

## **WITHAM AMATEUR OPERATIC SOCIETY**

**Jesus Christ Super Star. Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Lyrics by Tim Rice.**

**Director and Choreographer Jimmy Hooper**

**Musical Director Jessie Tabor**

**Assistant to the Director Emma Loring**

**Performed at The Public Hall, Witham on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026 at 7.30pm**

**I was warmly greeted by Donna Goddard at Front of House. There was a near capacity audience at this performance and a buzz of anticipation.**

**The set was a scaffolding type structure with steps each side and an overhead bridge allowing for good movement across the stage. A graffiti, produced by the society, was in the centre which lit up the name Jesus from time to time very effectively. A few props were used including the Last Supper Table (ingenious!) and a self opening cash box. Ensemble costumes reflected a modern image with principals dressed according to their character.**

**Sound levels were very good, with a few well timed effects and everyone could be heard clearly. Lighting was well focussed on the performers being muted, varied and complementary.**

**The band was very well balanced and complemented the actors. Musical Director Jessie Tabor was inspirational and creative in working with such a wide range of vocals and the highly emotional and intense score. I noted very accomplished singing by all the principals and a well rehearsed ensemble.**

**Choreography was by Director Jimmy Hooper and movement was well planned.**

**Dancers presented fast paced and intricate routines which added to the action.**

**From the beginning of this classic rock opera there was a strong sense of emotion and passion throughout. The casting was excellent with all playing to their individual strengths. Thomas Pleasant as Jesus was a superb actor who created an aura around himself. He had a phenomenal range of vocal ability and was just awe inspiring! Dressed in a white tunic and trousers he brought both pathos and intense vulnerability to the role. By contrast Michael Bardo, as Judas was dressed in black leather and had a magnificent powerful voice with a wide vocal range. A good mover on stage with well developed acting skills he was dominant and compelling. Leanne Barber, as Mary Magdalene had a fabulous clear voice, warm, sensitive and passionate and showed her anxiety over Jesus. Dressed in a striking red dress her acting was impressive.**

**Humour was introduced by an unexpected mock boxing match between Herod and Jesus! Michael Mundell-Poole was so well cast as a superbly evil Herod with a great costume and enormous stage presence. Well done!**

**Stewart Adkins was the High Priest Caiaphas. He was suitably sinister, cold and calculating in his demands for Jesus' death. He "plumbed the depths of his vocal range" (his words!) to achieve the tuneful deep bass required to lead the priests in their condemnation of Jesus.**

**Aiding and abetting Caiaphas was Annas, played by Simon Possee. As second in command in the priesthood he was very pompous and also evil and menacing. Tim Clarke took the role of Pilate in an interesting interpretation of the governor of Judea. Weak and unwilling to make a judgment he is haunted by his dreams. Two of the disciples took strong roles. Ben Rolph played a highly emotional part as Peter conflicted to the end by his betrayal and Simon, played by Jason Norton was something of a revolutionary wanting to fight for change.**

**I have seen many first class productions by this society but this challenging production is probably the best! The entire cast demonstrated a wealth of such amazing talent, with soaring and stand out vocals and great acting skills.**

**I enjoyed all the music and songs most of which are my forever favourites and all of which were performed so well..**

**My congratulations to Director and Choreographer Jimmy Hooper for his innovative ideas and creativity in bringing this version to stage.**

**Hazel Hole MBE  
Regional Representative  
NODA East  
District 11**

**© NODA CIO. All rights reserved**