

Braintree and Witham Times Review

GODSPELL

THE melange of stories wrapped up in Godspell produce a musical some way outside the mainstream. There is no storyline, no running thread, and, with one exception, all the actors are required to portray several different characters.

Its selling point is its variety of light and shade, loud and soft, joyful and sad and it was this that Witham Amateur Operatic Society latched on to in producing an enjoyable evening's entertainment.

It is a show that requires a considerable amount of effort. All 14 actors are on stage most of the time and they, director Angela Briley and choreographer Natalie Wilson, must have had their work cut out at rehearsal ~ getting the whole thing into shape.

Each mini-story, all based on Jesus's life or his parables, was brought to life in a range of accents, some American, some traditional and some with a distinctly modern twist. Dr Who, Max Bygraves, a reincarnated Elvis, Catherine Tate's unbovered teenager and sundry other characters re-imagined the Bible.

And so we had strong, straight singing from elder statesmen Patrick O'Brien and George Jordan, vamped~up vaudeville from Kath Adkins, some chavness from Christina Coe, gentle balladry from Sarah Waldie, and a confident performance from Michael Stewart, one of the youngest members of the cast, in the dual roles of John the Baptist and Judas Iscariot. There was also some magic, charades and lots of excuses for singing and dancing.

Above all there was Tim Clarke, as Jesus. One of the society's mainstays for many years, Clarke has been absent from recent productions, but returned in triumph with an outstanding performance, full of wit, charm and joie de vivre. His all-round puckishness gave way to controlled anger at one point before climaxing in dignified emotion in the crucifixion scene, a genuinely moving moment.

Review by Ron Fosker