

Passionate for God

It's **Easter** the entire **Summer** in a small German village famous for its Passion **Play**.

By Aaron M. Zook, Jr., July 2010

A movie is considered successful if it runs for a couple of months in the theaters. The longest running play on Broadway has gone on for 22 years. But in the German village of Oberammergau, the "Passion Play" has been performed for 376 years.

Back in 1633 during the Thirty Years War, destruction, poverty and disease swept through Central Europe. In the Bavarian town of Oberammergau, 80 people died of the plague. The people prayed for deliverance. Then the villagers and their council took a vow to perform the Passion Play—the story of Jesus Christ's suffering, death and resurrection—every 10 years without end. The disease, which had claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, halted. God spared their town.

In 1634, Oberammergau fulfilled its vow for the first time, performing the Passion Play at the village graveyard to express their faith. Since then, the play has been performed every ten years, with only a few unavoidable exceptions. By 1680, Oberammergau started performing the play the first year of each decade. Additional performances marked special occasions such as the end of wars, and the 300th and 350th anniversary years.

Miraculous Performance

This world-famous passion performance is presented in German. However, the program translates words and song lyrics into several languages, including English.

About half of Oberammergau's 5,300 residents participate in the production, combining for huge crowd scenes of up to 1,000 on stage at once, including children and live animals. When the crowd begins shouting for Jesus' death, the sound can be overpowering.

Add to that an orchestra of 60 musicians and a large choir, and it creates a powerful musical experience.

Of course, the Passion Play is already powerful as it depicts the last three days of Jesus Christ's life on earth including His trials and persecution, His death on the cross, and His marvelous victory over death!

The singers, musicians, and actors are only part of the show. More artistry lies in the brilliant sets, costumes and backdrops. For almost a year villagers rehearse on and off the stage, even in the winter snow. Only people who are villagers or permanent residents of 20 years or more can perform.

At five hours long with a three-hour dinner break, the outdoor stage performance occurs rain or shine several times a week from May through October, with only the orchestra and spectators under cover.

Oberammergau expects over half a million people to watch Christ's story come to life this summer.

Published by Focus on the Family Clubhouse, July 2010

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Additional notes from the author:



Oberammergau is beautiful. One hour south of Munich, the German village nestled in the Ammer river valley provides breath-taking views of its Bavarian Alps.

Our family attended the Play three times. Each time new scenes, backdrops, artistry and music mesmerized us. And, both my sons and I have climbed the Kopfel Mountain (close to 1,000 feet) adjacent to the town of Oberammergau. Even in the rain!

Find out more at <http://www.oberammergau-passion.com>.

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