

Godspell: road life

Is the life of an actor in the road production of "Godspell" an enviable one? How does one react after a month of one and two night stops in places from Connecticut to Slippery Rock College, Pa.?

Roger Kozol, James C. Vaughn and Bruce Connelly took time off between shows to discuss the pros and cons of performing in such a production.

Kozol, who portrays Jesus Christ in the show, first was cast in the role in San Francisco. After performing there, he joined the current tour, which was cast in New York.

"We rehearsed a week less than any other 'Godspell' cast and then they threw us out and said 'have a ball!' and we are," he explained. "I sat in San Francisco for a year and I just enjoy this a lot more, seeing different places and faces. We usually don't get to see that much though, just the motel and theatre. Since we've been here for two days, we've been able to see more."

James Vaughn, who attended New York University, explained this is the third play where he has portrayed Judas. "This tour has been a great experience for me. And playing here at Penn State was fun. You have the right sized theater for something like 'Godspell.' It made it a lot easier to have personal contact with the audience, which is so important," he said.

Bruce Connelly was with another cast of "Godspell" for two years before he joined this one. "I love being in this play," he said. "Is there anything he has to accept as part of the job? 'Yes, getting hurt,'" he replied. "We wear knee pads, but you wouldn't believe the injuries — bumps, scratches, sprains and cuts — we get with all that running around. It's really a trick to do all that physical activity and then sing a song."

The three said they found few people consider "Godspell's" interpretation of the Bible in any way irreverent. "When we played before the priests and students at St. Bonaventure, they loved it," Kozol explained. "In fact the more

religious a person is, the more he or she seems to like it. We had a few isolated incidents where people have tried to stop the show because they considered it sacrilegious." The actors said they leave it up to the audience to experience the emotion contained in "Godspell."

"There are no tears in 'Godspell,'" one explained. "We force each person to draw what he can from the scenes on stage. And when the audience is into what's happening, we can sense it and don't think it doesn't help us!"

There are 14 people in the "Godspell" troupe. Each takes turns performing the 10 different parts, to avoid "complete physical breakdown" as they put it.

How do 14 people get along after months of traveling and performing together? "Very well," Connelly answered. "In some shows, it could be harder. But here you're able to relate person to person. And you can enjoy each other on stage."

"We all do weird things to each other on stage," Kozol interjected. "Like Bruce is terribly ticklish, so in the middle of a number, I'll tickle him and he sends out 'the call of the wild.' It's great," he said.

"It's the constant ad libs on stage that keep the show from becoming monotonous and boring for us and the audience," Vaughn explained. "Like throwing in a Laurel and Hardy routine where there should be something else. Or this afternoon, I suddenly started talking in a lisp, so I just kept at it and let the others play along."

"However, audience participation is really important too," Kozol said. "It's really true that the audience gets what it asks for. If you have a really down audience, you'll try to bring them up, but you know you have to save your energy for another performance. If they're really into it, it makes it that much easier for us," he said. —RA

The National Touring Company of "Godspell"



Godspell cast blesses audience with new outlook on old story

By REGINA ANDRIOLO
Collegian Staff Writer

It's a fresh, new outlook on something very old and sometimes distant. It's funny and wild but its message comes across in all sincerity. It's Godspell.

This weekend's Artist Series program featured the road company of this award-winning musical and Schwab has rarely been blessed (excuse the pun) with such energy, joy

play review

and talent. John-Michael Tebelak's stage adaptation of St. Matthew's Gospel and Stephen Schwartz' music and lyrics, together with the outstanding vitality of 10 clown-costumed performers, made for unbeatable entertainment. It's gratifying to see that in times when that which glitters the most is usually the most successful, something as relatively uncontrived as

"Godspell" can become internationally acclaimed. Simple stage sets like sawhorses, fencing, planks of wood and bare lightbulbs are imaginatively employed throughout the show. Outlandish outfits adorn Christ and his disciples.

And yet the real secret of this "experience" lies in the people on stage. Each one of the 10 comes across so appealingly and naturally they make everyone feel a part of the happenings.

Jesus, played by Roger Kozol, and Judas-John the Baptist, performed by James G. Vaughn, led the company as they mimed and danced their way through various parables, such as their slightly unorthodox interpretation of the Prodigal Son.

Music and lyrics are integral parts of "Godspell." Ballad numbers such as "Day by Day" and "By My Side" contribute as much as lighter songs like "All for the Best" and "Turn Back Old Man."

The joy and warmth "Godspell" generates is worth far more than the price of admission.

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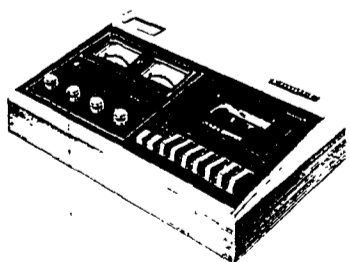
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