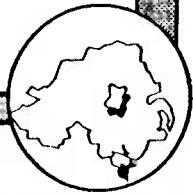


Cityside Diary

By Charles Fitzgerald



Box office success for Luther

Belfast's current biggest multi-media, multi-arts project, Luther, is being helped by the Castle-Court centre which has provided a shop in which to sell tickets and stage pre-performances.

The event is to be performed at several venues and will culminate in a performance involving actors, musicians, painters, sculptors and chorus in the Arts Theatre in mid-June.

Luther is the idea of German-born Nico Andreas Heller, who came to Ulster to work for the International Christian Service For Peace two years ago, and Queen's English lecturer Paul Whitley, who devised the script which is now being dramatised by author Phillip McCann.

It will be based on the great Reformation figure, but it's not a work about religion — more about politics and the effect of Luther and the Reformation on the arts

and, in particular, the Reformation's freeing of the arts from its hitherto almost exclusive religious monopoly.

Actor David Worden plays the title role in Symphony on Luther. He portrays Luther's life and thinking, interspersed by the work and performance of the other artists and with a chorus commentary.

The performance will open in the Arts Theatre on June 21, with scaffolding gantries erected throughout the auditorium for the performers.

Mr Heller stresses that the production, which has Arts Council support and is still hoping for financial backing from the new Community Council, is neither religious nor sectarian.

"Luther is the key because it was the time of the Renaissance. He was primarily a reformer and met vast opposition from the religious establishment. But he wasn't a revolutionary or a bigot — he was enlightened and is often badly misjudged."