

Review: 'Godspell' sticks to script(ure) (June 26, 2009)

By Laurie DuPaul

Special Contributor

The Arundel Barn Playhouse just off Route 1 in Arundel proudly presents Godspell directed by Chris Saunders. It first opened off Broadway on May 17, 1971, and continues with its popularity to be performed at many theaters. Written by Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak, it is based on the Gospel of Matthew.

Approaching the entrance, attendees are greeted by a mime, Stephen Tabor. Although his role this summer is assistant to the producing artistic director, his performance is delightful and welcoming. Throughout the evening Tabor skillfully brings a smile to the audience.

Upon entering the playhouse, the stage is draped with rows of red fabric that clearly represent a circus tent with brightly colored platforms and props. Costume designer, Kristina Makowski complemented the stage setting with costumes sewn from brilliant shades of yellow, green, purple, and red. Each costume has its own flair.

Ryan Heidenreich dressed in hoop pants that are pink with white polka dots; orange T-shirt with a tie set into the fabric; and a bright yellow hat with a heart often captures the attention of the audience with his antics and clever dance moves.

As the lights dim and the musicians begin to play, anticipation grows. The cast is made up of ten members: Jesus (Darren Bluestone); Judas (John Rozzoni) and the remaining used to act out each parable. Allison Frenzel, Colleen Gallagher and Monica Willey, who delighted the audience in "Suds," continue as supporting cast members in Godspell.

Not having attended Godspell before and reading only a couple of reviews, I wondered if it would complement the Book of Matthew in the Bible or leave a dislike for the production. Pleasantly surprised, Godspell is wonderfully written and actually follows quite closely the Gospel of Matthew with each parable being brought to life through dance, song and script. The cast with their energy and enthusiasm throughout the production provide a relaxing evening with thoughts being provoked by the messages of each parable.

Choosing a favorite parable would be difficult since each had its own attributes such as the Parable of the Sower. As Bluestone tells the story, each actor pretending to be a seed follows along. Some cast members pretend to sprout and then wither, others blossom into a beautiful plant. Saunders talent for directing and choreographing is seen throughout the production as the actors draw in the audience through their movement and facial expressions.

Musical Director, Joshua Smith on piano, Nick Cabral, as percussionist, a student at Kennebunk High School, John Lyden, bassist, a student at Kennebunk High School and Levi Brown, guitarist, a musician recommended by Tune Town and a student at Sanford High School complement the production with their talent by accentuating portions that bring anticipation and excitement. Most of the musical numbers were not familiar except for Day by Day performed by Willey.

Performances are Tuesday through Saturday evenings at 8 p.m. with Wednesday matinees at 2 p.m., and one Sunday evening performance on June 28 at 8 p.m. To make prepaid reservations, call the box office at 985-5552.