**Passion Re:told 2016**

Written by Neil Maddock

*A crowd of actors promenade down through Above Bar carrying some percussion and instruments. They are singing a simple refrain of a song (Build Your Kingdom Here) and inviting people to follow them to Guildhall Square where a stage awaits for the main performance. As they reach the Square they continue with the song and then conclude it when in place on the stage.*

**Scene One**

**No.1 (Judas):** Who is Jesus? Some say he was a liar. Others call him a mad man, or a lunatic. Others bow the knee and worship him as the Son of God. Each of us are faced with this question… who is Jesus and what shall we do with him? It’s a question that requires a response… whether now or at a later date… the question will remain.

*Enter No.2 & No.3 wearing priestly gowns and carrying documents/bibles/manuscripts*

**Judas :** (*in character*) Good morning to you, lovely day for it.

**No. 2:** I beg your pardon?

**Judas:**  Lovely day for it, the Passover festival and everything.

**No. 3:** Are you one of his followers?

**Judas:** Me… don’t know. I think a lot of what he says seems to make a lot of…

**No. 3:** (*in his face*) Do I look like I care?

**Judas:**  Not really, no. (*moving away*) quite the opposite.

**No. 2:** Are you still talking to us or just babbling like a mad man?

**Judas:** I’m sorry, I just don’t get why you, I mean all of you… the “religious” people are so bothered by this man any way. You all seem to have your robes in a knot over him and he seems harmless.

**No. 3:**  Harmless, you say? Tell me, are you an educated man?

*Judas just shrugs…*

**No. 3:** Thought not. If you had the knowledge we had; were aware of the history of our “religion”, you would understand why this man is a threat

**No. 2:** And why, as with all threats he needs to kept under observation so that he can be (*glances at other priest*), silenced if he gets out of hand.

**Judas:**  That seems a bit strong doesn’t it? He’s one man with a pretty shabby looking bunch of followers who look like they couldn’t fight their way out a paper bag, let alone overthrow a religion.

**No. 3:** He is to be observed and all necessary action will be taken if we feel appropriate. No why don’t you go back to your… whatever it is you do for an existence and leave us to our business.

*The priests exit. Judas turns back to audience…*

**Judas:** You see what I mean? To the established religion of the day this man Jesus was a threat. Someone who would need to be silenced if he started to speak or act out of line. He was someone who was offering a new way to live, a new way to know the Almighty God… a way that didn’t match with what others believed.

*As he is finishing a large crowd of actors arrive on stage and he shifts his focus to them…*

**Judas:**  Ah… here’s the rest of the gang, including the man of the hour, the main attraction…

*He goes to the crowd…*

**Judas:**  Jesus!

**Jesus:** Judas, brother… where have you been?

**Judas:**  Just getting acquainted with the locals, you know.

**Jesus:** Locals?

**Judas:**  The Priests… sounds like they’ve got it in for you.

**Jesus:** Careful Judas… be careful.

*There is a slight pause as the two exchange a look…*

**Jesus:**  Come, my friends we have a Passover to get ready for.

**No. 4:** Where shall we prepare the meal, Lord?

**Jesus:** Go into the City and… you will find a certain man there and you must go to him and tell him, “The teacher says, his time has come… and we will eat the Passover meal at your house tonight”. Then follow him, and that is where we shall eat.

*Jesus and the rest of the crowd move to one side leaving Judas alone. No. 1 & No. 2 enter and address Judas… Music underscore begins (sinister/scheming*

**No. 2:** So, you know him then?

**Judas:** I thought I did. I… it’s been a long day, I’m tired…

**No. 3:** Tired of your Lord’s teachings, tired of his attitudes… tired of waiting for something to happen?

**Judas:** I didn’t say that

**No. 3:** You didn’t have to

*Judas just looks at them but with a look that lets them know all they say is true…*

**No. 2:** We’re not so different after all it would seem. (*handing him a card*), you know where we are if you feel that we can be of any help to you…

**Judas:**  Judas.

**No. 2:** Judas… until next time.

*The Priests exit… Judas sings a short piece about his thoughts and feelings towards Jesus…*

**Judas :** Who is this man? That I’ve followed here

Who is he? It’s no longer clear

I’ve sat at his feet and listened well

To all of the stories he wanted to tell

Hung on his words, my heart ablaze

Battled my doubts and walked through the maze

And now, I must decide

Who is this man?

*Jesus has been watching the latter stages of the song from across the stage and now watches as Judas walks off with card in hand. They all move across the stage and begin to set up an Upper Room scene using the props on stage. No.4 & No.5 come with Bread and Wine…*

**Scene Two**

*The Upper Room scene is set using props from around the stage and Jesus and the crowd are sitting ready to share the meal… Judas enters and addresses the crowd…*

**Judas:** And so, as was tradition of that day Jesus and his band of disciples, his close friends and followers sat down to share together in the Passover meal. A tradition, dating back to the time of Moses and the escape of the Israelite people from their slavery in Egypt. A significant time in our history… and it was about to take on a new significance.

*Judas joins the crowd at the table…*

**Jesus:**  My disciples… my friends, I wanted very much to be here in Jerusalem tonight and to share this meal with you, for I believe that I will not eat it again in this life. I have already told you something of what lies before me, of what I, the Son of Man must go through to fulfil the plan of my Father. Now is the time and my friends it begins tonight.

**No. 5 (Peter):** My Lord, whatever happens we will stand with you. We have come this far and we will not…

**Jesus:** Peter… I know that your heart is to be faithful and remain loyal to me and to God. But what I must face will drive even the hardest man to turn and run.

**Peter:** No Lord, I will stay…

**Jesus:** Three times you will deny that you know me. Between this moment and when the Rooster crows at sunrise tomorrow, you will have been challenged about your time with me and each time you will deny it to save yourself from a similar fate to mine.

**Peter:** Lord…

**Jesus:** I forgive you.

**No. 7:** How is all of this going to happen? You’re not just going to hand yourself in are you?

**Jesus:** No need to. I have already been handed in to the authorities.

**No. 6:** How? What are you talking about?

**Jesus:** One of you, my disciples has made the choice to trade in loyalty for wealth and given my name and location in exchange for silver. He probably has the money on him as we speak.

*The disciples begin to mumble to each other and look at each other accusingly… Judas steps forward to address the crowd…*

**Judas:** How could he have known? I had literally just spoken to the priests not half an hour ago before coming here. All they wanted to know was where they could find him, nothing sinister just information… geography… there’s nothing wrong with that, surely. I must speak with him, I can’t leave it like this…

*He goes to Jesus…*

**Judas:**  Rabbi… am I the one that you were just talking about back there?

**Jesus:** Judas, you have come to me and said this. Why… no, there isn’t time for the why. You have things you need to do… I have things I must do.

*Judas moves to the side of the stage…*

**Judas:** It was custom as part of the Passover that we sing a hymn together… a song of praise to our God for who he is and for all that he has done for us… Yahweh, the Great I AM…

*Music begins…* ***All sing*** *(YAHWEH) accompanied by band… music continues underneath as song finishes and transitions to Last Supper…*

**Peter:** (*to audience*) No one heard what was said, or knew why Judas acted like he did. We were all too engrossed in what was happening in the room. Was Jesus admitting defeat? Was he saying that the past three years had been for nothing and that now he would be kil… that they were going to win? We continued eating, trying to celebrate the Passover but there was always that underlying sense of something bigger that was about to happen….

*Music underscores the Last Supper…*

**Jesus:** This is my body, which will be broken for you. Not only for you but for all who choose to believe in me and all who realise that I am the way, the life and the truth. Take it… eat and as you do remember me and the sacrifice that will be made to secure your freedom.

*They all eat some of the bread… Jesus beckons Judas to come and join with them. He then continues…*

**Jesus:**  This is my blood, which will be poured out to forgive you for your sins. It will cleanse and purify; it will make you right with God and it can make you holy. Take the cup and drink from it… do this always to remember me.

*Music comes to an end… Jesus moves towards Judas and places a hand on his shoulder and gives him a ‘nod’ as if to say it is time to go…*

**Jesus:**  My time has come, friends. Let’s go and visit Gethsemane, there is a garden there where we can pray and wait.

*Judas leaves…Music begins… the rest of the crowd exit removing the Upper Room set/scenery/props as they go and creating the Garden… As this happens in the background No.2 & No.3 enter and Judas enters opposite side…*

**No.2:** Well, that didn’t take long did it? You know this makes sense.

**Judas:**  Does it? Then why does it feel so wrong

**No. 3:** Feelings are overrated. The facts are staring you in the face and you know it. He is a threat to all that is right and true and he needs to be stopped, for the greater good. You… you are playing your part in history Judas, you’ll see.

**No. 2:**  So, where is he tonight?

**Judas:**  The Garden of Gethsemane.

*No.2 & No.3 exits speedily… Judas moves down stage as Jesus and disciples enter upstage…*

**Judas:** Was I right to do that? Was I right to tell them where he would be? Come on man, what are you worrying about? They’ll just warn him, maybe lock him up somewhere for a few days and then escort him out of the city. Surely that’s all this will come to… it’s not so bad… I’m not so bad… am I?

*He looks at his bag of money, clutches it and then exits… music ends*

**Scene Three**

**Jesus:**  I need to go alone. I must pray for strength for what lies ahead and I need to seek my Father. But please, stay and watch… pray for me. I need to know you are nearby.

**No. 6:** Of course my Lord, we are here for you. You do what you need to do.

*Jesus moves away slightly and they settle down to rest… music starts from off stage… Jesus sings…*

**Jesus:** O Father… I know there is a bigger plan.

I know what it is that you ask - I see.

But I am afraid, my heart is heavy

Is there another way,

O Father, take away this cup of pain before me…

So that I don’t have to drink it, for others to be free

Father, give me strength to bear this weight, please draw near to me,

I need you… Oh Father, please speak

I want to do your will, my God, achieving your great plan

O I want to do your will, but now I need the strength to stand

Not my will, but yours be done on Earth, Your will be done.

You are my Father… and I am the Son

*As Jesus sings this last line a drum beat interrupts and No. 2 & 3 and Judas enter... Jesus moves towards as they arrive and the Disciples stand with Jesus… rhythmic underscore continues during arrest…*

**Jesus:** Why do you come at night and with armed guards to arrest me? Why not today in broad daylight at the temple?

**No. 3:**  Save your questions.

*He motions to Judas who steps forward and kisses Jesus…*

**Jesus:** You betray me with a kiss?

*No.2 & No.3 grab Jesus, the other disciples start to try and protect him but in the end they flee, exiting the stage… No. 5 (Peter) stays hiding behind a box… Judas is left on stage as the rest leave…*

**Judas:** And so my story is almost over. My time with him has come to an end. Who was he to me? A teacher, the wisest I’d ever known. A leader, who inspired me to follow him. A friend… someone who trusted me. And now look what I have done to him. What have I done to him? All for money, all for a measly bit of wealth I betrayed his trust, his friendship… his love. There is nothing else left for me now. My story ends here.

*He exits… as he leaves there is a moments pause. Then Crowd 5 (Peter) steps out from his box and picks up the narration…*

**Peter:** What now? Where do we go from here? I know he said that all this stuff would happen and that he would be kil… that this would happen but what are we supposed to do? And where has everyone else gone? Surely they’re not deserting him already… after all he has done for us, taught us and shown us. After all the love he has poured into each of us, we can’t just run away and hide. I’ll not let him down… I’ll follow them; I’ll see what’s going on and what this is all about.

*He exits off… as he does so a crowd gather and Jesus is led in…*

**No.3:** This man is a trouble maker. He has come to stir up the people and to destroy our traditions and religion. Who here has heard him speak and is prepared to testify against him?

**No.4:** I have heard him say that he will destroy the very temple at the heart of the city

**No.7:**  And then he said that he would be able to rebuild it in three days!

*The crowd generally murmur and shout in agreement…*

**No.2:** A temple re-built in three days would not be built by human hands but by God himself. So, tell us Jesus… are you claiming to have authority from God? Greater authority than us?

*Jesus remains silent… his head hung low…*

**No.2:**  Are you going to answer these charges?

**No.3:**  Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Almighty God?

**Jesus:** I AM.

**No.3:** You have heard it for yourselves. Blasphemy. What other proof do we need. You have condemned yourself here today. What say all of you?

*Crowd shout ‘Guilty’, ‘Guilty’…*

**No.2:**  You will go before the Roman Governor Pilate now for sentencing. Take him away.

*They lead Jesus out and the crowd move around so as to form a different setting on stage as they do this Crowd 5 (Peter) emerges forward…*

**No.4:** Here, weren’t you one of his followers… I’m sure I saw you with him just yesterday.

**Peter:**  No, no not me, sorry.

**No.6:** Wait a minute, you are aren’t you? You even sound like him… you’re all the same aren’t you

**Peter:**  Look I said no, okay.

*As he goes to move away a young child sees him and stops him…*

**No.7:**  Please sir, you were with him weren’t you?

*Crowd 5 (Peter) shrugs and shakes his head… as he does sound the Rooster sound is heard and everyone freezes. Crowd 5 (Peter) come forward…music begins*

**Peter:** He knew me. He saw me…

he knew what I’d do

Though I could not see.

How could I do this after all he’s shown?

To deny him and leave him, condemned I stand alone.

Who is this man? That I’ve denied here

Who is he? The One who knew me

I’ve sat at his feet and listened well

To all of the stories he wanted to tell

Hung on his words, my heart ablaze

Stepped out in faith and walked on the wave

And now, I left to ask

Who is this man?

*As Peter sings this Jesus is bought on stage and they have a face to face moment… no words are exchanged but Jesus gives Peter a look of forgiveness… Peter sings…*

**Peter:** He knows me, yet he loves me.

He knew I’d betray,

Yet all I see is grace.

Who is he to me? My redeemer

The one who takes my place

*Crowd 5 (Peter) exits as Jesus is moved towards the boxes for Pilate to stand on. No.8 (Pilate) steps up onto a box…*

**No.8 (Pilate):** And what exactly do you have for me this time?

**No.3:**  Governor, we have here a blasphemer.

**Pilate:** A matter of religion, Priest that I have no interest in. Take him away and deal with it yourself will you.

**No.2:** We come seeking the death penalty, Governor. That is why we trouble you with the matter.

**Pilate:** Death? For speaking out of line and saying the wrong things to the wrong people? You want to kill the man for that?

**No.2:** It is more than that Governor, and you know it. He has threatened the very foundations of our belief system and claimed that he has been sent from the Almighty God that we serve. He is here to uproot not only our religion but the very Roman Empire that you serve.

**No.3:** Think how that would look to Caesar, if *you* let it happen right here in Jerusalem.

**Pilate:**  Bring him to me, I’ll at least question him myself before signing his life away.

*Jesus is led to one side with No.8 (Pilate)…*

**Pilate:**  So, you’re a king are you? The King of the Jews?

*Jesus remains silent…*

**Pilate:** Silence. Huh, these priests suggest you’ve been anything but silent recently, stirring up a storm with your words and actions.

*Jesus remains silent…*

**Pilate:**  I don’t have the time or the interest for this. Are you the King of the Jews?

**Jesus:**  You have said that I am.

**Pilate:** That’s it? That’s your defence? You do realise you’re talking with the man who has the power over your life right now.

**Jesus:** You would have no power over me at all if it wasn’t given to you from my Father above. Go ahead, do what you need to do

*Pilate moves back to the Priests…*

**Pilate** This man is innocent in my view and does not deserve to die. Therefore I suggest he is released.

**No.3:** No. That is not good enough. This man is no friend to you, no friend to Rome and definitely no friend to Caesar. He has declared himself King… that will only lead to trouble for all of us. You must act now to stop this. It’s in your hands.

**Pilate:** (*thoughtful pause*) The people will decide. It is tradition during your Passover that I release a prisoner. So I will present Jesus along with some criminal we’re currently holding and they can decide who they want to see go free.

**No.2:**  Very well.

*The Priests gather the crowd together in the background as No.8 (Pilate) comes forward to address the crowd…*

**Pilate:** He seemed like an ordinary man. Nothing special to look at; didn’t look like royalty, a new king arriving with all the pomp and ceremony. I’d heard his name mentioned around town and now here he is in front of me and yet he says very little. I have to admire his strength, his conviction… even if I don’t understand it. His face is set like flint and he is resolute about what seems to be his destiny. Many would be begging for their lives, but not him… silent. Not like the crowds and their leaders… I offer them the chance to set him free and instead they cry…

*The crowd call out ‘Crucify him’, ‘Crucify him’, ‘Crucify Him’… as they do a rhythmic underscore begins…*

**Pilate:** I have no choice but to give them their wish. It is no longer in my hands… my hands now stained with the blood of a seemingly innocent man.

*A crowd member brings forward a bowl of water…*

**Pilate:** Today, I wash my hands of this man’s blood. His death is your wish, not mine. Take him away… prepare him for crucifixion.

*Jesus is led away and the crowd disperse, leaving No.8 (Pilate) alone on stage to address the audience…*

**Pilate:** And that was it. He left here a condemned man… his fate sealed. His voice would be silenced and there would be no more talk of a new king or of the promised Messiah. I had done my duty for the good of the people, for the good of Rome. And yet, I was troubled… I found no basis for a charge against him, he was innocent in my sight; maybe he even was who he said he was. Maybe he had been sent by the Almighty God to usher in a new way to believe. It doesn’t matter now though, does it? The fire is quenched… it would take a miracle for anything good to come from this.

*He exits… as he does so music begins for a song leading into the crucifixion… crowd begin to enter and prepare the stage for the scene, eventually Jesus is led in and taken to the cross (scaffolding) and placed there… Mary comes forward and addresses the crowd…*

**Scene Four**

*No.9 (Mary) addresses the audience as the crucifixion is set behind her… gentle music underscore… builds as the crucifixion take place…*

**Mary:** We knew, Joseph and I right from the beginning that he wouldn’t lead an ordinary life… how could he with the beginning he had. The visitors, the gifts… the words spoken over him and the prophecies. But so many years have passed and we’ve treated him as, well just as our little boy… our son. That’s why this is so painful, so hard to accept that this is happening to my Jesus. I knew he was sent by God to be the Messiah, the one who would save the people from their sin and lead them back to Almighty God… but how is this going to achieve that. How is this going to achieve anything? He is my son, my precious son.

**No.7:** Here hangs Jesus of Nazareth – a Blasphemer against the established religion. You are hereby sentenced to death by crucifixion, as required by Jewish law.

*He is ‘hammered’ to the cross…*

**Jesus:**  Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.

*Members of the crowd have come to the front and begin to deliver lines to the audience…*

**No.2:**  He saved others, so now let’s see if he can save himself

**No.4:** Destroy the temple he said he would… rebuild it in three days. That’s what he said. I don’t see that happening now.

**No.7:**  Let’s see if his God will save him

**Peter:** I’m so sorry Lord. I didn’t mean to abandon you, I wanted to be there for you and stand with you… but I, I was afraid. Afraid what it would mean for me… afraid that I might end up there with you. I didn’t want to deny you… Lord, I love you.

**Mary:** My son… he was a good boy. A great man… he doesn’t deserve this. This is for thieves, murderers, traitors… dirty sinners. But he… he was spotless, a perfect spotless lamb that is now being sacrificed. And for what? (*Pause, then realisation*) Sacrificed for me… sacrificed for me, for us. Taking our place so that we can be free from the filth of shame and guilt. Huh, it’s all for me… it’s all for you.

**Jesus:** My God. My God… why have you abandoned me. Why? And so this is it… my work here is now done. Into your hands I commit my spirit. It is finished.

**Mary:** This was God’s plan… all along. I remember now… in the temple when he was born the old man… (*remembering*) Simeon… I have seen your salvation, which has been prepared for all people. This is the salvation… the moment… this is how he redeems the lost… how he restores the broken. This is how he forgives the sinner, offers us new life and a hope for our future. This is the answer.

*She freezes down stage looking up at Jesus on the cross.*

*A refrain of ‘Who is this Man’ sung by Mary, and a number of the cast to conclude*

**Mary** *-* Who is this man? My son, and my Lord,

 Who is he? Who dies that I be restored?

**Peter** *-* Son of God, oh surely it’s true!

 Lord what have we done here, this man was from you!

**All** *-* Stood at his cross, our hearts ablaze

 We put him there, the ones he came to save!

 And now, the world must ask,

 Who is this man?

 Who is this man?

**The End**