

The body and the blood, Judas betrayal, Christ's crucifixion, and electric guitar? In Hayfield Secondary School's impressive interpretation of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, all four of these elements shone with blinding radiance. From the tortured inner conflict of Judas to the ruthless flogging of Jesus, the Hayfield Dramahawks took on Andrew Lloyd Webber's dark, rock and roll retelling of the Holy Week with maturity and, quite frankly, Passion.

*Jesus Christ Superstar* opened on Broadway in 1971, receiving five Tony nominations and much critical acclaim. Known for its nearly impossible vocal arrangement and extremely emotional characters, the 70s rock musical remains popular nearly 50 years later.

Based loosely on Christ's last week on earth, the show centers around Judas Iscariot's conflicted betrayal of Jesus. Jesus is presented as a Superstar akin to rock stars like John Lennon or Freddie Mercury, whose followers (read: fan girls) have gone out of control. This crazed fanaticism is represented well by Zach Collison and Abby Heffner's choreography and executed skillfully by a talented and energetic ensemble. In *What's the Buzz*, a buoyant crowd cheered on Jesus with religious fervor; in *Trial Before Pilate*, an angry mob shouted "crucify him!" with awesome gall.

If one is to put on *Jesus Christ Superstar*, one needs a Jesus. The role requires a sky-shattering range, powerful emotional control, and most of all, endurance. From alpha to omega, from opening to close, Max von Kolnitz embodied all of these aspects of the character with a talent rarely seen on a high school stage. Jesus counterpart, Judas (Jordan Rockhill) is equally as challenging a role. Although Judas is traditionally played by men, Rockhill made the role her own and did just as her name suggests - rocked it. Not only did she possess vocals reminiscent of Stevie Nicks, her performance of Judas' *Death* evinced deep sympathy from within me. Both leads set an example to the rest of the high school theatre community as to what it means to perform musical theatre.

Although the show focuses primarily on Jesus and Judas, the supporting and ensemble members of the cast contribute largely to a successful performance. Standout performers include Brynn Spradlin (Pontius Pilate) whose stage presence in *Trial Before Pilate* set Spradlin as an equally powerful performer to both leads. With hand wringing and pained enumeration of Jesus' whipping, Spradlin enhanced the quality of the performance. Another performer, Patricia Villarroel Narvaez (Annas), who portrayed one of the Pharisees, defined her character with powerful rock vocals and expressive acrimony.

Both lead and supporting actors were assisted by the professional, beautiful technical teams. Whether it was the precise timing of the stage manager in coordinating the flashing light and cracking sound cues for the flogging scene, the multi-leveled set which was used in its entirety, the lights that divided Judas and Jesus into red and blue, or the changing ensemble costumes from light to dark, each technical element contributed to a cohesive and well thought out thematic image throughout the performance.

Although it may be irreverent to suggest that this performance contained some form of divine power, I will do so anyways. This cast and crew put on a phenomenal performance of one of the most difficult musicals ever written and made me proud to be a part of this high school theatre community. Thank you, Hayfield Dramahawks, and congratulations!