

Betsy Taylor - University of Sydney Sydney Medieval and Renaissance Society Archive

Outline

The material relates mainly to performances of mediaeval cycle plays, from 1968. The plays were performed by students and staff of the University, involving many departments (History, English, German, French, Italian and Music) and were organised by the Sydney Mediaeval and Renaissance Society. Performances took place in the University's Great Hall.

Material

Scripts -- the scripts were prepared by English Department staff. They were adapted from various editions of mediaeval plays, given normalised spelling, and provided with enough translation (or glossing) to make them intelligible to the actors and audience. Some of the scripts are annotated with production details.

Photographs -- there are a large number of professional photographs in black-and-white, taken by University photographers during dress rehearsals and performances. We also have a few colour photos taken by people involved in the plays.

Programs -- programmes exist for all the major productions.

Costume designs -- several of the designs have survived, and some have details about the materials used.

Music -- some scores of the music used in productions are available. These are of particular interest since Associate Professor Winsome Evans from the Department of Music acted as a de facto musical director for the early performances.

Miscellaneous -- there are notebooks with details of people involved in the shows including set builders, prop makers, lighting designers and operators and wardrobe. These are accompanied by several files of administrative records and correspondence.

Video - The University Television Unit produced television versions of some of the individual plays. Videos of the Towneley Noah, First and Second Shepherds' Plays and Herod the Great were produced and were later shown to students of medieval drama as part of their course. The scripts and tapes have been retained.

Notes

In addition to the major productions, the English Department had a strong tradition of presenting rehearsed readings of plays that were being studied. Among the early drama, there are materials for Everyman, Nice Wanton and a St George play (scripts, programs).

These are not the only early plays that were being performed. The Renaissance Players mounted some superb performances of early drama (including The Play of Daniel and the Fleury Playbook Massacre of the Innocents).

Dr Lyn Olson of the History Department produced some of the Cornish plays, including a spectacular St Meriasek. In 1973 Professor Sybil Jack produced Respublica. She has now retired from the History Department but may also possess some archival materials similar to those listed above.