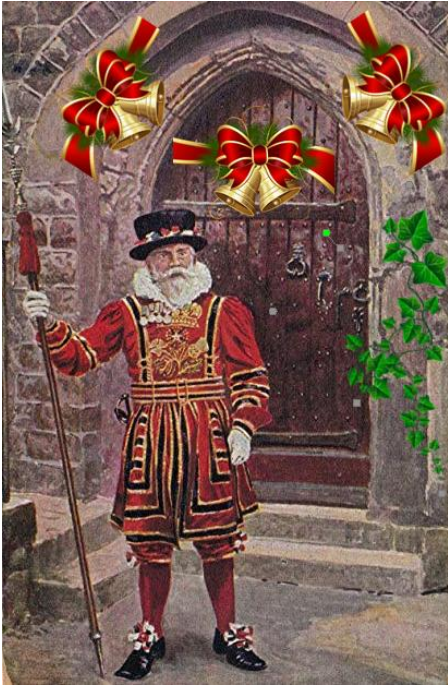


# *Christmas at the Tower*

## *with St. George & the Dragon (a mummers play)*



Fri. Dec. 6 & 13, 2019 @ 8pm  
Sat. Dec. 7 & 14, 2019 @ 2pm

Stage Director: Cynthia duPont Tobias  
Music Director: Helene Furlong  
Asst. Stage Director: Sean McGuire

It's 16th Century London, and the town is in a festive mood! - -

All too often, the Tower of London is a grim place, but Christmas is rapidly approaching, and the residents and visitors are primed to celebrate, with traditional songs and dance, processions, folk plays, mischief, and general merry-making, all intended to chase the dark winter way! Sergeant Meryll of the Tower Warders leads the festivities. Special guests include the choir of St. Peters ad Vincula Church.

Even the Tower ghosts make an appearance, and the children, caught up in the excitement, join in with games and mischief, and with a performance of the traditional mummers play, St. George and the Dragon. Will St. George, patron saint of England, once again, succeed in protecting the land from fearsome beasts and foreign foes? Father Christmas, a learned doctor, a fool, and many others join St. George on his quest.

You'll meet some familiar figures in the show. The action picks up months after the tragic events depicted in Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Yeomen of the Guard". In that earlier tale Sergeant Meryll of the Tower Warders and his daughter, Phoebe, help Colonel Fairfax escape execution, after he's been accused falsely of dealings with the devil. Unfortunately, the conspiracy is discovered, and the Sergeant and Phoebe end up agreeing to unwelcome marriages to secure the silence of their discoverers. The jester, Jack Point, comes to a worse fate. His merry-maid, Elsie Maynard, is now married to Colonel Fairfax, and Point dies of a broken heart.



As "Christmas at the Tower" begins, the Sergeant and Mistress Meryll (nee Carruthers) are settled into married life, but Phoebe Meryll and Wilfred Shadbolt, Head Jailer and Assistant Tormenter of the Tower, have yet to tie the knot. What of Jack Point? Well, the Tower has lots of ghosts!



The early 16<sup>th</sup> century falls during the reign of Henry VIII. Henry was a noted patron of the arts, even composing music himself, but of course, he's better known for having 6 different queens (two of them executed), and for casting off ties with Rome by establishing the Church of England. It's a dynamic, but rather terrifying period. All in the Tower must tread softly!

In this production, we have slightly adjusted what the King and his Church said, and when they said it. The worship of the Virgin Mary was denounced long before the Latin liturgy was replaced by the Book of Common Prayer. We have chosen beloved music, and stretched historic accuracy a bit. (Occasionally we have bent it into a pretzel!)

Join us in December, and draw your own conclusions!