

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Jesus Christ Superstar has ton of emotion

I could use this entire column to tell you about the Sunshine Festival's presentation of Jesus Christ Superstar, but there are other things going on, too.

I was at the opening night on Saturday and I'm happy to report that the performance lived up to what I

wrote last week. And then some.

The one thought I keep returning to, is this play, this particular production of it, is the perfect play to go to if you don't like musicals, or, if you've never been to a play.

Why? Because it's simply

the best thing that's ever been presented in the Opera House — at least as long as I've called Orillia home.

People who don't like musicals usually don't because they can't wrap their heads around characters breaking out in song for no particular reason except to sing. There often isn't a point to it.

In Jesus Christ Superstar, there is no dialogue, just singing. The songs move the plot along.

So what about the singing? Janet Martin (Mary Magdalene), Matt Campbell (Judas), Paul Nolan (Jesus) and Michel LaFleche (Simon) go way beyond greatness.

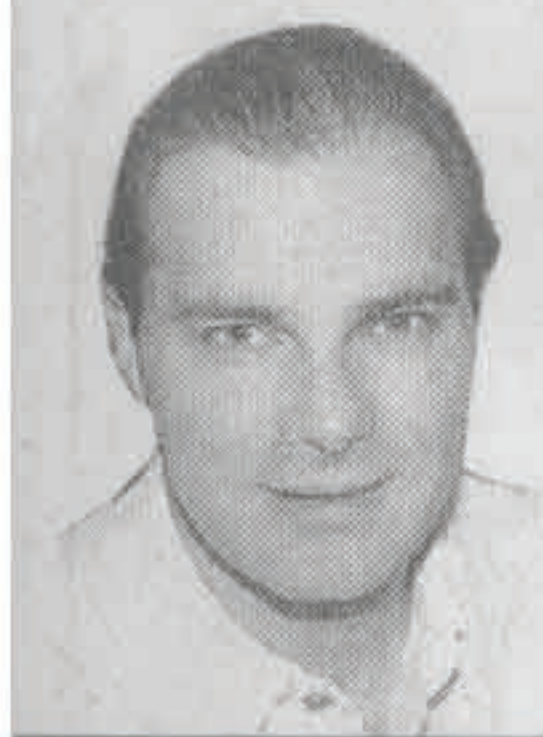
Each packs a ton of emotion into the tunes they sing. I thought Martin's turn with I Don't Know How to Love Him that I saw early last week was outstanding. On Saturday night, it was several times better.

Campbell in Judas's Death was superb. His tortured singing left most of the audience breathless. Nolan takes his tunes down to a whisper and at one point leaps to the upper register — out of nowhere — and he sings full-throat, not falsetto, longer than most men would find comfortable. LaFleche wails during his feature, and it's good.

The cast sings very well together, best that I've heard, and it dances with a level of execution that I haven't seen live in a long time.

There was some problem with the sound generation, which was regrettable, but will likely be fixed quickly.

One audience member, with some experience of attending theatre productions, mentioned to me after the opening that you can't see anything like this show anywhere, except New York, and he just might be right.



**John Swartz**

## ARTIST PROFILE



Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart

The Mariposa Folk Festival will be held in Orillia Friday through Saturday. The Packet will profile some of the artists slated to perform.

### STACEY EARLE AND MARK STUART

Although they've performed together since 1992, and have been married since 1993, Stacey Earle and Mark Stuart waited until 2001 to officially join their acts together. To be sure, their duo performances have been showered with sparks of magic and grace. They feel their new album, *Never Gonna Let You Go*, has greater breadth and appeal than anything they've ever released individually. With two songwriters coming from their unique perspectives, their collaborative effort offers something for everyone.

[www.staceyearle.com](http://www.staceyearle.com)



The final production number, the title tune, was incredible. The dancing and singing was so infectious the audience spontaneously started to clap in time.

The audience then broke out into one of the longest, loudest and wildest standing ovations I've seen in the Opera House.

Did I mention that it was perhaps the largest opening night audience for a Sunfest play. There were 450 people on hand, and incredibly, 70 people who bought tickets weren't there.

I do believe all the credit for this whopping success has to land on director Dave Campbell. He outdid his production of *Cats*, and he assembled one of the most obviously talented teams of production personnel, and a cast that even Garth Drabinsky would love to have at his disposal.

An example of the kind of on-stage and backstage talent we're dealing with is evident in what was missing from Saturday night's performance. Lead dancer, and assistant director, Christy Adamson took ill a couple hours before showtime and had to visit Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

Every set change had to be re-jigged on the fly because the actors handle all the set changes. Props, costume changes and dance numbers also had to be adjusted. That's a major chink in the flow of things to deal with and I never noticed anything was wrong, nor do I think the audience did.

I almost forgot to mention King Herod's Song. Alexandre Beaulieu (Herod) describes this production number as a commercial within the play. It's so different in so many respects from what surrounds it. It's

really a bit of creative genius that will leave you in stitches. Saying more would ruin the moment, so you'll just have to see it.

David Fanstone is going to have his work cut out for him coming up with something that will build on this next year. Jesus Christ Superstar runs to the end of the month. There are still good seats available, but get your tickets yesterday.

More good news about this season. *Kiss Me Kate*, August's production, has the same team involved.

• The Mariposa Folk Festival might run out of tickets. That's what it says on the website ([www.folk-festival.org](http://www.folk-festival.org)). The exact message is 'due to demand, Mariposa 2005 may sell out.'

The festival has gotten better each year, but this is ridiculous. No tickets? Who would have thought?

One of the things driving sales, apart from a great lineup, is the plan to target the youth market with a special weekend pass. A mere 24 bucks gets anyone 17 to 24 years old in for the whole weekend.

Kids under 16 have always been admitted free, when accompanied by an adult.

Advance tickets can be bought at Spotlight on Arts and Festivals on Peter Street (329-2333), the Opera House box office (326-8011) and at Shoppers Drug Mart stores. You can do it by phone and use your credit card, too. Getting them online at the address above is an option as well.

Tomorrow night's concert starts with Bleeker Ridge. The band's name comes from Bleeker Street and Ridge Road. Yes, the band is local. Getting Bleeker Ridge to open the festival is not a bone thrown to a local act; the band deserves its slot on the main stage.

See you there.

• Coming up ... The 2nd Last Call has Awesome Teens and the Jeffery Brothers tonight; on Friday, Brothers of Gutter plays; on Saturday, Out of Your Mouth and other bands are in for an all-ages show starting at 5 p.m. (five buck cover), which will be repeated later in the evening for the regular crowd; the Mike JonDan Band hosts a jam on Monday. ... Sidestreet's has a blues jam with

Under the Influence tonight; on Friday and Saturday, Sons of Tupelo play; on Sunday, Mugshot, No Data and I Hate Sally perform in an all-ages gig starting at 7 p.m. (eight buck cover). ... Mickey Columby plays at the Harbour Inn in Lagoon City Friday nights. ... The Orillia Museum of Art and History has the Franklin Carmichael exhibit, as well as Bettina Harvie: A Career in Modernity. ... The Zephyr Gallery has *Endless Summer* on all summer. ... Tower of Power opens for Tom Jones at Casino Rama July 19 and 20. ... Gallery 7 on Peter Street has *Luscious Summer* on all this month. ... Oprey Orillia is at Sidestreet's July 17, beginning at 1:30 p.m. ... Omar and the Howlers are playing a Peter's Players concert at the MacLaren Art Centre in Barrie on July 17. Call 721-9696 to order tickets, which are 27 bucks.

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