

The traditional passion play, now with less antisemitism

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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This summer, a small Bavarian town's life is consumed by community theater. It's time again for the Oberammergau Passion Play, produced once a decade since the 17th century. The current production, a 20-week run that began in May, involves half of Oberammergau's 5,000 residents. [The play's Web site](#) offers photos, music and video.

A centuries-old passion play produced in Germany, hmm? So how do the Jews come off in this particular telling?

Turns out not all that badly, at least not in this year's revision. The Council of Centers on Jewish Christian Relations reviewed the script and [offers](#) these "positive impressions":

- First-century Jewish culture is shown to be "variegated and vibrant."
- The character of Jesus is unambiguously Jewish.
- There is some "nuance" in the treatment of Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate.

But CCJR has some "negative impressions" as well:

- The inclusion of Old Testament scenes sometimes "recalls perennial demeaning depictions of Judaism."
- The Temple priesthood's concern for doctrinal purity is exaggerated, "resulting in Jesus anachronistically being called 'heretic' and 'apostate.'"
- Caiaphas and Annas "are unnecessarily and baselessly portrayed as fanatics driven to see Jesus crucified."

Read the whole report [here](#). (Via [Gary Stern](#).)