

# PASSION TRUST

## Publicity for Passion Plays:

Jules Robinson discusses publicity tactics for Wintershall's *Life of Christ* and Passion plays 2012

Publicity is FREE and it is your key, not only to getting people to attend, but it also it can help you get the project off the ground in the first place! You need to invest in marketing & publicity for folk to turn up in the first place otherwise it's a lot of work for nothing.

- Publicity is so important and needs to be thought about NOW, whilst you are beginning to think about putting on your production. That's because you can use it to help recruit actors and helpers and encourage local support! And it doesn't have to cost you anything. Contact your local paper and get them 'on side' to write an article about what you are planning to do and when and give details of where your first rehearsal /meeting will be. Also contact your local tourism office with all your information and ask for it your production to be publicised.
- Similarly contact your local churches and email/send them similar information to put in their parish newsletters. Later you can ask them to display publicity materials on their noticeboards.
- As rehearsals progress, look for angles for stories that you can contact the press with – it might be about a cast member, an animal you're using, costumes – anything newsworthy or fun. There may be a certain cast member who has a wonderful testimony that they don't mind sharing on your local radio station – to help promote the event a couple of weeks before it's due to take place.

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- Images are all important. Ask local photographers and papers who take photos of the event if you can have their permission to use and reproduce them in the future for free. Take photos yourselves during rehearsals. You can 'stage' a pre-publicity shot with just one or two actors in costume which you can send to the papers to use...
- Define your target audience before deciding on the play. You have to think in the same terms for publicity. And if you have more than one event going on, one can feed off another. For example Guildford High St (Surrey) Passion always takes place on a Saturday. When we staged the Passion in Lewes prison (East Sussex) on Good Friday I organised an interview with BBC Radio Surrey and Sussex which covers both areas so I could talk about both and promote Guildford the next day.
- The subsequent years we've used 'Trafalgar' interviews with national newspapers and radio stations to promote Guildford, as well as promoting Guildford Passion through local Surrey press and radio. We've also used them to promote the fuller length 'Life of Christ'.
- Bear in mind that most monthly magazines have 3 month lead times so you will need to prepare to contact them well in advance.
- Going back to 'who your target audience are' in terms of publicity – think laterally. When we first started planning Trafalgar I thought about all of the people who were going to be in London from abroad over Easter so I researched and contacted all of the hotels in the surrounding area. Knowing that it's usually the concierge who people ask about where to go and what to see, I sent them all flyers and leaflets, underlying the fact that it was a FREE to attend event in the heart of London! Now we have discovered there is a concierge magazine which is even more helpful.

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- Utilise your contacts and think even more laterally. If a cast member has a shop –ask him/her to display your publicity materials there. If one is a doctor ask them to display something in their room, a dentist – ask them to put up a poster on the ceiling(!).
- The publicity can grow organically, along with your production. Don't be put off by large budgets and advertising costs. God takes the seed that we plant and waters and nurtures it so that it bears fruit. Your production will turn heads, so those that don't know anything about it will be attracted by the crowds that do! There are 'shoppers' at Guildford, as there will be in any town, who don't know anything about the event until they are literally 'swept up in the action' as it moves up the High Street. As I was telling someone last night, last year I heard one woman excitedly saying, 'Isn't this great? I only popped out for a few oranges!' and a man contemplating suicide, was caught up in and so moved by the story that he found Jesus. And that's what it's all about...

I hope the above few pointers/ideas are helpful. I haven't mentioned marketing but maybe that's something for the next Passion Trust conference.

God bless and God speed with your forthcoming productions!