



Passover and Easter...
then and now

Description

COVID-19 has changed how we musically celebrate these two major holidays

By **Byron Toben**

The number 8 (considered by the Chinese as its lucky number) is manifest at this time of year with the confluence of the **Jewish Passover** eight days (evenings of April 8-16) and the **Christian Easter Holy Week** (April 5-12).

A staple of the Jewish "Seder" diners reciting the Exodus of their ancestors from slavery in Egypt is having the youngest members of the family ask the "Four Questions" – Wherefore is this night different from all other nights?

In this year of our self-isolation, I ask myself "Wherefore is this year different from all other years ?" The answer for both holidays is the absence of crowds. However, modern technology has resulted in many performers using YouTube or Vimeo to simulate the feeling for housebound us.

In that light, look upon Then and Now entertainment clips below.

Passover

THEN

Passover songs Mash-Up (5:49)

Dozens of dancers and singers perform together in front of an office tower.

NOW

Happy Passover, a Musical Greeting From the Israel Philharmonic (3:23)

Dozens of skilled instrumentalists perform in individual slots



Easter

THEN

In Your Easter Bonnet (3:12)

Irving Berlin's *Easter Parade* features Judy Garland and Fred Astaire amid a Manhattan crowd.

NOW

Be Thou My Vision Irish Hymn (3:44)

A male singer and female pianist, appropriately at least 6 metres apart, are inspiring in a beautiful empty church.

What I particularly miss this Easter

For several years, at Théâtre Ste. Catherine, **Sandi Armstrong** staged her annual **Jesus Christ Super Band**, a clever parody of the Broadway mega-hit rock opera *Jesus Christ, Super Star*. She took off a few years to raise her children and I had hoped it would be resurrected this year until the virus intervened. Click for [my review](#) of it from 2015. Note the rare clip of its preparation on Montreal streets and in the Metro in the 3:23 minute video at the end of this review.

Finally, here is **Jesus Christ, Super Star (Overture)** also preparing, but in a desert (5:23)

Holiday Greetings to all WestmountMag readers and keep safe!

Feature image: frame from *Easter Parade* film courtesy of MGM

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Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.

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