



Easter Rocks at Théâtre Sainte Cat's

Description

Jesus Christ Superband a blast in its third reincarnation

By **Byron Toben**

Mr. Toben, who has seen this annual show twice before, plans to see it again this weekend. As it ends on Sunday, April 16, here is his earlier review from 2014.

The only problem with Christianity is that it's never really been tried.

G. Bernard Shaw, playwright and music critic

Down at the intimate **Théâtre Sainte Catherine**, the vibes were resonating with the now third annual presentation and spoof of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the rock opera that has had a concept album in 1970.



Superstar made tons of moola for composer Andrew Lloyd

Webber and lyricist Tim Rice as it later became a Broadway play with productions and tours around the world,

including even the Shakespeare festival in Stratford, Ontario in 2011.

In the current production, Théâtre Sainte Cat's stalwart Jackie of all trades, **Sandi Armstrong** – fresh from giving birth to a bouncing baby boy – is cast as Jesus himself in a white robe, and acquits her/himself well, walking and singing with confidence cloaked in serenity. Jesus Shaves!

Judas, in some sense the real protagonist of the play, is resplendent in a golden robe and powerfully portrayed by **Christian Ngabonziza “Ngabo”**. Thankfully, when he hangs himself at the end, there is a blackout before he places the noose around his neck so he does not actually die... as did a Judas actor accidentally in a Brazilian passion play a year ago.

King Herod, played by **Alain Mercieca**, is the theatre's head and inspiration, who also doubles in comic intervals as punk poet Cornelius, discussing things with **Stefan Petersen**. He prefers tablets, not the new-fangled scrolls – anachronisms reign supreme here (as they do in Superstar).

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The show opens with Jesus appearing to his disciples after a 17-year absence. (See the Internet for the lost years of Jesus, from bar mitzvah to preacher.) Groupie-type disciples gather, eager for him to resurrect his super band to counter the depression of the times: Romans with watchtowers everywhere, pot holes galore, and the price of olives is out of sight.



The energetic crowd scenes were choreographed by Théâtre

Sainte Cat's regular **Lise Vigneault**, who also writhed with the true believers chorus. Is there a performer in town who gets more into her role than her? I doubt it.

The six assembled musicians – two keyboards, two guitars, a bass and drums, abetted by an occasional sax outburst – energetically plowed through two dozen songs. I had never seen or heard *Superstar* myself, and so was amazed at how many in the audience knew or sang along to some of the most popular titles, which ranged from *Heaven On Their Minds* and *I Don't Know How To Love Him* to *Last Supper*.

The Louch brothers contributed mightily as well, **Jeff** as Pontius Pilate, with **Marc** on the set and lighting. The visuals on the giant back screen ranged from lambs and camels to market scenes, and ecumenically, Hasidic and Hindu dancers.

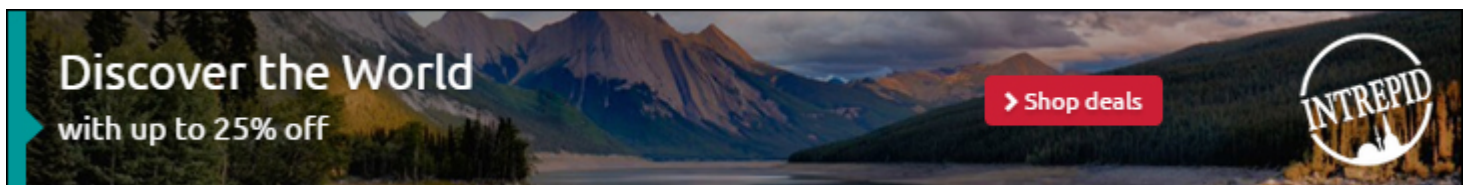
At the end, the crowd heartily joined in dance and song in a near rave mode.

Jesus Christ Superband continues at the Théâtre Sainte Catherine until Sunday, April 16.

More information and tickets at 514 284-3939 or theatresaintecatherine.com

Images: Erin Hall

Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club.



Category

1. Art | Culture
2. Review
3. Theatre



Tags

1. Byron Toben
2. improv
3. Jesus Christ Superband
4. Jesus Christ Superstar
5. music
6. play
7. spoof
8. Théâtre Sainte Catherine

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