

!HERO, The Rock Opera

Story Synopsis

Imagine a world that has never known the influence of a Messiah. A world in which Jesus has never lived. Modern culture exemplifies the ascendancy of man. World government is centralized under The International Confederation of Nations, I.C.O.N. New York City is part of a police state, where ethnic gangs rule the streets and I.C.O.N. controls the gangs.

Into this world is born a hero.

!HERO, the Rock Opera is a musical adaptation of the story of Jesus Christ (Hero) set in the parallel universe of a post-modern New York City. *HERO* draws from the vast palette of unforgettable biblical characters of Petrov (Peter); Kai, Chief Rabbi (Caiaphas), Jude (Judas), Maggie (Mary Magdalene), Mama Mary (mother of Jesus); as well as introducing Devlin, evil ICON Police Chief and crony of Kai; Governor Pilate, ICON agent Hunter (Roman Centurion); and Jairus (Pharisee), a drug kingpin from Harlem.

The world of *!HERO, the Rock Opera* is a very different place from the one we know. It has never known the influence of Jesus: no missionaries, no Red Cross, no churches, no Salvation Army, no equality of the sexes. And the iron rule of ancient kings has grown to global domination by ICON, who controls every continent and country in the world - all commerce, all media and communications, the courts, the military, the police. The customs and cultures of the peoples of the world have all but disappeared under ICON's soulless brutality and totalitarian rule. All worship and religion is banned, the supernatural almost non-existent. Hero's story is told by an eyewitness, ICON Agent Hunter, from a jail cell.

When our opera begins Hero is 30 years old. Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he and his family fled from prosecution by deranged, psychopath District Governor Herod, and settled in the Jewish section of Brooklyn, where he grew up. The small sect represents the only Jews that have survived and still believe in the one true God. Sensing the time has come to fulfill his long-awaited destiny, Hero begins by recruiting his first two followers down by the ship docks, Petrov and Jude.

Days later at the wedding of a young Jewish couple Hero's mother, Mama Mary, who knows his latent power, prevails upon Hero to "help" when the father of the bride unexpectedly runs out of wine. Hero turns water into wine, right before the eyes of all, including the ambitious and scheming Kai, and our fellow antagonist, Devlin. Neither man is pleased at this conspicuous display of trickery...it has no place in their world.

In truth, Devlin is very bad news. He is an ICON Police Chief with much authority in New

York, but also possesses evil and supernatural powers. He is a dirty-cop who runs illicit businesses on the side. His association with Kai is simple: he allows Kai to practice his religion and worship, as well as lucrative Brooklyn Synagogue commerce, in exchange for kickbacks from Kai's enterprises, and information from the streets, which Kai provides via his network of informants and snitches.

Soon after this first miracle, Hero attends a meeting at the Brooklyn Synagogue, and a small riot ensues when he stands to read the Scriptures, revealing to the rabbis that he is indeed the one for whom they have long prayed and waited...the Messiah. He lays out his mission of love to the infuriated rabbis, who beat and throw him down the steps of the Synagogue into the street. Mama Mary finds him, and the two say a tearful goodbye to their former life. It is time for him to leave home and do the bidding of his heavenly Father who sent him to earth.

In Washington Square where the homeless live, Hero performs his first healing upon a man crippled for 38 years. Pandemonium breaks out as everyone joins in the celebration. Again Kai and Devlin witness the event, both agreeing Hero could be very dangerous - Devlin concerned about anything stirring up the gangs and street people, Kai threatened by his charisma and potential to gain a power base. What both men fear most is a champion of the people...a hero. They decide to enlist a spy.

Over the next weeks Hero begins speaking out against the systems of the world, the institutions of hate and injustice. People respond to his words. Gang members believe in his message of hope....commoners receive his love. At a public fountain in Spanish Harlem Maggie, a palm-reader and young prostitute, trembles at the revelation of her innermost secrets by Hero and receives forgiveness for her shadowed past. She, too, begins to follow Hero.

In Central Park thousands gather to hear Hero declare the promises he makes to all who believe in him, teaching them to love their enemies, promising freedom and new life in a kingdom not of this world.

In Harlem, Hero is summoned by the dangerous and powerful drug kingpin Jairus to his home where his daughter lies dead from a drive-by shooting. When the child is raised from the dead all of Harlem erupts in joy. Henceforth, Jairus becomes a bodyguard to Hero.

One day while speaking in Times Square Hero feeds 5000 hungry people, multiplying the feast from just two two pretzels and a hot dog.

Thousands are beginning to follow this man as he turns the world upside down. They are calling him simply Hero. Kai and Devlin approach the man they have earmarked as their spy into Hero's inner circle. The one promoting himself as manager and press agent. Jude.

At the end of Act One Hero takes Petrov, Jude, and Maggie to the Observatory of the Empire State Building where his heavenly Father reveals Hero's deity to them in supernatural radiance.

Act Two begins with Hero being harassed and rejected by a gang of Hispanics - Maggie's former people in Spanish Harlem. Maggie defends him and a fight starts to break out. Agent Hunter comes to their rescue, breaks up the fight, then warns Hero how dangerous his mission is. Hunter then pledges to Hero how he will endeavor to watch his back. Hunter and Maggie then find themselves pledging the love that has been growing between them for many weeks.

Hero continues to speak his mind with authority, thus alienating certain gangs, especially his own people, the Jews. Kai and Devlin have by now approached and convinced Jude they want only to help Hero and his movement. Jude agrees to set up a meeting with them and Hero, seeing himself as liaison and his efforts as a PR coup.

In a triumphant parade culminating in a rally at Yankee Stadium, the crowds cheer their new Hero, who has finally come to save them. It's Hero-mania. Things turn sour, however, for Jude when his attempt to set up the meeting for Kai and Devlin is flatly rejected by Hero. When he reports his failure to them, they assure him they will force the meeting. Just get them information of when and where. Jude agrees.

Worse yet, when Hero encounters the commerce being transacted by greedy merchants in the Outer Courts of the Brooklyn Synagogue, he goes ballistic - overturning tables and displays in a showdown with Kai and his minion rabbis. A definite line has been crossed.

That evening, the night before Jewish Passover, Hero arranges for a dinner with his closest followers at Mama Mary's. Petrov, in his good-intentioned but blundering way, tries to lighten the mood, reminding everyone it's supposed to be a party. However, with bread and wine Hero leads them symbolically through his soon-coming death...his blood shed and body broken for all mankind. Jude leaves the table repulsed and defeated, then proceeds to a final solution - turning Hero over to Devlin and Kai - the spiritual and government authorities.

Simultaneously, in the Arboretum in Central Park, Hero pours out his distress in prayer to his heavenly Father. The man in Hero fears his death greatly and demons harass him. Eventually, however, he expels the spirits of oppression and resolves to do the right thing - the will of his heavenly Father.

Suddenly ICON police storm in, led by Kai and Jude. Jude identifies Hero with a kiss on the cheek, then Hero is handcuffed and led away.

He is brought into a secret interrogation room, where Governor Pilate has been summoned and presides. Not finding satisfaction in Hero's answers to questions and charges, and frustrated at Kai's lack of real evidence and exaggerated religious fervor, Gov. Pilate provides a solution. He turns Hero over to Kai, Devlin, and a mob of street people that has materialized there, shouting for Hero's blood. Volatile people alienated by Hero's message, many from Maggie's former gang in Spanish Harlem.

Governor Pilate turns a blind eye to Hero's fate -washing his hands of the entire sick madness.

Jude is heartsick over the situation and his role in it. He shoots himself.

Dragged into an alley by the mob, supervised by Kai and ICON Police, Hero's tormentors and accusers scream and curse, encircling then beating him savagely - to death. His corpse is lifted and hung with his arms draped over a street sign.

Maggie, Mama Mary, and Hunter find his dead body - and mourn. ICON Police eventually remove the body to the City Morgue. They also arrest Hunter for collusion with Hero and his followers.

Three days later on a Sunday morning when Maggie comes to the City Morgue to anoint Hero's body with oil and pray, she is astounded and dismayed to find Hero's body missing. A janitor tells her Hero is no longer there. He is risen from the dead. Just as he predicted. The janitor hands her a bloody shirt and Maggie suddenly realizes she is speaking to Hero himself - alive. Not an apparition, but the man himself.

When she looks again the janitor is gone. Joyfully and tearfully she runs to bring the news to the others waiting at Mama Mary's.

Devlin and Kai immediately launch a cover-up.

Our opera ends where it began, with Agent Hunter in a jail cell.

He assures us he may be jailed for believing and following Hero - but in truth he says he is freer than he has ever been - in his whole entire life.
