

Who we are:

Matthew Gibson: *Saint Mark*

A native Kingstonian, Matthew studied acting at Queen's University and The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in the U.K. He has been a professional actor for the past eighteen years, and has extensive experience in the Kingston theatre scene – including 14 seasons at the Thousand Islands Playhouse, and 10 seasons with Theatre Kingston – and farther afield in theatres across Canada.

Matthew is the Co-Artistic Director of Hope Theatre Projects (formerly The Seat Of Your Pants Theatre Company). Newly incorporated as a not-for-profit in 2007, Hope Theatre has been garnering rave reviews from the press and public alike for their production of *'Art'* -- staged at the prestigious Agnes Etherington Art Centre – and *April in Paris*, which re-opened the Baby Grand Theatre in the summer of 2008. Prior to his roles in these productions, Matthew was featured as "Bishop" in The Seat Of Your Pants Theatre Company's critically acclaimed production of the Canadian classic, *Billy Bishop Goes to War*.

Matthew's productions for Theatre Kingston included *The Master Builder*, *Cherry Docs*, *Copenhagen* and *The Winter's Tale*. Gibson garnered rave reviews for his performance as Leontes in Theatre Kingston's *The Winter's Tale*. He was named by the National Post as one of the best actors of 2004 (in Toronto-area productions). The Kingston Whig-Standard raved "[Gibson's] mastery of Shakespearean verse is obvious . . . I don't know why he isn't at Stratford." Eye Magazine called his performance "Dora-worthy", and raved "Matthew Gibson gave the subtlest, most moving interpretation of the difficult role of Leontes this reviewer has ever seen . . . not at Soulpepper, not at Stratford, have I seen this difficult role played so convincingly."

Jennifer Radford Gibson: *Director/Stage Manager/Publicist*

Jennifer is a graduate of the Queen's University drama program, the Grants Administrator for the Kingston Arts Council, and the Co-Artistic Director of Hope Theatre Projects (formerly The Seat Of Your Pants Theatre Company). This summer Jennifer her husband Matthew appeared onstage together as the dueling spouses in Hope Theatre's the smash hit *April in Paris* at the Baby Grand Theatre in Kingston. Recent directing credits include: *'Art'*, *Billy Bishop Goes To War*, *Our Town*, and *Bent* (Hope Theatre/TSOYPTC); *The Aardv'ARK* (H'Art Studio); *Not Spain*, *Cherry Docs* and *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (for Theatre Kingston, for whom she was also General Manager for their 2006-07 season). Jennifer is an actress, and a costume, poster, and set designer, as the occasion calls. She holds a Masters degree in Arts Education from Queen's University, and teaches drama and theatre to children and adults of all ages through various workshop programs in the Kingston area.

The original theatrical run of *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* at the Wellington Street Theatre featured the work of Dan Rider (lighting design), Mark Hunt (set design), Annie Briggs (Stage Manager), and Andrew McWilliams (Assistant Stage Manager).

Please share your response to the performance by visiting us at:
www.hopetheatre.com/gospel-reviews.html



The Gospel According To Saint Mark

Featuring Matthew Gibson
Directed by Jennifer Radford Gibson

Act I: Chapters 1 – 8

~ Intermission ~

Act II: Chapters 9 – 16

Text: King James Bible (1611)

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Each person's experience of a book like the Bible is different, informed by a myriad of personal and cultural variables. When we first began work on this production, we were generally familiar with the events of Jesus' life, but we probably could not have made distinctions between the events contained within the various gospels. It was a bit like arriving at a party, having a passing acquaintanceship with the host, but meeting all the other guests as strangers.

After an awkward initial period, working hard at remembering the names and contexts of the various characters and making connections between them, we began to feel more at home. Now, having spent some time in their company, they seem like old friends whose qualities and failings make them human and *ours*, and not simply characters on a page: brave, loyal Peter, who denies his friend and saviour even as he follows him where no other disciple has the courage to go; James and John and the other disciples, struggling to understand and embody the enormous undertaking to which they have been called; doomed Judas, known through history as the man who betrayed the son of God; kind, eccentric John the Baptist,

*(...continued...)*

who lives in the wilds and introduces so many to the word of God; drunken, hapless Herod and his complicated family life, who must execute a man he respects because of a thoughtless promise; poor, haunted Legion, who, blessedly freed of his demons, goes out and publishes far and wide the work of Jesus; blind – and noisy – Bartimaeus, whose faith allows him to receive his sight; the earnest and devout young man who must give up his “great possessions”; the scribes and Pharisees, puffed up with power and self-importance, and the honourable scribe who is, as Jesus says, “not far from the kingdom of God”; the father who begs for help with his “unbelief” that his dying son might be cured; the young man in the sheet who flees the men arresting Jesus – and who may indeed be Mark, himself...

...and, of course, Jesus: haunted, passionate, intelligent, inspired, whimsical, frustrated, kind, furious, sometimes impatient and tired, and frightened -- and in the end, magnificently brave, selfless, and heroic. He represents the best of humanity, and the all-too-rarely-glimpsed human face of God.

We have tried not to distort the gospel, nor to obscure those elements within it which might make us uncomfortable, but simply to bring Mark's characterizations – and his remarkable challenge to believe – to life upon the stage. In doing so we offer this production up to the ongoing human conversation of faith, for, “whether or not you are a believer, it is impossible to study St. Mark carefully and not know -- without any shadow of doubt -- that something amazing happened in Galilee 2,000 years ago.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alec McCowen in Bruce Buursma, "One-man Gospel Play a Revelation For Actor," Chicago Tribune, January 20, 1981, Tempo section, p. 6.

*This production is available for bookings in theatres, houses of worship, and alternative venues. Please contact us directly for more information or to arrange a booking:*

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**[www.theatrekingston.com/gospel.html](http://www.theatrekingston.com/gospel.html)**