

**Jethro Tull**  
**A Passion Play**  
**Analysis**  
by Frank Mathie

A Passion Play was released to almost unanimous critical disapproval in 1973 and remains, even amongst the most avid Tull fans, the subject of great controversy. Many find it musically and lyrically unfathomable, others find it a challenging, but rewarding work. Basically, I think you either love it or hate it!! Personally I love it!

What follows is my personal interpretation of "A Passion Play"; what you see below is what I currently see and feel when I listen to this album. I do not pretend that it was what Ian meant when he wrote it, or what you might hear when you listen to it.

There is also some information after the lyrics, on the history of traditional Passion Plays and at the end, for anyone who has never seen it, I have typed out the text from the Programme which was included in the original vinyl album release and the ULTRADISC II (The Mobile Fidelity) remaster version (see the end of the analysis). This is to be read with the same pinch of salt you would read the newspaper, The St. Cleve Chronicle, which accompanied Thick as A Brick!!

It is fairly well known amongst Tull fans that "A Passion Play" was created out of the aftermath of the abortive "Chateau D'Isaster" sessions in 1973. These sessions, which were later to appear on the 1993 release "Nightcap" seem to deal with two main themes. Firstly there is Ian's slant on the acceptability of aggression in business which he achieves by portraying business people as various animals. Secondly, he deals with the subject of Free will Vs Pre-Destiny in human existence.. As part of this thread, he likens life to a play, with God as the Director. Each of us goes on stage without a script or rehearsal, to improvise our story as best we can.

For various reason, these recordings were abandoned, but the twin themes were refined and developed, later to appear as separate albums, A Passion Play and War Child.

A Passion Play deals with the death, afterlife and resurrection of its central character, Ronnie Pilgrim

In the programme it is presented as being a play in four Acts, these being

Act I: Ronnie Pilgrims Funeral:

A winters morning in the cemetery

Act II: The Memory Bank: a small but comfortable theatre with a cinema screen - the next morning

Interval: "The Story of the Hare who lost his Spectacles"

Act III: The business office of G. Oddie and Son - two days later

Act IV: Magus Perdé's drawing room at midnight

I believe it to be a mistake to take the contents of the "Programme" too literally, particularly the list of characters and their order of appearance as I believe it was produced for effect, to be part of the packaging, rather than a true representation of the work. Similarly, I feel that the ballerina on the cover has little or nothing at all to do with the story, other than the fact that on the front she is dead, and on the back she is alive (a fairly tenuous connection but there you go)

Anyway, on with the show.....

## **A Passion Play**

### **Act I**

**>"Do you still see me even here?"**

Off to a flying start!!!!

The first line and I'm confused!! I have never been exactly sure as to who is being asked this initial question. The choices I have are

1. The young man is addressing his friends who have gathered to attend his funeral, or
2. Is he addressing God and saying " Is there nowhere I can go and be unseen by you? I favour the latter, mainly because of the use of the words "still" and "even", but I remain to be convinced :-}

**>(The silver cord lies on the ground.)**

**>"And so I'm dead", the young man said --- over the hill**

**>(not a wish away).**

A number of cultures share the belief that our physical body is connected to an astral body by a silver cord, and that death occurs if (or when) this cord is severed. The common belief is that our dreams are the half remembered activities of the astral body which take place whilst the physical body sleeps.

In this scene Ronnie looks down to see the severed cord lying on the ground and the realization dawns on him. He is dead, he is over the hill, and his previous existence is beyond him (more than a wish away). A significant aspect to the use of the silver cord, is the Ian makes it clear that we are not dealing with an exclusively Christian view of the afterlife, the implication being that no single religion has all the answers.

**>My friends (as one) all stand aligned although their taxis came too late.**

This for me is the first indication that the other theme from the Chateau tapes was carried into APP. This line and later lyrics in the work lead me to see Ronnie as a leading light in the rat race who died prematurely. His supposed "friends" all showed up late for his funeral, all using the same excuse that their taxis were late. If nothing else, this shows their lack of respect for him.

**>There was a rush along the Fulham Road.**

**>There was a hush in the Passion Play.**

This phrase is varied throughout, and is used as an indicator of a scene closing. Here I see the rush depicting his friends hurried departure from the scene, getting away as soon as they can and the hush being Ronnie left alone in the cemetery, his life now finally over.

(For anyone interested, Fulham Road is a longish street which runs from the Putney Bridge to the South Kensington areas of London, the Maison Rouge studio, at which Tull recorded being located at 2 Wansdowne Place, Fulham.)

**>Such a sense of glowing in the aftermath /ripe with rich attainments**

**>all imagined / sad misdeeds in disarray**

**>the sore thumb screams aloud, echoing out of the Passion Play.**

**>All the old familiar choruses come crowding in a different key:**

**>Melodies decaying in sweet dissonance.**

At this point, recollections of his life crash in on Ronnie like a wave. He now sees his life from the new perspective (a different key)which his after life state has given him. He sees his achievements (rich attainments)and his actions for what they really are, and the realization of what he was makes him howl in anguish as he sees all he held to be true exposed as worthless. Ronnie has been ruthlessly shown the honest measure of his worth! Additionally, Ronnie was unable to make his "quietus", whereby a dying person could make atonement and achieve penance by recalling and repenting ones every sin. The sudden nature of his death meant Ronnie was unable to do this, and as a result his sins are left in disarray.

**>There was a rush along the Fulham Road, into the Ever-passion Play.**

Ronnie is ripped from this last earthly scene into the after life.

**>And who comes here to wish me well?**

**>A sweetly-scented angel fell.**

**>She laid her head upon my disbelief and bathed me with her ever-smile.**

Ronnie stands alone in the afterlife and is still suffering the shock from his

new self awareness. This state is not unique to our hero, as all newly departed souls would suffer the same sensory overload, and so what happens ? An angel arrives to administer an almost spiritual anaesthetic to soothe his shock and to make him ready for the ordeal to come. The use of the word "scented" (repeated later on as "scented cathedral") suggests purity and wholesomeness.

**>And with a howl across the sand I go escorted by a band of gentlemen**

**>in leather bound -- NO-ONE (but someone to be found).**

Almost as suddenly as the Angel arrives, Ronnie is snatched from her by a group of "gentlemen". He is bound, and taken into limbo to await his fate.

As a soul in limbo Ronnie has no status

(He is no-one) and his future has yet to be decided (someone to be found)

## **Act II**

**>All along the icy wastes there are faces smiling in the gloom.**

This is quite a vivid image for me. Ronnie is being escorted towards a film theatre like a movie star on Academy Awards night, only instead of a glorious Spring evening with cameras flashing and crowds of excited fans, it is silent and in semi-darkness and his path is lined by barely visible faces peering at him expectantly through the gloom. Spooky!!!

**>Roll up roll down,**

**>Feeling unwound? -- step into the viewing room.**

The narration then shifts from Ronnie, to the Cinemas Projectionist who invites Ronnie in and asks if he is relaxed

**>The cameras were all around.**

**>We've got you taped -- you're in the play.**

**>Here's your I. D.**

**>(Ideal for identifying one and all.)**

Ronnie is told that every moment of his life has been recorded on tape.

The Projectionist finds Ronnie's particular tape and tells him that his life is about to be re-shown. (normally when people returns from comma or any

death-like experience, they tell they have seen their lives as a movie)

**>Invest your life in the memory bank -- ours the interest and we  
>thank you.**

Ronnie is given a clue as to the purpose of this recording. His life is being compared to a bank account with his actions, good or bad keep him in credit or put him overdrawn, with the obvious connotations of where he is bound for if his account end up finally overdrawn. The pun on the word "interest" delivers a message that it is the duty of the projectionist and his staff to examine his life and balance the account. It is also implied that any form of profit he makes is passed on to them in some way. They are therefore interested in his life as it earns them interest!!. The tone in Ian's voice as he delivers the words "and we thank you" tell us that they didn't earn much from Ronnie :o)

**>The ice-cream lady wet her drawers, to see you in the passion play.**

A lovely image. Ronnie is told that his life was so ridiculous to behold that even the lady who sells the ice -cream and soft drinks during the interval, laughed so hard that she wet her pants! (Here I ever thought the movie was depreciating him so much that it was interesting for the other "human" beings in the room)

The Projectionist then begins to recount some of the details of Ronnie's life, almost as though he is reading the cover notes from a video cassette case.

**>take the prize for instant pleasure**

We are told that Ronnie is way ahead of his peers in terms of being selfish and self indulgent.

**>captain of the cricket team**

**> public speaking in all weathers**

**>a knighthood from a queen.**

He is revealed as a success in all walks of life, gaining public and official recognition for his business and public actions.

**>All your best friends' telephones never cooled from the heat of your**

hand.

**>There's / a line in a front-page story / 13 horses that also-ran.**

These lines suggest to me that Ronnie was never reluctant to touch his friends for favours and information, but that he rarely repaid them, and frequently used the information he gained to profit at their expense.

**>Climb in your old umbrella.**

**>Does it have a nasty tear in the dome?**

**>But / the rain only gets in sometimes and / the sun never leaves you alone.**

I take the umbrella to be a metaphor for Ronnie's self perception, which he used in life as a defense mechanism to shield himself from his own true personality. He is being asked if the insights being provided have made a hole in his protective layer through which the reality of his true self can be viewed and through which the real world leaks in. I am probably totally wide of the mark, but I have always felt that the line "the sun never leaves you alone" refers to the Sun newspaper, published in the U. K. , which has something of a well earned reputation as a sensationalist scandalsoot, and is probably most well known for its "Page Three Girls" (the topless models it used to feature on the third page) It is the type of journal that is renowned for publishing whatever scandal it can find on public figures, often pursuing them beyond the bounds of decency to get a "story".

Ronnie, in life, would be a natural target for it's attention. As I say, I'm probably wrong, but I hear the line and I get that image every time. One of Ian's many talents (I had never thought this sun would be The Sun, but now that you said, it makes a lot of sense, so I think you can remove the "I'm probably wrong")

**>Lover of the black and white -- it's your first night.**

**>The Passion Play / goes all the way / spoils your insight.**

The Projectionist tells Ronnie that they know that he is/was a man with strong views and definite opinions, sure in his knowledge, but that they know that he is growing nervous about his life being replayed and made

public(he is like an actor with first night nerves). He is warned that there is worse to come and that what he will see will shatter his illusions about himself and his life.

**>Tell me / how the baby's made / how the lady's laid / why the old  
>dog howls in sadness.**

Ronnie is taunted about what he knows about life(how the baby's made, the lady's laid) and death

(there is a belief in British folklore that a dog will howl at the moment of its masters death). These questions are thrown rapidly at him. but before he can answer, the projectionist relates the following

**>And your little sister's immaculate virginity wings away on the bony  
>shoulders of a young horse named George who stole surreptitiously  
>into her geography revision.**

**>(The examining body examined her body.)**

This sordid and previously unknown episode is related, almost contemptuously by the Projectionist, as if to prove how much he knows and how little Ronnie really knows.

**>Actor of the low-high Q, let's hear your view.**

**>Peek at the lines upon your sleeves since your memory won't do.**

**>Tell me / how the baby's graded / how the lady's faded / why the old  
dogs**

**>howl with madness.**

Ronnie's humiliation continues, as the Projectionist continues to question how little Ronnie knows. His remark that Ronnie should peek at the lines on his sleeve are a further attack on his honesty and that they are reminding him of his lack of scruples in life.

**>All of this and some of that's the only way to skin the cat.**

Ronnie's response to the taunts and questions is to tell the Projectionist " Yes I did all that you said, and I would do more of the same because life is hard and that's the only way to get through it.

**>And now you've lost a skin or two -- you're for us and we for you.**

**>The dressing room is right behind**

The Projectionist tells Ronnie that he has passed his ordeal, that for him the play is over, and that his place of rest (the dressing room) is at hand.

**>We've got you taped -- you're in the play.**

The expression "We've got you taped" has a double meaning here. Apart from the obvious statement that his life has been recorded, it is also a common English slang term. To "have someone taped" means to have the measure of them, to be wise to them and their ways.

**>How does it feel to be in the play?**

**>How does it feel to play the play?**

**>How does it feel to be the play?**

The Projectionist is asking these questions, not to taunt Ronnie. There is almost a sense of envy about them, as if they want Ronnie to tell them about what it is like to be alive, something they have not experienced and cannot comprehend. (Here I think he's being asked how does it feel to be exposed, but I think that the point you mentioned is also very relevant. That was what he did, he is now retired from living)

**>Man of passion rise again, we won't cross you out -- for we do love  
>you like a son -- of that there's no doubt.**

By the use of the phrase " Man of Passion" which is clearly a reference to Christ, as well as the use of the word "cross",the projectionist is acknowledging that Ronnie has passed through purgatory, and that his suffering is now over. These lines, and the invitation to rise again indicate that his admission to heaven is now assured. (That's another reason why I think the Projectionist is God, because the use of the word son and he is doing to Ronnie what he did to Christ, but I think when he says Man of Passion is probably because Ronnie is up to stand for himself)

**>Tell us / is it you who are here for our good cheer?**

**>Or / are we here / for the glory / for the story / for the gory  
satisfaction**

**>of telling you how absolutely awful you really are?**

This parting shot by the projectionist begs the question as to who's end is served by this process. (Here I think it's Ronnie standing up for himself, questioning God and then the surprise of everybody)

**>There was / a rush along the Fulham Road.**

**>There was / a hush in the Passion Play.**

Ronnie moves on from Purgatory to the next stage of his journey

### **Interval**

This marks the end of the second Act and the start of the interval. It was (is) traditional during the performance of Passion Plays, to insert a lighter hearted, but moralistic, piece between Acts. The plays themselves could last up to three days, and these pieces were meant to lighten the mood.

The story is in the form of a fable (a short moral work in which the characters are usually animals) and is essentially a lesson to us about interfering in the business of others. Hare loses his spectacles, and all the other animals, who seem to think they know what's best for him, offer various (useless) solutions to his predicament. At the end, hare wonders what all the fuss is about, because after all he has a spare pair.

The piece contains a number of puns, which I have underlined. They are far more obvious when you hear John Evan actually reciting the work.

### **The Story Of The Hare Who Lost His Spectacles**

**>This is the story of the hare who lost his spectacles.**

**>Owl loved to rest quietly whilst no one was watching. Sitting on a**

**>fence one day, he was surprised when suddenly a kangaroo ran close**

**>by.**

**>Now this may not seem strange, but when Owl overheard Kangaroo whisper**

**>to no one in particular, "The hare has lost his spectacles," well, he**

**>began to wonder.**

**>Presently, the moon appeared from behind a cloud and there, lying on**

>the grass was hare. In the stream that flowed by the grass -- a  
>newt. And sitting astride a twig of a bush -- a bee.  
>Ostensibly motionless, the hare was trembling with excitement, for  
>without his spectacles he was completely helpless. Where were his  
>spectacles? Could someone have stolen them? Had he mislaid  
them? What  
>was he to do?  
>Bee wanted to help, and thinking he had the answer *began*: "You  
>probably ate them thinking they were a carrot. "  
>"No!" interrupted Owl, who was wise. "I have good eye-sight,  
insight,  
>and foresight. How could an intelligent hare make such a silly  
>mistake?" But all this time, Owl had been sitting on the fence,  
>scowling!  
>Kangaroo were hopping mad at this sort of talk. She thought herself  
>far superior in intelligence to the others. She was their leader;  
>their guru. She had the answer: "Hare, you must go in search of the  
>optician. "  
>But then she realised that Hare was completely helpless without his  
>spectacles. And so, Kangaroo loudly proclaimed, "I can't send Hare  
in  
>search of anything!"  
>"You *can guru*, you can!" shouted Newt. "You can send him with  
Owl. "  
>But Owl had gone to sleep. Newt *knew too much* to be stopped by  
so  
>small a problem -- "You can take him in your pouch. " But alas, Hare  
>was much too big to fit into Kangaroo's pouch.  
>All this time, it had been quite plain to hare that the others knew  
>nothing about spectacles.  
>As for all their tempting ideas, well Hare didn't care.

**>The lost spectacles were his own affair.**

**>And after all, Hare did have a spare a-pair.**

**>A-pair.**

**Act III**

**THE END**

**>We sleep by the ever-bright hole in the door / eat in the corner / talk  
to the**

**>floor -- cheating the spiders who come to say "Please",**

**>(politely). They bend at the knees.**

**>Well, I'll go to the foot of our stairs.**

The Act opens with Ronnie's observations on life in heaven, and it is not what he expected.

The lines give me an image of a vast barrack like room, full of Army style, metal frame beds. The room is dominated at one end by a huge wooden door, pillars either side, and with a large key hole.

Were they allowed through it, the door would lead to the presence of God and the heavenly hosts. The light emitted by this divine gathering beams through the keyhole and is the light by which the occupants are expected to sleep.

The occupants of the barracks are highly regimented, with none of the freedom Ronnie was expecting.

They have to eat their meals in the barrack corner, and must keep their heads bowed when they speak (i. e. they talk to the floor.) Even the behaviour of the insects has been rendered polite and inoffensive.

The line " Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs" is an expression used in Lancashire in the North of England, to express surprise or amazement It is similar to "Well I'll be a monkeys Uncle"

**>Old gentlemen talk / of when they were young / of ladies**

**>lost and erring sons.**

**>Lace-covered dandies revel (with friends) pure as the truth --**

**>tied at both ends.**

**>Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs.**

Ronnie expresses surprise at how boring the after life is, with little to do but sit around and reminisce about the past.

**>Scented cathedral -- spire pointed down.**

**>We pray for souls in Kentish Town.**

I remember reading that a church spire was pointed because it was supposed to channel the prayers of the congregation upward towards heaven. The line suggests that the churches in heaven would logically (?) have their spires pointing earthwards as the congregations pray for the souls on earth. It also suggests to me that each section of heaven has its own bit of earth to pray for, Ronnie's being the area of London known as Kentish Town.

An alternative theory I remember seeing (but I can't remember where) is that the Kentish town refers to Canterbury in the county of Kent, which is the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, ordained head of the Church of England

**>A delicate hush -- the gods / floating by / wishing us well --**

**>pie in the sky.**

This strengthens the image of an indolent and inert place, and again provides a hint that heaven is not just limited to Christianity. There is more than one god here, lesser ones (denoted by the small case "g") float by offering their patronising best wishes to the masses.

**>God of ages / Lord of Time -- mine is the right to be wrong.**

**>Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs.**

Ronnie addresses God angrily, telling him he has a right to more than this boring existence, he has a right to be human and experience success and failure

**>Jack rabbit mister spawn a new breed of love-hungry pilgrims**

**>(no bodies to feed).**

He continues his irreverent speech, likening God to a jack rabbit in the way he sires new life. He tells God that he should produce a race who are only

interested in the spiritual, and are free from all earthly appetites. That way he would be sure of producing souls who found heaven acceptable, as it is currently no place for a real person.

**>Show me a good man and I'll show you the door.**

Ronnie tells God he is sick of Saints and piety, and says the equivalent of "if I see another goody goody I'll scream!!

**>The last hymn is sung and the devil cries "More."**

He points out the futility of singing Gods praises, as even Lucifer is not daunted by them and asks to hear more.

**>Well, I'm all for leaving and that being done, I've put in a request**

**>to take up my turn in that forsaken paradise that calls itself "Hell" --**

**>Where no-one has nothing and nothing is**

Ronnie tells God he has had enough of heaven and has decided to try Hell

**>well meaning fool, pick up thy bed and rise up from your gloom**

**(smiling).**

**>Give me your hate and do as the loving heathen do.**

Tired of this tirade, God interrupts Ronnie. Almost sympathetically, he tells Ronnie to cheerfully pack his belongings (paraphrasing Christ's words when he healed the lame beggar "Take up thy bed and walk", Mark Chapter 2 vs 1 to 13). He accepts Ronnie has no great love for him, and so bids him do what the promiscuous non-believers do, and Go to Hell!!

**>Colors I've none -- dark or light, red, white or blue.**

Ronnie is transported to hell, where Lucifer introduces himself. His opening remark is to tell Ronnie that he owes allegiance to no-one, neither to good or evil (dark or light) nor to any artificially created state,(the red, white and blue representing a nations flag)

**>Cold is my touch (freezing).**

**>Summoned by name -- I am the overseer over you.**

**>Given this command to watch o'er our miserable sphere.**

**>Fallen from grace / called on to bring sun or rain.**

**>Occasional corn from my oversight grew.**

**>Fell with mine angels from a far better place, offering services for  
>the saving of face.**

He goes on to outline his history. He is the Archangel who fell from Gods grace, and that as punishment, was cast down from heaven and was charged to oversee the mortal world. The line "offering services for the saving of face" suggests that part of Lucifer's duty involves being a ready scapegoat for mankind to use when they do wrong. Easier to save face and say "the Devil made me do it " than admit your own failings.

**>Now you're here, you may as well admire all whom living has retired  
>from the benign reconciliation.**

Ronnie is told that he is not the only person who came to hell because they could not cope with heavens sterility compared to the feeling and joy of being alive.

**>Legends were born surrounding mysterious lights seen in the sky  
>(flashing).**

**>I just / lit a fag then / took my leave in the blink of an eye.**

Lucifer boasts to Ronnie that he is so powerful that an action of his as simple as lighting a cigarette achieves of power and status beyond human comprehension.

**>Passionate play -- join round the maypole in dance (primitive  
>rite) (wrongly).**

**>Summoned by name / I am the overseer / over you.**

He tells Ronnie what he must do in Hell. It is constant action and activity, exactly the opposite of heaven, but to Ronnie, equally unattractive!!

**>Flee the icy Lucifer.**

**>Oh he's an awful fellow!**

**>What a mistake!**

**>I didn't take a feather from his pillow.**

Ronnie has realised he has made a mistake, and that hell is no better than heaven

**>Here's the everlasting rub: neither am I good or bad.**

**>I'd give up my halo for a horn and the horn for the hat**

**>I once had.**

He realises his dilemma. He has to spend eternity in either heaven or hell, and he belongs in neither. He would give up both to be alive again. His observation that he is neither good nor bad, comes from the realisation that whether or not an action is sinful is a purely human and subjective decision.

**>I'm only breathing.**

**>There's life on my ceiling.**

**>The flies there are sleeping quietly.**

The reality of his situation grows clearer to him. His thought " I'm only breathing" means he is not truly living, he is just existing in his current state. He realises that even the flies on his ceiling are better off than he is. They are sleeping quietly, satisfied with what they are.

**>Twist my right arm in the dark.**

**>I would give two or three for one of those days that never made**

**>impressions on the old score.**

**>I would gladly be a dog barking up the wrong tree.**

He would endure torture to re-live even the dulllest day of his life and would be glad to be in a position to make mistakes.

**>Everyone's saved -- we're in the grave.**

**>See you there for afternoon tea.**

He realises that everyone in heaven or hell is comfortable with their lot, although their spark of humanity is dead (in the grave) He mocks the dullness of their cosy existence with his reference to taking afternoon tea, that most genteel and staid of English customs.

**>Time for awaking -- the tea lady's making a brew-up and baking**

**>new bread.**

Ronnie decides he has had enough and he has to get back to a mortal existence. He is aware that God is constantly creating new souls to be born. (he trivialises this by comparing Gods creation of flesh and blood, to

the routine tasks of a worker in a factory canteen, what we Brits call a tea lady, preparing bread and tea, with a parallel to the Eucharist where bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ).

**>Pick me up at half past none -- there's not a moment to lose.**

Having decided to go, he must go now. Even in a place where time stands still (the clocks stand at none o'clock) he has to leave as soon as possible, i. e. half past none.

**>There is the train on which I came.**

**>On the platform are my old shoes.**

**>Station master rings his bell.**

**>Whistles blow and flags wave.**

**>A little of what you fancy does you good (Or so it should).**

Ronnie makes his way to the arrival/departure terminal. I always get a picture of a huge, incredibly busy, transport complex, with countless souls coming and going on every conceivable form of transport. Ronnie spots the particular train he arrived from purgatory on, and sees that the place is so busy, his human trappings have not yet been disposed of.

**>I thank everybody for making me welcome.**

**>I'd stay but my wings have just dropped off.**

He joins the queue to depart, bidding everyone a sarcastic farewell

#### **Act IV**

**>Hail! Son of kings / make the ever-dying sign / cross your fingers in the**

**>sky for those about to BE.**

Ronnie calls on Christ (identified by the use of an upper case "S " in Son) to give the command that will allow those waiting to be born. He also asks him to cross his fingers, thereby wishing them luck in life. (Just a note:"here I always imagined the Son of Kings making that symbol to tell the gladiators, they could kill their opponents in the Roman Empire" because as he's in limbo, a sign to go down would be here to the earth as you said about the spire pointed down. I always imagine the Sarcastic Ian

doing it live...)

**>There am I waiting along the sand.**

**>Cast your sweet spell upon the land and sea.**

Ronnie is anxious, in a state of suspense, and he asks Christ to hurry. The image of being on the sand, between land and sea reflects him being in a state of transition between life and after-life

**>Magus Perd , take your hand from off the chain.**

**>Loose a wish to still / the rain / the storm about to BE.**

The word "Magus" comes from the Old Persian for sorcerer or wise man (there is a Simon Magus in the New Testament, who was a sorcerer who tried to buy spiritual powers from the Apostles). Perd  I cannot come up with a meaning for. The closest I can get is "Perdre" the French verb, which means to lose, forfeit or to ruin. (I don't know the meaning of Perd , but I know that Perdo in latin means destruction, also associated to magic) I would therefore hazard a guess that Ronnie is addressing Christ again, calling him "Sorcerer of the Lost", a somewhat insulting interpretation of the word "Saviour", and is again beseeching him to hurry and pull the chain and blow the whistle which is the command that will free him, this time comparing the souls awaiting birth to a storm about to break.

**>Here am I (voyager into life).**

**>Tough are the soles that tread the knife's edge.**

There is a pun here on the words soles/souls, with the knife's edge being life. There is also a somewhat tenuous literary link to the Sword Bridge across which Sir Lancelot had to cross on his bare hands and feet, in order to rescue Queen Guinnevere in the story, "The Knight of the Cart"

**>Break the circle / stretch the line / call upon the devil.**

**>Bring / the gods / the gods' own fire.**

**>In the conflict revel.**

The command is given, the gift of life (the Gods own fire, which has a reference to the Greek myths of Prometheus who was blinded for stealing the Gods own fire) is bestowed and they can begin to enjoy the struggle of

being alive.

**>The passengers / upon the ferry crossing / waiting to be born /  
renew the**

**>pledge of life's long song / rise to the reveille horn.**

**>Animals / queuing at the gate that stands upon the shore / breathe  
the**

**>ever-burning fire that guards the ever-door.**

The signal is given, and as life is breathed into them, all those who wait,  
human or animal begin to move forward to be born

**>Man / son of man / buy the flame of ever-life (yours to breathe and  
>breath the pain of living): living BE!**

Ronnie's turn to be reborn into human life arrives. His mortal status is  
acknowledged (Man, son of Man) and he is told the gift comes at a cost,  
that cost is to feel pain and suffering

**>Here am I!**

**>Roll the stone away from the dark into ever-day.**

Ronnie announces his arrival or resurrection, the image of rolling the stone  
from the tomb coming from the New Testament account of Christ's  
resurrection, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

**>There was a rush / along the Fulham Road / into the Ever-passion  
Play.**

We end with the rush of the new souls into life, part of the never ending  
cycle.

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Lyrics used without their permission.

### **The Programme**

The Programme which accompanied the original 1973 vinyl release of A Passion  
Play was a spoof on a parochial, small town theatre production, in much the same  
way that the newspaper that formed the sleeve for Thick as a Brick was a spoof  
of a small town tabloid (Linwell and St Cleve actually being neighbouring towns, if  
not in reality, then at least in the mind of I.A.!) The play itself is credited to Rena

Sanderone, a wordplay on Ian Anderson.

I am taking this transcription from a bad photocopy, as my original copy was demolished some years ago, and as a consequence I am unable to identify the band members from their pictures. Information on this front is therefore very welcome!! (I'll try to identify on the APP Ultradisc I bought yesterday. I can also send the pictures to you by e-mail if you wish, The first is Ian, John Tetrad is Barlow, Max Quad is Jeffery, Ben Rossington is John Evan)

## **THE LINWELL THEATRE**

Parrish Street

Tel:Linwell 4306

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PROPRIETORS: LINWELL THEATRE LTD.

LICENSED BY LINWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

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THE LINWELL PLAYERS and D. RUDGE

present

*MAX QUAD JOHN TETRAD*

*MARK RIDLEY*

in

**A PASSION PLAY**

**by RENA SANDERONE**

***Directed by***

*COLIN BEALE*

**Mark Ridley** began his theatrical career at Edinburgh in repertory.

His first West End appearance was as "Elvoe" in Ron Read's social critique "The Demo". His role opposite Bert Tring in "The Missing Button" brought him acclaim from the critics for the character role he has long since been associated with. He starred in "Nevertheless, Susan" on Broadway for nearly two years and more recently completed work on two films for Thames T. V. :the "Infidels" and

"The Man Who Played With Bears". He has written several short stories, and plans for a short film script based on the lives of a travelling salesman have reached advanced stage. He begins rehearsals next month for the part of "Elgin" in "The Light in Mr. Elgin's Window" which also co-stars Derek Small.

**John Tetrad** was born in Birmingham and spent his early life in the engineering trade before embarking on a theatrical career as "Willie" in "Pass Me A Pippin" at the Albemarle Theatre, Boswell. He then studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and made his first London appearance in "Over The Brush" at the Strand Theatre. He first entered musicals with a part in the chorus of "The Immortal Miss Peters" but went on to a leading role in the highly-praised but shortlived West End success "My Canary Can't Sing". His roles in T. V. plays are too numerous to mention but he may be remembered for his regular appearances as the son of a cafe owner in "Down King Street". He is married to Deirdre Plannette, star of the T. V. series "Fathers In Law". They have two daughters.

**Derek Small** first entered the acting profession at the age of nine when he appeared in pantomime as a squirrel in "Woodlands". He was educated at Ashby de la Zouche and entered the David Pike School of Drama at the age of seventeen. He made several forays into the world of films but found the parts restricting because of his diminutive stature. He has appeared in several West End productions; notably "Sir John, Sir John", "Never Say 'Please' To A Sailor" and "Miss Lampton's Retreat". He spent several years out of the theatre while working for television as a drama consultant but returned to the live stage with a star role playing opposite to Lilly Schaeffer in Joe Mercer's comedy "Which Milkman?". He is due to begin filming the historical novel "The Rose of Cullenbridge" in which he plays "McNeil" opposite Mary Dawn Harty's "Janette".

**Max Quad** was born in Cleethorpes and educated at Manchester

Grammar School and the Wimbledon School of Art where he studied theatre design. He moved into the acting profession quite by accident with an understudy role which threw him unexpectedly into an opening night performance of "Jumping The Gun" at the Harrogate Theatre. He made many inroads into T. V. plays in the late '60's before finally turning to films with a starring part in Oliveggio's "All The Nice Sailors". His professional acting roles have taken second place to his blossoming landscape gardening business in more recent years but he still finds time to work in T. V. commercials and the occasional radio play. He has just completed filming "The Formative Years" for director Colin Beale and returns tonight to a stage he remembers well from his pantomime part in last year's "Aladdin" at the Linwell Theatre

**Ben Rossington** first studied music under his mother, a piano teacher, and later after a grammar school and university education moved on to a less interpretative role as a T. V. announcer. He came to acting largely through friendship with some of his T. V. actor colleagues who found him a small part in the half hour T. V. play "Weather Report". He continued with other small parts until his magical break in the West End with an emphatic appearance in "Man In A White Suit". He still thinks of himself as something of a beginner and prefers to play down his considerable acting experience. "It is easier to think of every part as the first you've ever played. The complacency of the 'old hand at the game' is a contagious disease". Ben Rossington prefers to avoid over familiarity with his work by indulging in as many as possible sideline hobbies. "My current favourite is photographing people's wives". He is soon to start his first film role with a lengthy part in Joesph Eller's "Mistake".

### **A Passion Play**

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Characters in order of appearance

Ronnie Pilgrim

The Angel

Peter Dejour

The Projectionist

G. Oddie Snr.

G. Oddie Jnr.

Lucy

Magus Perdé

**Max Quad**

**Lilly Schnaeffer**

**Mark Ridley**

**Derek Small**

**Ben Rossington**

**Lou Purcell**

**Ronald Pleasant**

**John Tetrad**

**ACT I Ronnie Pilgrims Funeral:**

**a winter's morning in the cemetery**

**ACT II The Memory Bank: a small but**

**comfortable theatre with a cinema**

**screen - the next morning**

Interval

**ACT III The business office of G. Oddie**

**and**

**Son - two days later**

**ACT IV Magus Perdé's drawing room at**

**midnight**

The centre two pages contain a copy of the albums sleeves gate-fold lyrics. There are two flaps are provided so that the booklet pages may be tucked under to keep the page open. Apart from the lyrics, the gate-fold contains the a lightly drawn tragedy (left) and comedy (right) mask. Beneath all this is an embroidered ribbon

saying "Jethro Tull" (left) and "A Passion Play" (right).

Directed by

**Colin Beale**

Designed by

**Harry Seamons**

Lighting by

**Eric Brooks**

Interval Music

1st and 2nd dances

composed by

**Rena Sanderone**

Electronis Synthesis by

**Christopher Amson**

"The Story of the Hare who lost  
his Spectacles" composed by

**J. Hammond-Hammond**

**John Evan and**

**Ian Anderson**

Orchestra arranged and  
conducted by

**David Palmer**

Programme Design

**Jennifer Ann**

**Geoffrey Dowlatshahi**

Design Consultants

**CCS**

Photographs Assistant Electrician

**Brian Ward Frazer Aitken**

**For Linwell Theatre Company**

Administrator

**Terry Ellis**

Business Manager

**L. M. Bewley**

Publicity Officer

**Royston Eldridge**

Production Manager

**Frank Klamm**

Stage Manager

**Alan McKenzie**

Assistant Stage Manager

**Roger Jordan**

Scenic Artist

**James Bacon**

Social Secretary & Wardrobe

Supervision

**Diane Baker**

Chief Electrician

**Roy Bailey**

Master Carpenter

**Arthur Champfer**

Assistant Carpenter

**Simon. P Linter**

**Jethro Tull A Passion Play**

**1. Lifebeats - 1:14**

**2. Prelude - 2:14**

**3. Silver Cord - 4:29**

**4. Re-Assuring Tune - 1:11**

**5. Memmory Bank - 4:20**

**6. Best Friends - 1:58**

**7. Critique Oblique - 4:38**

**8. Forest Dance #1 - 1:35**

**9. The Story of The Hare Who**

**Lost His Spectacles - 4:18**

**10. Forest Dance #2 - 1:12**

**11. The Foot Of Our Staris -**  
4:18

**12. Overseer Overture - 4:00**

**13. Flight From Lucifer - 3:58**

**14. 10.08 To Paddington - 1:04**

**15. Magus Perdé - 3:55**

**16. Epilogue - 0:43**

First aid facilities in the theatre are given by

Nurses Ltd. members who give their services voluntarily.

**PATRONS ARE REQUESTED NOT TO SMOKE IN THE AUDITORIUM**

*In accordance with the Linwell district Council's regulations and general conditions*

**(a)** No obstructions, whether permanent or temporary, shall be allowed in

any exit doors, exit ways (whether corridors or staircases), external passage-

ways, gangways, foyers, lobbies, or entrance halls.

**(b)** The safety curtain shall be lowered and raised at least once during the

presence of the public at each performance.

**Latecomers may be asked to wait until a suitable break in the performance**

Just a note in the song #14: Ian's birthday is in august, 10...

**A Traditional Passion Play**

A traditional Passion Play is a form of mystery play which depicts Christ's last days on earth -- Holy Week --including the suffering or passion on the cross. The earliest dramatic representations of the crucifixion, in Latin verse, were given in the early part of the 13th century. At the height of their popularity in the middle of the 15th century, they had developed into

elaborate productions requiring three days for performance. During the renaissance period, the tradition languished. Of the passion plays performed in modern times, the best known one is one dating from 1634, given every ten years by the residents of Oberammergau in the Bavarian Alps. Every ten years, hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the world gather to see the play performed there. When the bubonic plague reached Oberammergau in 1633, villagers vowed that those who were spared would present a Passion Play every ten years. The first performance was in 1634. The date was later changed to the years ending with 0, and except for the years 1870, 1920, and 1940 the pledge has been unbroken.

The all day play is performed in an open -air theatre, built in 1930, and takes place from May to September. There are some 1,400 performers (about half of whom are children), all born in the village. They wear period costumes, but no wigs or make-up. Actresses must be unmarried. Men wear their hair and beards long even in the years between performances. As I said at the beginning of this piece, Personally I love it, although I do admit there is no easily discernible story line to follow and much of its interpretation is left to the listener. I do not see this as a failing; rather it is one of Ian Anderson's greatest strengths as a writer. Whilst others preach to the listener or tell us everything with a "See.... See Spot catch the ball " simplicity, Ian will suggest or imply, creating word pictures that have a different, but equally valid meaning for each set of ears.

Some fans lament the fact that his writing in later years seems less metaphysical than in the early seventies, as if this means that his latest work is somehow shallower and less meaningful.

To anyone that might feel this to be the case, and believes that Ian's writing skills have diminished over the years, I would suggest you do as I am about to do, and pour yourself a glass of something mellow and amber and have a good listen to "At Last, Forever" or " This Free Will" from the album Roots to Branches.

See what I mean ?

Cheerio!

Frank