Jesus Christ
rock star
Conveying Messiah's suffering on stage inspires musician struggling to provide for family

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
for The Columbian

Everyone who stages "Jesus Christ Superstar" encounters the ultimate casting dilemma: Who's going to be the Messiah? Tami Castillo Gray, director of the Clark College production that opens Friday, decided to prepare for that weighty decision in the way that felt most natural. She prayed.

No one knows for sure how the historical Jesus Christ looked. He's been pictured with skin from pale pink to black, hair cropped short and curly or left long and straight. He's been drawn imposing and thin but has been described by scientists as short and stocky. In America, he's depicted as tall and white, with long brown hair, a full beard and deep brown eyes.

None of these iconic images has tattoos and short, spiky red hair. Appearances alone should have eliminated Nick Krieg from contention.

The 26-year-old lead singer of the local band The Experimental Earth aspires to be a rock 'n' roll star, not a Broadway thespian. He went to audition for the role of the most renowned religious figure in human history on a whim. He has never taken an acting class.

The biggest role of his career? Playing Dr. Frank N. Furter in the Clinton Street Theater troupe that mimics the on-screen action of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."

Yet Gray chose him from the 30 actors who filled Gaiser Hall for the audition a few months ago. "I was looking at the core of who (the actors) are, and Nick stood out," she said. "He was the person meant to do this role."

If you go
- What: Clark College Theatre presents "Jesus Christ Superstar, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyrics by Tim Rice, the same team that later collaborated on "Evita" and "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."
- When: Friday through March 1, with performances at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday as well as Feb. 22-23, plus additional shows Feb. 26-29 and March 1. An accompanying dinner, prepared by the school's culinary department, will be served starting at 6 p.m., Friday and Saturday as well as Feb. 22-23.
- Cost: $10 for dinner shows, $14 for performance only.
- Information: 360-992-3818 or clark.edu.

Nick Krieg has a full-time job maintaining and repairing commercial dishwashers as well as a weekend job at Burgerville to support his wife and daughter. Krieg dreams of one day making it big as a rock star.

ONLINE VIDEO: To view a video about Nick Krieg, who stars in Clark College's production of "Jesus Christ Superstar," visit www.columbian.com/video.
Krieg: From Page 31
When Krieg received the call of his wife, he was depressed. He was a 35-year-old man, and his life was unraveling. He was killed when his car hit a tree and burst into flames. The accident was a shocking and tragic event for his family and friends.

Sacrifices
Krieg took the opportunity to reflect and understand how he would fit in the demands faced during his busy schedule. He was still clear when Krieg set out at 8:30 on a recent morning for Scappoose, Ore., to begin a 1-3-hour shift of repairing and servicing commercial dishwashers for Auto-Car. He left early and was driven by his wife, who was in the hospital at the time.

Krieg listened to the "Jesus Christ Superstar" soundtrack as he drove between appointments in the morning. By afternoon, he was ready for a change, so he switched the truck's stereo to the hard-rock band Toto's "400 Days." When he returned to downtown Portland, he took a detour during his final stop to fill out an application for an apprenticeship at the Carpenters' Union Hall.

The coincidence suddenly struck Krieg as a carpenter.

For years, Krieg thought about being a carpenter. Now he was thinking about following in the footsteps of his father, all five of his uncles and three of his brothers joining him in the apprentice program. He can't explain why, but he felt compelled to sign up for it. "Maybe the powers that be are giving me the right direction," he said.

He hopes becoming a carpenter will enable him to make more money and have more time with his family. In addition to the 30-40 hours a week Krieg works for Auto-Car, he also takes on two-weekend shifts at Burger King to help fill shifts and maintain health benefits. He's rarely

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