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THE ALEXANDRA PLAYERS
Present

The Flint Street Nativity

By Tim Firth



26th - 29th October 2016

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The Director

I spent many of my early working years teaching in a primary school. It was long enough ago to have been a time when all primary schools produced a traditional nativity play at Christmas. I recall many happy times when often timid and reluctant children were given the opportunity to shine by being given a part in the nativity. What an honour it was if you were chosen to be Mary — usually the brightest girl in the class (but often the girl who was disliked by many of the other children because she was seen as “the favourite”). Perhaps it was an even greater feeling of success for the reluctant or shy child who was persuaded to play a shepherd or an angel. The beaming smile on her or his face probably gave both parent and teacher far more satisfaction.



When I came across Tim Firth’s play, I fell in love with it and determined that I would attempt to direct it at some time. It is full of life and vitality, and extremely funny at times. But the humour is perfectly balanced by the pathos — Firth vividly captures the way children feel and speak, and how cruel they can be to each other.

This is an ensemble piece and I thank and congratulate the cast, crew and all who have worked so hard on it. Alfred Hickling, in his review for *The Guardian*, said “There are moments where you may wet yourself laughing.” You’ve been warned!

Roy Moore

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'The Flint Street Nativity'

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The Playwright

Tim Firth (1964 -)

Dramatist, screenwriter and songwriter Tim Firth was born in The Wirral, Merseyside and spent most of his time at his Warrington Comprehensive writing songs. He began writing for the theatre by accident: shortly before going up to Cambridge to read English, he attended an Arvon Foundation course run by Willy Russell and Danny Hiller, where he had to write dialogue. He wrote about the only thing he knew, two sixteen-year-olds trying to write a song.

While at Cambridge he joined the Footlights, where one of his contemporaries was David Baddiel, who invited him to contribute music for *The Mary Whitehouse Experience*.

On leaving Cambridge Tim wrote and composed music for Radio Four but was soon invited to meet Alan Ayckbourn in Scarborough and commissioned to write a play for the studio at the Stephen Joseph Theatre. His one-act play, *A Man of Letters*, was successful and led to Alan commissioning a full-length play, *Neville's Island* – memorably produced by the Alexandra Players in 2011.

During two successive Christmas runs at the Liverpool Playhouse, the stage version of Tim's tv film, *The Flint Street Nativity*, became the most successful Christmas production in the theatre's history.

Probably his best-known play, *Calendar Girls*, adapted by Tim from his own film, during its 2008/09 tour broke the all-time British box office record for a play and continued to sell out during its West End run in 2010.

In 2015, with Gary Barlow, Tim wrote *The Girls*, based on the story of *Calendar Girls*. The musical ran for 60 sell-out performances in all, and will open at The Phoenix Theatre in London in January 2017. Tickets went on sale in September.

Tim lives in North Cheshire with his wife Katy and children Jack, Joe and Georgia.

Sources: *Wikipedia June 2016*
IMDb mini biography by Tim Firth

Some of our cast in previous productions



Wise Frankincense and Ass in their previous double act (Cinderella)



Narrator and Angel enjoying the sunshine ('Respecting Your Piers')



Angel and Mary in 'Enchanted April' and Shepherd in 'Dangerous Corner'

And the last time we played school children (Daisy Pulls It Off)



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And now for today's RE* lesson....

In case you've forgotten, here is the correct story of the nativity, as recorded in Luke, chapters 1 and 2 and Matthew, chapter 1:

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house David; and the virgin's name was Mary,

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women,

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be,

And the angel said unto her, Fear not Mary: for thou hast found favour with God, And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed,

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city,

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child,

And so it was, that, while they were there,, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered,

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn,

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid,

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people,

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude

of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men,

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us,

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him,

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born,

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, Art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel,

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared,

And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search diligently for the young child: and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also,

When they had heard the king, they departed: and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy,

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

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The Flint Street Nativity

**A comedy with music
by Tim Firth**

Adapted from a play for television and first produced for stage by the
Everyman Liverpool Playhouse on 28th December 2006.

Director Roy Moore
Musical Director Susan Boorman

CAST

Innkeeper	John Milner
Star	Mark Higgins
Ass	Mark Foulds
Narrator	Liz Moss
Herod/Joseph	Lee Copp
Wise Frankincense	Keith Hartley
Shepherd	Janet Denne
Mary	Juliette Harrison
Wise Gold	Clare Sweetapple
Angel	Sue McGeehan
Gabriel	Emily Gilham

There will be an Interval of 15 minutes between
Act One and Act Two.
Refreshments (tea and coffee) will be available in the
church café and wine in the foyer.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Co-ordinator	Janet Sweet
Set design & build	Rob Hames Roy Moore
Stage Manager	Jackie Hartley
ASM	Rose Bayley
Lighting design	David Hawkett
Sound	Hereward Cruttwell-Reade
Art work	Debra Malley
Publicity	Louise Gaul
Photography	Juliette Harrison
FOH Manager	Rob Hames
Refreshments	Janet Sweet

Safety

In the unlikely event that the hall has to be vacated in an emergency, please leave the building by the nearest exit, which is clearly indicated.

In accordance with local safety requirements:

1. The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exits and these doors must at that time be kept open.
2. All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept free from obstruction.
3. Persons will not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways.
4. Smoking is not allowed.

Please note that taking of photographs and video recording during the performance is strictly prohibited.

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SUSAN BOORMAN*Musical Director*

Susan joined the Alexandra Players in 1970 and played a number of small parts in plays such as *Plaza Suite* and *Absurd Person Singular*. She dazzled us with her performance as Mrs Fraser, the pianist with a liking for drink, in *Stepping Out*. In recent times she has become our resident Musical Director in productions which involved music, and the all-important “refreshment co-ordinator”. Before retiring, Susan worked as a hospital pharmacist at Darent Valley Hospital, Dartford. She is organist and Secretary of Charlton United Reformed Church.

LEE COPP*Herod/Joseph*

Now, having been with the Alexandra Players for nearly a year, Lee has helped back stage on the production of *Cat's Cradle*, to a small walk-on part in this year's production of *Timeshare*. He is now participating with his first ‘proper’ role as both Herod and Joseph which he has thoroughly enjoyed along with the rest of the cast. He hopes to have an opportunity at directing sometime in the future.

HEREWARD CRUTTWELL-READE *Crew*

Born in London, Hereward has just graduated from music college in Manchester and plays the oboe and saxophone. A film buff, in his gap year he enjoyed acting in student films at Prague Film School and directed a few five-minute films.

JANET DENNE*Shepherd*

Janet joined the Alexandra Players in 2000. Over the years, she has taken many varied roles, including directing *Murder Mistaken*, *Groping for Words* and *Essence of Love*. She appeared as the lead Susan in *Good Things*, the likeable but hapless heroine who rebuilds her life through her interactions with the varied characters who enter her charity shop. Then she played the drunken has-been actress in *We Happy Few*, our RSC Open Stages production.

MARK FOULDS*Ass*

Mark joined the Players at the start of last year and has played a range of roles. These include a rather pretty-ugly sister (*Cinderella, the untold story*), an 18 year old thespian (*Wyrd Sisters*) and a rather aggressive landlord in his 50's (*Cat's Cradle*). Mark is back to a comical role tonight with a character not too dissimilar to his own school boy self!

JACKIE HARTLEY*Stage Manager*

After a long stint of either acting or directing, Jackie is enjoying helping out backstage. All the fun but less of the stress! One of the great things about amateur dramatics is that everyone gets to have a go at everything. Hope you enjoy watching the show as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

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LOUISE GAUL*Publicity*

Louise joined the Alexandra Players in 2010 and has achieved her lifelong ambition by appearing in 10 productions. Along with maintaining our website and social media pages online, Louise thoroughly enjoys performing with the group and loves being a part of our company. Her credits include *Daisy Pulls It Off*, *Pack of Lies*, *Good Things*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *A Foot In The Door*, *We Happy Few*, *The Flesh Game*, *The Essence of Love*, *Wyrd Sisters* and *Cat's Cradle*.

EMILY GILHAM*Gabriel*

Emily's love for theatre started at the tender age of seven when she was given the role of 'narrator 8' in her infant school nativity. Never did it occur to her that 10 years later she'd be back where it all began! Over the past few years she completed a GCSE in drama and has taken on parts in various plays and pantomimes in her local area. Thoroughly delighted to finally be cast in a bigger role, she has worked hard to make Gabriel her own; and she can't wait to make her long awaited debut as a Player!

ROB HAMES*Set builder, FOH manager*

Rob is a regular in our front-of-house team and spends many hours on the stage creating our outstanding sets. He learned many of his set building tricks from the master of set design, Dave Townsend, with whom he worked for recent productions such as *The Sleeping Beauty*, *We Happy Few*, *The Essence of Love* and *Wyrd Sisters*, and with Roy Moore on *Cat's Cradle* and *Timeshare*.

JULIETTE HARRISON*Mary*

Juliette is a talented photographer, actor and musician. She joined the Alexandra Players in 2000 and has appeared in many of our productions since then including *Steel Magnolias*, *Stepping Out*, *Blithe Spirit*, *David Copperfield* and *My Sister In This House*. She directed *Absurd Person Singular* in 2010 and played Lotty Wilton in the delightful comedy *Enchanted April* in 2012. More recently she played Clare Beaumont in *Daisy Pulls It Off*, had a small part in *Good Things* and took the leading role of Hetty Oak in our RSC Open Stages production of *We Happy Few*.

KEITH HARTLEY*Wise Frankincense*

Keith trained at the City of London Polytechnic student union bar in Moorgate, and then at The British Oak, Blackheath, before passing out with flying colours (before his eyes). Joined the Alexandra Players in 1987, and has been trying to leave ever since. Appearances in plays such as *Round and Round the Garden*, *Time Of My Life*, *It Could Be Any One Of Us* (all by Sir Alan Ayckbourn), dressing up as women in various pantomimes; *The Caretaker* (Harold Pinter); Inspector Jack Frost in *Cat's Cradle* (Leslie Sands). Keith has also directed, stage managed, sold tickets at the door, and played with sound and lights. This appearance in *The Flint Street Nativity* marks his lisping debut.

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DAVID HAWKETT*Lighting design*

David Hawkett (also sound design) enjoys all things techie backstage. He's done sound or lighting for most of the recent Players' productions. "The best bit about Am Dram is when it all comes together: actors, set, props, costumes, front-of-house, sound, lights — and, most important, the audience", he says.

MARK HIGGINS*Star*

Mark joined the Players in 2003. In 2009 he took on his first directing role with J. B. Priestley's *Dangerous Corner* and appeared as Geoffrey in Ayckbourn's *Absurd Person Singular*. He played the critically acclaimed part of Angus in *Neville's Island* and Saul Watson in *Play On!* In 2012 he played Frederick Arnott in our "close to faultless" production of *Enchanted April*, the Duke of York in *Crown Matrimonial* and Ambrose in *Private Fears In Public Places*. In the last three years he has played Bob Jackson in *Pack of Lies*, Frazer in *Good Things*, Fusspot, the Lord Chamberlain, in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Duke Felmet in *Wyrd Sisters* and Eddie in *Timeshare*.

DEBRA MALLEY*Art work*

Debra is a local artist and this is the second Alex production that she has made work for, the first being *The Essence of Love*. She's thrilled to be part of another production. She was artist in residence at the Blackheath Halls community opera earlier this year.

SUE MCGEEHAN*Angel*

Sue has been with the Players for 20 years and in that time has taken on roles in productions as varied as *Gigi*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Gaslight*, *Stepping Out*, *David Copperfield* and *My Sister In This House*. In recent years she performed as Daisy's trusty sidekick, Trixie Martin, in *Daisy Pulls It Off* and Barbara Jackson in *Pack of Lies*. In 2014 she played Azuriel in *Sleeping Beauty* before giving birth to Aisling, a sister to Conor. As a busy mum of two, Sue is less able to commit to as many acting roles but was stage manager for the RSC Open Stages production of *We Happy Few* and the Philip Ayckbourn premiere of *Timeshare*, and in 2015 took on the loveable character of Magrat in the stage adaptation of Terry Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters*.



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JOHN MILNER*Innkeeper*

For many years John has worked quietly behind the scenes using his inventive skills to create sounds as varied as dripping taps and screeching cars! He occasionally ventured onto the stage, usually at pantomime time. More recently he has been putting his acting skills to greater use, showing his ability to develop a range of characters, playing the King in *Sleeping Beauty* and Chamberlain, Bedlin and Guard in *Wyrd Sisters*.

ROY MOORE*Director*

Roy combines acting with directing and set and lighting design, he is proud of the range of productions the Alexandra Players have put on in recent years. Highlights include *The Passion Play* in Greenwich Park, a joint production of David Copperfield with the Roan Company and playing Davies in Pinter's *The Caretaker*. Directing credits include *The Killing of Sister George*, *Crown Matrimonial* and *Daisy Pulls It Off*. He has appeared in many productions over the years, some of the most recent being Charles Stanton in *Dangerous Corner*, Neville in *Neville's Island*, Mellersh Wilton in *Enchanted April* and Stewart in *Private Fears In Public Places*.

LIZ MOSS*Narrator*

Liz took part in the joint Church/Players pantomime in 2004. She enjoyed her role as Fairy Godmother so much she was inspired to join the Players. Since then she has acted in a number of roles including *The Killing of Sister George* and most recently had a number of parts in *Wyrd Sisters*. When not acting she helps backstage or organises and serves interval teas.

CLARE SWEETAPPLE*Wise Gold*

Clare discovered the Alexandra Players in 2014 and her first role was backstage for *A Foot In The Door*. She then made her stage debut as Gertrude in *We Happy Few* followed closely by Pauline in *The Flesh Game*. In 2015 Clare directed the fast-paced and visually spectacular fantasy *Wyrd Sisters*. She also took on the role of ASM as well as making props and costumes. She returns to the stage in the role of Wise Gold.

ROSE BAYLEY*Assistant Stage Manager*

Rose moved to the UK from South Africa, where she had trained in drama, in 2011. With the Alexandra Players she has performed in *Crown Matrimonial*, *Daisy Pulls It Off*, *Pack of Lies*, *Good Things*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *We Happy Few*, *Cinderella*, *Wyrd Sisters*, *Cat's Cradle* and *Timeshare*.

JANET SWEET*Production Co-ordinator*

Since joining the Players in 1978 Janet has played many roles in plays as varied as *The Chalk Garden*, *Crown Matrimonial* and *Wyrd Sisters* as well as a number of pantomimes. Janet's sense of timing in order to extract the greatest drama or humour out of a part is unsurpassed. In addition to her co-ordinator role, Janet edits the programme.

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