

LATEST NEWS # 399, March 7, 2007

The following news concerns Estonia.

Latest News items are posted on the UBS web site (with photographs embedded where available) within a short time of issue. Please go to: http://biblesociety.org/latestnews/index_latestnews.html

Unusual production in an unusual theatre

ESTONIA — The run-up to last Christmas saw Estonia's first ever theatrical performance of the Gospel of Mark. And the days preceding Easter will let more theatre-goers enjoy the production — which is being presented in a theatre in one of the towers of the picturesque medieval city wall of the Estonian capital, Tallinn.

Featuring Estonian actor Andres Roosileht, 30, the production is a joint venture between the national puppet theatre of Estonia, the Estonian Bible Society and a Christian arts organisation called Crescendo.

In a departure from conventional productions of the Gospel of Mark, it introduces a contemporary narrator. Mr Roosileht, who as well as acting in it shares co-directing honours with Vahur Keller, says that they have been very conscious that, Estonia being one of the most secular countries in Europe, very few people know even the most basic Bible stories. The production, which also makes imaginative use of stage property and music, is therefore designed to help contemporary audiences to engage with it.

The narrator is an artist who is trying to draw a picture of Jesus. He finds this so difficult, however, that, in an effort to try to understand exactly who Jesus is, he re-examines the Gospel text. Although he is the only person on stage, in the course of narrating the story, Mr Roosileht also depicts a succession of other characters including Jesus, John the Baptist, the disciples, the scribes and the Pharisees.

In the two weeks before Christmas the production played eight performances and received a very good reception from audiences and theatre professionals alike – which bodes well for the further performances taking place before Easter.

The General Secretary of the Estonian Bible Society, Jaan Bärenson, had dreamed for a long time of putting on a theatrical production of Mark's Gospel. He first discussed the idea with Mr Roosileht in the summer



of 2005, when the latter was taking part in performances combining Bible readings with pop-jazz versions of hymns. Mr Roosileht began preparing for the production by reading the Gospel through many times with a friend who is a minister and missionary.

Photos (Estonian Bible Society/Teet Malsroos):

EST07DJ-1, EST07DJ-2, EST07DJ-9: Actor Andres Roosileht playing the part of an artist who is trying to draw a picture of Jesus in a production of the Gospel of Mark staged jointly in December 2006 by the national puppet theatre of Estonia, the Estonian Bible Society and a Christian arts organisation called Crescendo.

For further information please contact comms@ubs-wsc.org