth and he has also played various Shakespearean roles, including Richard in *Richard II* and Edmund in *King Lear*. He has a background in Taekwondo and Music (singing predominantly) and plays a little guitar and piano, and is always trying to immerse himself in the arts.



COLIN HAYES (Lucifer) is a Canadian studying for his Masters in Medieval Archaeology at Durham University. His dissertation is focused on the archaeological record of the Durham Cycle mystery plays. His first unforgettable role in a mystery-style play was in his Senior Infants nativity play as the Great Big Christmas Star at Holly Park boys school in Dublin, Ireland. In March 2020 his high school was able to stage its production of *Macbeth: Jukebox Antihero* one week before lockdown. Colin had enormous fun playing multiple roles including the Thane of Angus and the second murderer. He was first drawn to medieval literature and the York Plays as an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto. Acting out medieval plays in class led to being cast in the PLS & CRRS production of the York Plays 2025, when all 50 wagon plays were performed between dawn and midnight. Colin's roles included Malchus in *Agony & Betrayal* and a medieval playwright in *Death & Funeral of Mary*. He is excited to be performing in the York mystery plays again, this time in their original home.



IMOGEN LISLE-CLARK (2nd Angel) is thrilled to be playing an Angel in HIDDEN Theatres's mystery play *The War In Heaven*. She is excited to work with this play having come from a television background, starring as Imogen in her own short film *Love Token* (based on Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*), Grace in short film *Grace Redacted*, and Chloe in *Summer Bridges*. She has also had multiple on-set appearances for the BBC, ITV and Warner Brothers. Imogen is excited to be working on this production whilst finishing her degree at York St John University in BA Hons Acting. She would like to thank her tutors, friends and family for all their support and to everyone at HIDDEN Theatre.



WILL SEDDON (3rd Angel) has studied the performing arts in every stage of his education, with his current endeavour being degree-level acting at York St John University. While having played a variety of roles and being part of many performances (including the prestigious National Theatre Connections programme), this is his first appearance within the Mystery Plays. He hopes to use the valuable experience taken from this performance of *The War in Heaven* to begin a career as a living history actor.



FREDDIE AMY (Angel Ensemble) grew up in North Yorkshire and is currently studying Media, Journalism and Publishing at Oxford Brookes University. Outside of his studies, Freddie enjoys acting, photography and travelling, and has been involved in a range of film and television productions. In 2025, he completed the London Marathon in aid of Dementia UK before travelling to Nepal to volunteer as an English teacher. Freddie is pleased to be involved in this year's production of *The War in Heaven*.



SUE WHYTE (1st Fallen Angel) studied drama as a mature student at Northampton University and has regularly appeared on stage at the Royal & Derngate Theatres in Northampton. Last autumn she appeared as Muriel in *Soldiering On* for a tour of Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads* with The Plays the Thing Company. She loves outdoor Shakespearean performance, last summer appearing as the Porter in *Macbeth* for 'Secret Shakespeare' at the Reading Abbey Ruins. She is a member of Bradwell Abbey Players, who perform Pilgrim Tales 'on the wagon' for Heritage Open Days, and was privileged to have taken part in the Pandemonium section of the Olympic Opening Ceremony in 2012. Her first Mystery Play was in 2000 in Buckinghamshire when the story of Christ from Nativity to Resurrection was staged to celebrate the Millennium. The power of that experience never left her and she has always wanted to do more. For Sue, finally being able to be part of the York Mystery Plays is like a dream come true.



ROBIN DENLEY BOWERS (2nd Fallen Angel) is performing for the first time with the Mystery Plays, and it is their first performance in over 15 years. They grew up in York and have always been fascinated by the city's deep connection with its long history, which the Mystery Plays represents a major part of. They spend their days working as a mathematical biologist, and have recently reconnected with their love of theatre.



OLIVER EARDLEY (3rd Fallen Angel) was born in Dubai. His love for acting and screen surfaced around middle school, and since then has become a wider passion. He is studying acting at York St John University, where he has taken a multitude of different roles across a variety of plays and musicals, and is seeking a future profession in the acting industry. Outside of acting, Oliver enjoys tabletop games like Dungeons & Dragons and Warhammer 40K.



CHRISTOPHER BRADSHAW (Fallen Angel Ensemble) studied Russian and German at the University of Leeds before working as a linguist at GCHQ and later as an editor at BBC Monitoring, which monitors open source information from many countries around the world. He first encountered the Mystery Plays after relocating to York following retirement and jumped at the chance now to play a minor role in this linguistically-rich spectacle, which is such an important continuation of a tradition of historic importance in York and far beyond.

Creative Team



LAURA-ELIZABETH RICE (Director & Designer) has been in love with the theatre and history since childhood, when her family performed together in America. Laura divided her university career in Washington, DC between theatre and history, ultimately majoring in both. She subsequently worked at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre for a season. A medieval archaeology MA brought her to York in 2006, during which she focused on the modern revivals of the York Mystery Plays. In the subsequent years, Laura has worked as an actor, designer, and director for various companies in York, and in 2016 she completed a PhD at the University of Bristol on medieval drama in the 1951 Festival of Britain. She hopes to spend the rest of her life finding ways to merge her passions for history and theatre, and share them with the world.



SAMUEL FERNANDES MORAIS (Composer & Musical Director) is an emerging composer and theatre-maker. He studied music production in Lisbon, and music performance and composition in York, having completed his MA in music in September 2025. During his undergraduate, he got involved with the Canterbury Choir Festival in 2022 and the Chester Mystery Plays in 2024. Samuel also has experience playing in pit bands and function bands, including musicals *Carrie* and *Cry Baby*, the choir for the York Minster graduation ceremonies and Christmas Carols, and a chamber group in celebration of the Victorian Garden of Death at the York Cemetery. Samuel also has a special interest in producing interdisciplinary projects, such as the one he produced for his MA involving film, music, and theatre. Outside of the Mystery Plays, Samuel is working with York Theatre Royal towards audience development and engagement for younger adults in the Futureproof program, and collaborating with composer/performer Damien Collis on recordings celebrating female composers in classical music.



CATHERINE MCRAE (Puppet Director) is a Northern actor, puppeteer and drama facilitator who has been fascinated by storytelling for as long as she can remember. She is particularly drawn to puppetry for adults — the moment when those who were sceptical choose to believe. *The War in Heaven* marks her debut as puppet director and her first collaboration with HIDDEN Theatre. She also works with Mind the Gap, the award-winning Bradford-based theatre company whose work centres disabled artists.



IREM SATICIOĞLU (Assistant Director) is a Turkish theatre-maker based in York. Her interest in theatre and especially directing started while she was studying Zoology at the University of Glasgow. She did her MA in Theatre-Making at the University of York and has been involved in many productions as a director/assistant director. Her previous work includes *A Nativity for York* (assistant director) with the YMPST and *The Painting Has Gone* (director) for YSCP's Direct Approach project.

Non-Human Characters

(in absolutely no particular order)



LARGE ROLLEY (Waggon) Large Rolley began his life as a much smaller rolley, but he has finally reached the apogee of waggon potential. Professionally, he works on a farm, aiding in provisional distribution (hay for cows), but his true love is the theatre: he has many more than two planks, and plenty of passion! He is delighted to be opening this year's Mystery Plays with *The War in Heaven*, and has become firm friends with Dave the Hellmouth. It's not every waggon has the chance to portray both heaven and hell! Large Rolley would like to thank his mentor, Helena Handcart, for coaching him on his acting.



DAVE WAFFLE (Hellmouth) Dave never expected to end up onstage, so he's very pleased to be in this year's Mystery Plays! His career as a hellmouth usually demands his full attention (there are just so many people coming to hell daily; it's a real growth industry) but he couldn't turn down the chance to take centre stage- or at least, rear stage- in the play. He's enjoyed hanging out, literally, with Large Rolley and the company. In his spare time, Dave collects stamps, and he spends an inordinate amount of time flossing his teeth, as peasants tend to get stuck.



ELON (Daemon) is an unfathomable enigma and one of the most viciously unrepentant of all the daemons, what humans call "a nasty piece of work". His ghoulish appearance and behaviour gave no clue as to any previous existence he may have had, and nor does his behaviour. Maybe he was banished to the Underworld for some vile transgression, or maybe he has always been there. Some say he looks like he should be lurking at the bottom of a deep, murky ocean, but he actually flies around Hell in a constant savage search for new lost souls to torment. The other daemons fear and shun him, trying to avoid coming within his biting range.



DRUMBLEGOG BEATFACE "Beatea" (Daemon) is the Ruler of Houseflies (or any fly, really!) He is always of two minds, pulled this way and that. He enjoys hanging around the other daemons. Drumblegog's favourite hobby is spewing out more daemons when time allows, and banging on about how to get (a)head (or two) in Hell.



MORTARION MUSTAFARUS "Morty" (Daemon) Born and raised in hell itself, Mortarion has built a career out of fear, torture and menace. His current pastimes include haunting Lucifer, encouraging 3rd Fallen Angel to hurt Lucifer and the others, and generally just floating behind people until they notice. He actually really likes flowers, though will never admit it to anyone



BEELZEBUB "Beeley" (Daemon) Traditionally known as the Lord of the Flies, Beelzebub prefers to be known as Marquis of the Flies, as he's very conscious of rank. Beelzebub isn't entirely sure how he got into this- the play- but that whole "bound and tormented" thing probably played a part. He thinks it's probably all beneath his dignity, but as his depth perception isn't very good, he's not sure about that. What he does know is that Lucifer is an upstart, a hellish parvenu, and must be stopped before his pride causes him to try to take over the kingdom of Hell.

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The Gild of Freemen of York:

Gild Master	Andrew Kenny
Clerk	Tom Gibson

HIDden Theatre Board of Trustees: Nathan Bargate, Ian S. Murphy, Laura-Elizabeth Rice



HIDden Theatre

HIDden Theatre is a not-for-profit company that aims to enrich the lives of audience members and creative participants through stories from and about the past. We were formed in 2010 as an outgrowth of that year's Mystery Plays, debuting with a production at the British Museum, and the current team has worked together since the Plays of 2014. Our name is a nod to "historically informed drama"; as such, we strive to ground our projects in thorough research, offering deeper contexts for our productions, and many educational extras for those who want to learn more about the stories we tell. The HIDden team enjoy creating a bridge between yesterday and today, giving our audiences entertaining and intriguing performances. We continue to believe that the past has many of the best stories, and hope our audiences agree! To learn more about our work, our productions, or to donate to help us create more drama from history, you can find us on social media and at hiddentheatre.com.



The Gild of Freemen of York

In the Middle Ages, "freemen" were not a trade guild but a fraternal group made up of men who were not bound by the feudalistic system, but could exercise trade and free movement, in exchange for civic responsibilities and defence of the city. In 1953, the idea of "freemen" was resurrected as the Gild we know today, whose purpose is to enhance the city of York and further the interest of its citizens. They have continued in this mission ever since, and participation in the Mystery Plays is one of the ways in which they carry this out. HIDden is delighted to be paired with the Gild, and hopes that together we have created something to honour York's past and contribute to its ongoing life.