

A black and white portrait of Michael Faraday, an elderly man with long, wavy hair, wearing a dark suit and a white cravat. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera.

Wayfarer Productions Presents

FIRE FROM HEAVEN

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
Murray Watts

PERFORMED BY
Andrew Harrison

MICHAEL FARADAY AND THE DAWN OF THE ELECTRICAL AGE

*From the creators of the acclaimed **Mr Darwin's Tree** comes this inspiring new play about a young man from the humblest background who rose to become one of the greatest experimental scientists of the Nineteenth Century*

Fire from Heaven sponsored by Templeton Religion Trust | FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: www.scio-uk.org/events/

All Saints Church, Ilkley

November 26th & 27th @ 7.30pm

All tickets - £10

Book online at ...

<https://bit.ly/FIRE-26> (Nov. 26th)

<https://bit.ly/FIRE-27> (Nov. 27th)

or the Church Office - 01943 816035

MICHAEL FARADAY (1791 – 1867) rose from a very humble background to become one of the greatest experimental scientists of all time. His father was a blacksmith and Faraday left school at the age of 12 with only the most basic education. His family came from 'the wrong side of the tracks' in a world where science (or 'Natural Philosophy' as it was then called) was the preserve of the wealthy and privileged. There was little hope for a working class lad from the streets of London and Faraday had another great disadvantage socially: his family were dissenters, members of an obscure Christian sect called *Sandemanians* which, although orthodox in its beliefs, immediately excluded him from Oxford or Cambridge or any kind of university education. The Anglican establishment still ruled the day in law and government and in the social hierarchy.

There are many who believe that Faraday's ability to 'think outside the box', the sheer originality of his mind, owed a great deal to the non-conformity of his religion and his experience of life on the margins, where he was forced to take his own initiative in everything. His first job was as a paper boy, working for Ribeau's bookshop in Blandford Street but, before long, he was offered a place as an apprentice bookbinder. Surrounded by thousands of volumes, Faraday began to read voraciously. The entry on 'Electricity' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* seized his imagination. His employer recognised the teenager's potential and allowed Faraday to conduct his own experiments, with chemicals, in a backroom. In this way, Faraday began his humble career as an aspiring 'natural philosopher.' Ribeau soon realised that his industrious apprentice was a scientific prodigy and encouraged him to pursue his ambitions against all the odds.

Among the great scientific establishments of the day was *The Royal Society*, the elite society of natural philosophers (many of whom were wealthy and aristocratic) and *The Royal Institution*, which had been founded recently to advance scientific learning for the general population. The director of The Royal Institution (also a member of *The Royal Society*) was the illustrious Sir Humphry Davy, one of the world's greatest chemists and a heroic figure to Michael Faraday. Faraday was thrilled to receive tickets from a wealthy customer of the bookshop to attend one of Davy's unforgettable lectures...

And this is where the action of the play begins.

Murray Watts, *Fire From Heaven*

MURRAY WATTS / WRITER, DIRECTOR

In a career lasting forty years, Murray Watts has written many plays for theatre and radio, and numerous screenplays for TV and film. His work as a playwright, screenwriter and children's writer has won awards nationally and internationally. He was one of the founding directors of Riding Lights Theatre Company. Screenplays range from 'The Dream', for BBC, starring Jeremy Irons to 'The Miracle Maker', for S4C/BBC/ICON, featuring the voices of Ralph Fiennes, William Hurt and Julie Christie. The Miracle Maker won the Movieguide Epiphany Award as the most inspirational film on US TV in 2000. His work as a playwright has been seen in major theatres throughout the UK and in the West End. Theatre awards include a Fringe First for his production of the comic revue 'Colour Radio' with Riding Lights in 1979 and the LWT Plays on Stage Award for 'The Fatherland' his play set in Soweto, staged by Bush Theatre at Riverside Studios in 1989. In 2012, The King's Head Theatre in London hosted a season of his plays. One of these plays, 'Mr Darwin's Tree', was commissioned to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and was premiered at Westminster Abbey in 2009. SCIO has produced five US tours and multiple Oxford performances of Mr. Darwin's Tree. Murray is currently working on a new play for a theatre in New York.



ANDREW HARRISON / ACTOR

Andrew Harrison has worked in film, television, theatre and radio for over 30 years. He has toured the world with his performance of Charles Darwin in 'Mr. Darwin's Tree' and has appeared in a variety of one-man plays written by Murray Watts, including 'The Walk', 'The Way' and most recently 'Yours Truly'. Andrew's theatre credits include 'Glyn and It' with Dame Penelope Keith on national tour, the premiere tour of Peter Nichol's 'Blue Murder' and the London West End production with the late Sir Michael Hordern of 'Trelawny of the Wells'. He made his repertory debut in Exeter playing the leads in Caryl Churchill's 'Serious Money' and Alan Ayckbourn's 'A Chorus of Disapproval'. He played the lead in the premiere of 'First Light' by Murray Watts, which transferred to the King's Head in London in 2012.

Andrew is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4's drama department. His film credits include 'An Ideal Husband', 'The Sea Change', 'A Little Loving' and 'Dorian Gray'. For television he has appeared in 'Florence Nightingale', 'The Life of Pepys', 'Miss Marple', '2000 Acres of Sky', 'The Bill', 'Birds of a Feather', 'You rang M'lord?', 'Beyond Narnia' and 'Summer in Transylvania'.