

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEDIEVAL-DRAMA REVIVALS AND THE UNIVERSITIES

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The slim journal *Theatre in Education*, issue 5, number 25, for April 1951, carried three interestingly linked articles. First there is a report on the preparations for the forthcoming Festival of Britain, the country's great post-war self-celebration. What is specifically reported here is the outcome of Ministry of Education Circular 231 of 15 December 1950, which gave a general outline of what the rôle of schools and colleges was to be in the Festival, embodying the hope that 'most schools will find in their local history, etc., a rich accumulation of treasures and achievements that could properly be studied as part of a national festival of thankfulness and legitimate pride'. The report moves on to preview plans for the revival of the York Mystery Plays, listed alongside Cambridge's plans to stage Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Tempest or Enchanted Isle* by Dryden, Davenant, and Purcell. Norwich planned to put on Shakespeare's *Pericles* and *The Taming of the Shrew* in the Maddermarket Theatre, as well as a production by the Pilgrim Players of Christopher Fry's *Sleep of Prisoners* in the medieval church of St Peter Mancroft. In Canterbury there was to be a new play by Robert Gittings about St Alphege and the Danish invasion entitled *Makers of Violence*; in Oxford *Henry IV Part 2* and *Samson Agonistes* were being put on in college gardens. Stratford was contributing four of Shakespeare's history plays, from *Richard II* to *Henry V*; and, in Battersea Festival Gardens in London, Harold Turner was appearing in a new ballet based on *Orlando's Silver Wedding*. The reporter remarks on how London was lagging behind the provinces in what was clearly seen as a major and appropriate endeavour in patriotic drama.

The discussion of York's plans presciently adds that, 'One had the general feeling that this revival, if successful, may become a permanent feature if not of every summer season then as often at least as Edinburgh will see the revival of the "Thrie Estatis"'. Moreover the account notes that other revivals of medieval scriptural drama for the Festival were to include an adaptation by Rev and Mrs Joseph McCulloch in Chester — 'where the Chester plays have not been done in their entirety for four hundred