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St Peter's Church, Oundle (the Parish Church) - 8pm

# MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

by T S Eliot

RELIGION-RITUAL-RENEWAL

The Director's View

A classic play has been described as one 'which has proved itself to be fundamental in content and unlimited in form'. *Murder in the Cathedral* by T S Eliot is indeed a classic play, universal in content, and in form echoing the earliest traditions of English drama, following closely the verse structure of the mediæval morality play *Everyman*.

*Murder in the Cathedral* was written in the 1930s, in the aftermath of the Great War, a time of great depression, unemployment, recession and poverty - a restless, aimless time. Yet it remains as strong today as when it was written, for conditions are in many ways worse now than in the '30s. Many, like the Women of Canterbury, try to pass unobserved, existing, eating, drinking, raising families, facing problems, living but only partly living, surviving in a world ruled by men out of touch, distanced from common folk, poor folk, who remain powerless, unable to alter the course of their lives - living and partly living.

For its very first drama, Oundle International Festival boldly returns to the roots of theatrical tradition: no modern resources, no state-of-the-art technology for this production, only an ancient mediæval church, stripped bare and lit by the natural light of candles. An evocative setting for a rich and intensifying experience, story telling of the highest order, the sweeping, powerful verbal imagery of Eliot's words: a celebration of life and death, of pride and passion, of murder and martyrdom, of man and his fall from grace.

This play, in this setting, is pure theatre, and with its living history style, its sense of reality in what is seen and heard, leaves a powerful impression, just as the death of Thomas Becket has left a powerful impression on every generation century after century. The martyr who answers the cries of leadership, who holds a torch up to the light and is prepared to give his life in order that the light will continue to shine, is always a powerful symbol, a rallying point. It doesn't happen these days: the politicians see to that. Governments have made a point of not allowing martyrs. Perhaps we are cleverer now or perhaps not!

A killing is a shared experience, it leaves its mark even on those who have nothing to do with the killing, even if only momentarily. *Murder in the Cathedral* is shared experience too: in this production actor and audience travel the road together.

Geoffrey Davies

'ALL THINGS PREPARE THE EVENT - WATCH' THOMAS BECKET

THERE WILL BE ONE INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES. THE AUDIENCE IS REQUESTED TO SIT ON THE GROUND FOR THE SERMON; SOME SEATS ARE AVAILABLE. SEE SEPARATE INSERT FOR PRODUCTION DETAILS & CAST LIST



SPONSORED BY  
**JOHN LEWIS**  
Peterborough



St Peter's Church, Oundle (the Parish Church) - 10pm

Friday 12 July

To celebrate *Cinema 100*, an opportunity to watch this unusual and very rare 1952 film created by George Hoellering in association with T S Eliot. A relaxed late evening screening to follow the first performance of the drama. *Sponsored by Welland Flooring Co Ltd.*

