

Godspell Or Not

My favorite Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is by far his most controversial. [Jesus Christ Superstar](#) may not be the most accurate telling of Christ's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem up to the point of his crucifixion, but the music found in this show is some of the most powerful, moving, and beautiful ever to be put on stage. Correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that the controversy originated because it indeed tells the story of Jesus as a man seen largely through the eyes of the confused, almost sympathetic Judas.

The most powerful part of the show is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying to His Father. Christ asks God why he must be the one to suffer and die on the cross and indeed what his death will mean in the big picture. Will he be more noticed then he ever was before. Would the things he said and did matter any more. By the end of the triumphant piece, he has accepted the role he must play whether or not he understands what the ultimate consequence for those he leaves behind will be. He will drink the cup of poison and allow himself to be broken and nailed to the tree... but he wants it to be done quickly or he will change his mind. All too human.

One of my favorite parts of the show is King Herod and his show stopping song. A totally flamboyant character who makes a list of demands for Jesus to perform in order to prove that he indeed is the Christ. Walk across my swimming pool, change my water into wine, etc. By the end of the vaudevillian act, Herod has become annoyed with Jesus and his unwillingness to perform the simple tasks. He condemns Jesus as just another false Messiah and not worthy to be prosecuted by him and sends him back to Pilate to be judged. One of the only comedic moments in the entire production. I cannot see it done in anyway that it would not be memorable.

"I Don't Know How To Love Him" is probably the most famous

song in the musical and is sung by Mary Magdalene. After she soothes an upset Jesus to sleep, Mary reflects on her feelings of physical love for the man. She has never known another like him and as a prostitute has known many but has never loved. She does not know how to and indeed if she should act on those feelings. Plus, if he were to say he loved her in return she would not know what to do. She is a frightened young woman.

There are so many layers to this masterpiece (and I hope that it will be the show Lord Webber is most remembered for) that it would take hours to explain and debate its significance. Controversial or not it is hard not to imagine what Jesus would be thinking or feeling if he were an ordinary 33 year old man placed in such an extraordinary position. And this comes from someone who has never seen a staged production but pictures in his minds eye while he listens to the music without the visual. It must be magnificent (as long as it is not the [1973 film adaptation](#) that I found to be horrible).

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