



Murder in the Cathedral, Wimborne Minster

A shiver went down my spine as the four knights stormed their way into the Minster to murder Thomas Becket. I'd known it was coming all along but the tension had been so effectively built up that I couldn't help but flinch.

Wimborne Drama was invited to perform in the Minster at the start of the church's celebration of 1,300 years of Christian worship. Apart from Canterbury Cathedral itself there can't be many better stages for T S Eliot's evocative verse play.

Set on a raised stage at the centre of the Minster, with light streaming in from the stained glass window behind

the altar, the atmosphere was perfect. As dusk gave way to night, the scene was set for the confrontations with the knights and the eventual dark murder.

The action takes place during the few days leading up to the martyrdom of the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose internal struggle is the main thrust of the play. Having come into conflict with secular authority, Becket is visited by a succession of tempters, who variously urge him to avoid or to seek martyrdom.

It was a confident performance throughout. Jeremy Austin was an inspiring choice as Becket. He captured the Archbishop's dignity and humility as he ponders on his fate. The audience warmed to the man, feeling relief for him as he finally achieves peace of mind by electing not to look for sainthood but to accept death as inevitable. We admired him and grieved for him.

Tony Feltham, Stuart Glossop, Dave Williams and David Pile played tempters and then knights giving powerful per-

formances in both roles. Their explanations for why they had to kill Becket were convincing, almost making the audience, as judges, believe that Becket had effectively committed suicide.

The performance of the Women of Canterbury was simply superb. They worked together effectively as they wailed and worried and set the scene for the action. We felt their pain and grief as they suffered. Brilliant acting throughout.

The whole of Wimborne Drama rose to the challenge of this play.

Director Enid Davies should be celebrating her achievement in a magnificent production, which was justifiably sold out for every performance.

Accuracy resulting from excellent research into the 12th century, costumes, music, properties and quality front of house made this a "theatre" trip to be relished. The play was an inspired move by the organisers of the Cuthberga celebrations. LT