

JESUS CHRIST Superstar

OPAS brings Webber's classic musical to A&M

By Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

The story of Jesus Christ's final days may be one of the most famous tales ever told. In *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Andrew Lloyd Webber retells the events through the eyes of Judas Iscariot, Christ's betrayer.

The Opera and Performing Arts Society is bringing Webber's classic musical to A&M Sunday in Rudder Auditorium at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Jeffrey Cranor, an OPAS member and junior journalism major, said he hopes people will not be offended by the musical. He said Webber is not making an excuse for Judas' actions.

"*Superstar* is simply a retelling of the story," Cranor said. "Some people feel it challenges Christian beliefs. If they keep in mind that it's from Judas' viewpoint, they won't find it offensive."

Despite past controversy, OPAS members said they feel the show will attract a large audience of A&M students.

Changes have been made in the musical for the current tour. The dated aspects that embodied the late 1960s and early '70s are no longer in the musical.

Karen Allen, OPAS student chair and a senior biomedical science major, said the changes will appeal to a modern audience.

"*Superstar* was first released in the late '60s," Allen said. "The sound really dated it. Now, it's reamped. They use more computers."

Cranor said that out of this season's shows, *Superstar* will have the widest appeal.

"This is the one show we think the A&M students will enjoy," Cranor said. "This is my favorite show OPAS is bringing. This is a proven tour."

After over 1,312 performances, *Jesus* star stays focused

By Michael Landauer
THE BATTALION

Whether he is in full costume, sporting a full beard or completely bald, people are always coming up to Ted Neeley saying, "Hey, you're that guy."

"That guy" is Jesus, and Neeley has been synonymous with the symbol of the Christian faith since he first played the role in *Jesus Christ Superstar* on Broadway over 20 years ago.

"It's nice to be associated with something — better this than the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*," he said.

Since first playing the part on Broadway, Neeley has played Jesus in several variations of the musical — including the tour stopping in College Station for two shows Sunday in Rudder Theater.

Neeley, who also played Jesus in the film version of the musical, has been touring nonstop for over three years — a total of 1,312 performances.

"I've been told all my life that I'm too Texan, I sound too much like a Texan," he said, "and eventually, I realized that that's a crock."

Neeley said there are a few things that can compare to playing Jesus.

"It's like being the quarterback in the Superbowl, a pitcher in the World Series or a center in a championship basketball game," he said.

Playing Jesus in front of an audience can be a nerve-racking challenge, he said.

"Every person in the audience is a critic because everyone knows who Jesus is," he said. "Everyone has their own opinion about who Jesus is supposed to be, how he's supposed to walk, talk, look, act and everything. You're under a microscope."

He said that he sometimes feels like the crowd is looking too hard for errors in his performance.

"Maybe I should say it's like being on the field of the A&M-Texas game and being a Longhorn fan," he said. "Everyone's watching every move you make — everyone wants you to fail. And when you don't, it's pretty remarkable."

Neeley said some people may find reasons for



Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*

why he is wrong for the part but his experience has overshadowed any doubts he has in his performance. He said it is the positive energy he gets from the audience that makes performing *Superstar* such a unique experience as an actor.

"The major support from the audience is just so amazing," he said. "The applause will blow you away."

Given *Superstar's* content, Neeley said the silent moments in the theater are just as powerful as moments filled with cheers.

"When it's dead silent, that's amazing because you know they're right there with you," he said. "They're experiencing exactly what you're experiencing."

Although he has experienced the performance more times than he can remember, Neeley said each performance brings out something

new in him.

"I love every second of it," he said. "It's so overwhelming and fulfilling for me to get to do this part over and over again."

Neeley, who lives in Spring, said he is looking forward to this weekend's performances because of what he knows about Aggies.

"There's no question that the spirit of that college is going to make this show incredible," he said. "The people who choose to come see this show are gonna carry that spirit into the theater, and, therefore, it's going to be like going to a big pep rally."

Besides the show's energy, Neeley said the production has held appeal over the years because of its simple, catchy songs.

"Anybody can come in and listen to this piece and walk out singing something from it," he said. "And it happens to be the greatest story ever told."

ARMY aims to rally support for athletic teams, events

By Katharine Deaton
THE BATTALION

The "ARMY" on the maroon shirts they wear may seem to promote the U.S. Army, but they actually represent Aggies Ready to Motivate You, a student support organization for Aggie athletics.

Michael Miller, ARMY president and a senior history major, said the best way to support Aggie athletics and motivate other Aggies is through example. "We try to go to all sports events," Miller said. "We get a bunch of Aggies together, wear our shirts and go to games. Our purpose is to try to motivate other Aggies for sports."

ARMY was started in Spring 1992 by Martin Carcasson, Class of '94. Carcasson organized it to increase student interest in all athletic events, not just football, Miller said.

Aaron Metcalf, a junior biomedical science major, said ARMY still has the same goal.

"We're there to provide support for all athletic

teams and show them we're there," Metcalf said. "It's even more important to show support at G. Rollie [White Coliseum] because a group of 2,000 Aggies can make a difference, where at Kyle Field, 2,000 people might not make an impact."

"Every sport deserves the spirit of the 12th man."

— Aaron Metcalf
junior biomedical science major

Miller said ARMY has made an impact in several A&M games.

"In a game against Rice in '93, we got so riled up, the team said ARMY and other Aggies changed the outcome of the game," he said.

Miller said other teams also notice the support. He said the spirit the students show makes the Aggie teams better and intimidates the other teams.

In a game against Baylor in 1993, the Baylor women's head volleyball and basketball coach asked of the Aggies, "Could you please shut them up? They're intimidating us."

Miller said most of the appeal and fun for students in ARMY is going in large groups to games.

"It's more fun in a big group, all wearing the same shirts," he said. "People are more likely to yell loud."

Although during this time of year, people may notice slumps in spirit, Miller said the interest in games and events has increased.

"The attendance has increased," Miller said. "There's been a lot of effort by student organizations to promote the games and athletics, especially where it was hurting, like in women's sports. As the teams get better and games get more exciting, people get the word out more, and people show up."

Miller said a lot of the time, instead of a lack of spirit, there is a lack of information.

"If people know when and where a game is, they are more likely to go to it," Miller said. "We also

pass out schedules and work with the sports department to promote the games. For some, 'motivate' may just mean knowing about it. A lot of the time, Aggies just don't know about it. That's why they don't come."

ARMY shows its support in bigger ways such as road trips once a month and challenge nights, Miller said.

"In the past, we've held RHA (Residence Hall Association) challenge night and Fish Camp challenge night," Miller said. "We challenge dorms and individual fish camps to be the group with the most students at a game. The winner gets pizza."

ARMY also holds a spring banquet to honor the Aggies who go to the most games. Miller said they use a point system to determine the winners, who are honored with different awards.

Metcalf said students should try to attend athletic events out of respect for the teams.

"Each of the teams deserves the same spirit," Metcalf said. "Every sport deserves the spirit of the 12th man."

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