

Musical production of "Jesus the Christ" celebrates Easter story in outdoor, community event for 9 shows in March



*For more than 80 years, the story of "Jesus the Christ" has been presented on the north lawn of the Mesa Temple, 455 E. Main St., in downtown Mesa. The finale scene features the actor portraying the resurrected Christ being lifted high about the 4-story stage. (Photo/**Richard Webb/MesaTemple.org**)*

By Jill Adair | Digital Free Press

his Easter seas "Jesus the Christ," (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7PHWnlbD94>) an outdoor musical dramatization of the greatest story ever

Told.

Through music, dance, drama and a cast of more than 450 performing on a massive stage, **"Mesa Easter Pageant: Jesus the Christ"** depicts the powerful and poignant moments of the life of Jesus Christ. Witness awe-inspiring, miraculous events surrounding Jesus' life as recorded in the New Testament, including: His humble birth, His healing miracles, His walk on the raging Sea of Galilee, His raising the dead, His crucifixion on the cross, and His glorious resurrection.

"What you see on stage is the result of hundreds of cast members giving many hours to express their love and gratitude for the Redeemer of the world," says Creative Director Jenee Prince. "Individuals and families serve together over several weeks to present this beautiful Easter message. We often refer to our cast members as "storytellers" and it truly is a beautiful process to watch them recreate the most intimate moments of the Savior's life on a grand scale."

The soundtrack for "Jesus the Christ: The Mesa Easter Pageant" was composed and produced by Rob Gardner and performed by the London Symphony Orchestra and Spire Chorus. The soundtrack is available for free listening on all major streaming platforms.

This free 70-minute program — that also features live animals and special effects — runs Wednesday, March 20, through Saturday, March 23, and Tuesday, March 26, through Saturday, March 30. Each evening's performance begins at 8 p.m. on the north lawn of the Mesa Arizona Temple, 455 E. Main St. in downtown Mesa.

It is all made possible by thousands of volunteers.

2024 Biofreeze USA Pickleball National Championships coming to Mesa



2024 USA Pickleball National Championships at Arizona Athletic Grounds Staff Reports | Digital Free Press USA



Pickleball, the National Governing Body for pickleball in the U.S., has named Mesa as the location for the 2024 Biofreeze USA Pickleball National Championships, the premier tournament in the sport of pickleball. Pickleball Nationals will be hosted at the ... Continue reading






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“Thousands of volunteer hours go into producing the Mesa Easter Pageant,” says Pageant Committee Chair Matt Riggs. “Visitors will be amazed by the cast of more than 450 volunteers who practice for weeks leading up to the pageant. What visitors will not see are the committees of volunteers who function separately behind the scenes and then bring their efforts into a beautifully unified effort to produce the pageant.”

The Easter celebration (<https://arizonadigitalfreepress.com/celebrate-at-2023-mesa-easter-pageant/>) has been a community holiday tradition in downtown Mesa since 1938, when the first gathering began as an Easter sunrise service. To accommodate ever growing crowds, the production moved to multiple evenings beginning in 1977. More than 100,000 people are expected to attend the nine shows this year.

Other important info:

- No tickets are necessary.
- Come early to sit on some of the 9,200 chairs provided. Attendees are encouraged to attend during the first week of performances to avoid the generally larger crowds closer to Easter weekend.
- Parking is limited. Attendees are encouraged to use Valley Metro Light Rail  which has a stop at Mesa Drive/Main Street, within a short walking distance of the venue.
- 400 headsets will be available at each performance to provide Spanish translation. 
- ASL is offered during the first week of performances only in the front non  seating area.
- Saving seats policy: A person must be present to save seats and should not save more than four seats. Seats may not be saved at 7:30 p.m. Unattended items will be removed (and taken to the Visitors' Center, 455 E. Main St.).





For more info, please visit www.MesaTemple.org/easter. (<https://mesatemple.org/easter/>)



*The story of "Jesus the Christ" is presented by more than 450 costumed cast members with the addition of live animals and special effects. Admission is free. (Photo/**Kary Ann Hoopes/MesaTemple.org**)*



10 Interesting Facts about the Mesa Easter Pageant:

- The production actually started in 1938 as a Sunrise Service at the Mesa Arizona Temple. 
- The sunrise service continued for nearly 30 years as a choral presentation featuring sacred music that was linked with a brief narration, focusing on the life of Jesus Christ. In 1963 (its 25 anniversary), a local TV station began broadcasting the service on Easter morning. 
- In 1966, Irwin Phelps, who was the drama teacher at Mesa Community College, became the director and had a vision of a more dramatic production. He wrote a new script, depicting the story of Jesus with a costumed cast posed in tableaux (motionless actors that recreated iconic paintings of Christ) atop a makeshift stage made of cotton trailers. This production debuted in 1967 and was called an Easter Pageant, which, by one definition, means an outdoor performance of a historical scene. 
- From 1938 to 2018, there was only one year that it wasn't held: 1975. Why? Because the open house for the temple's first renovation was being held that spring. 
- In 1977, the one-day sunrise service blossomed into a two-evening event prior to Easter that featured hundreds involved in the cast and crew, multiple stages, theatrical lighting, live animals and a new soundtrack recording.
- So successful were the evening performances in 1977 that pageant officials

expanded 1978’s performances to four evenings prior to Easter. This time a total of 40,000 people attended.

- In 1996, the production, which ran for six nights that year, was presented entirely in Spanish one of the evenings. The Spanish soundtrack had been a work in progress over several years—first the narration and then the lyrics were translated—and the finished program was received with reverence and appreciation.
- Attendance generally tops 100,000 people during the two weeks of performances prior to Easter. This year, it is presented nine times.
- Most recently, the pageant script and score were rewritten under the direction of local composer Rob Gardner, whose recent work includes “Lamb of God: The Concert Film.” The pageant script comes almost entirely from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. The music was recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra in January 2022, followed by the singing voices and narration recorded locally.
- “Jesus the Christ” is not a passion play focusing on the crucifixion, rather, it is a heartfelt celebration of the life, teachings and resurrection of the Savior, and invites all to come unto Him and partake of the “good news” that is His gospel.



JESUS THE
CHRIST
MESA EASTER PAGEANT

MARCH
20-23, 26-30
Starts at 8 p.m.

A free outdoor musical dramatization
of the greatest story ever told

MesaTemple.org #GreatestStory

Learn About the Author

