

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Music and Theatre

Presents



Study Guide created by Lena Frank and Lori Sulzberger
Photos and poster design by Britney Walters

The Creative Team

Directed by **Brad Dell**
Musical Director **Patrick Gagnon**
Scenic Designer **Natalie Hining**
Costume Stylist **Kelly Marie Schaefer**
Lighting Designer **Davis Vande Steeg**
Stage manager **Francesca Geis**
Assistant Director **Lena Frank**
Assistant Stage Manager **Liam Gleason**
Assistant Stage Manager **Emily Oldham**
Technical Director **Christopher Culver**
Costume Shop Supervisor **Doris Nash**
Props Master **Amy Taylor**

The Cast

Jesus **Keaton Lane**
John the Baptist/Judas **Nicolas Ronkar**
Rachel **Rachel McDermott**
Jess **Jessica Fenton**
Olivia **Olivia Gasper**
Ryan **Ryan Foreman**
Sydni **Sydni Lapsley**
Emily **Emily Heckle**
Olly **Olly Manning**
Nate **Nathan Krusemark**

Musical Numbers

ACT ONE

“Tower of Babble” - Company
“Prepare Ye the Way Of the Lord” - John the Baptist & Company
“Save the People” – Jesus and Company
“Day by Day” – Rachel and Company
“Learn Your Lessons Well” – Jess and Company
“Bless the Lord” - Olivia and Company
“All For the Best” – Jesus, Judas, and Company
“All Good Gifts” – Ryan and Company
“Light Of the World” – Sydni and Company

ACT TWO

“Learn Your Lessons Well” - Company
“Turn Back, O Man” – Emily and Company
“Alas For You” - Jesus
“By My Side” – Olly and Company
“We Beseech Thee” - Nate and Company
“Beautiful City” - Jesus
“On the Willows” – Judas and Company
“Finale” Jesus and Company

Preview Guide for Parents and Teachers

Dear Educator,

We have created the following study guide to help make your students theatre experience with the musical *Godspell* as meaningful as possible. For some younger students, it will be their first time viewing a theatrical production. We have learned that when teachers discuss the play with their students before and after the production, the experience is more significant and long lasting. Our study guide provides pre and post-production discussion topics, as well as additional resource materials. These are just suggestions; please feel free to create your own activities and areas for discussion.



The Basics of Godspell

Originally written in 1971, *Godspell* has been circulating on and off Broadway with many revivals with a well-known 2012 adaption. The story is based on the Gospels according to St. Matthew and follows as Jesus teaches his disciples lessons in love, forgiveness, and community through parables and stories. Due to the theatrical interpretation of the Bible, *Godspell* has been traditionally a very hard story to follow. Unlike a traditional musical, *Godspell* is lacking a structure including a plot moving towards the climax. Instead in *Godspell* we see variations of stories and songs, not really matching up and lacking clear transitions into the next section. Many times this is why previous productions of *Godspell* included a lot of nonsensical fun, in order to mesh ideas together without the pressure having to explain the why to their audience. In 2012 the script of *Godspell* was updated for the Broadway revival to include more modern references including cell phones, the internet, and mentions of contemporary figures like Donald

Trump. In a few places the script further invites each production to choose even more freshly contemporary references to make it as much as possible a mirror to our current world. In our production you will see mentions of R. Kelly and Snapchat.

What you are about to see

Set in Fisher Theater during the present time, Jesus brings these nine vastly different college students together. The characters are very much based upon the actor playing them because, once assembled, Jesus builds a community where stories and lessons are shared among the group. There are fun moments, heartfelt moments and even some painful times. Differing from original interpretation, many of the moments are sincere rather than funny, bringing new meaning to the story. This particular production of *Godspell* is all about gifting the audience with an experience, love, acceptance, and encouragement to go out into the world and build their own community. The fourth wall doesn't exist in this production as the audience is invited to dance, sing, and in some sections even perform onstage with the actors as well. Encourage your students to be engaged in what they are seeing and to interact with the actors onstage.



Ritual Theory

Traditionally, musicals and plays follow Aristotle's dramatic structure. *Godspell*, however, relies on ritual theater to tell its stories. The difference between Aristotle's dramatic structure and ritual theater is that Aristotle uses plot and conflicts to tell the story, where ritual theory is used to convey an emotion or feeling to the audience. Ritual theory is more present in our world than we really know. It can be seen church services, political rallies, or sporting events.

There are five basic functions of ritual theater: glorification, passing of traditions, entertainment, knowledge transference, and sympathetic magic. Though subtle at times, without all of the elements the experience for the audience won't be as effective. A great example of how these are used is Act 1. Much like a church service, Act 1 includes praise sections, lessons, passing of the peace, and communion which are all shared with the audience and benefit the audience. Here are some descriptions so you can find which sections of the play are utilizing one or more of these ritual functions:

Glorification: praise and worshiping god

Passing of Traditions: A belief, story, or behavior is passed on to explain "who we are" or "why do we do it this way?"

Entertainment: providing amusement to the audience

Knowledge Transference: knowledge is passed on to the community

Sympathetic Magic: acting out a ritual you want to happen in real life

Theater Etiquette

We want your students to have the best experience when they see a performance live so below is a list of reminders of how to behave when they see the show.

- Stay seated during the performance.
- Keep in mind that the actors on stage can hear you if you talk, so always be courteous to the actors and other audience members around you by paying attention during the performance and not talking or texting
- Arrive early. Seeing a show is a special experience, and you don't want to miss any of it.
- No taking pictures or recording during the performance.
- Be sure to laugh and applaud when appropriate, and remember to have fun!



Post-Show Activities

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning, what purpose was served by the actors starting in the audience?
2. What themes did you find in the play that you will take with you?

3. What is satire? What did you think of the script's satirical references to modern day figures like R. Kelly and Donald Trump? How were those moments used to illustrate the parables?
4. How do you think what you saw in the play relates to what is going on in the world today?
5. What part in the play was the clearest? What did you understand the most?
6. What part of the play did you have questions about? Which parts did you not understand?
7. Did the lighting enhance your understanding of the story? How did it change throughout the show?
8. What happens to the company after Jesus is gone?
9. What did you think the cell phone lights represented at the end of the show?
10. How does the music contribute to our understanding of the themes or main ideas?
11. Which ritual function (entertainment, glorification, passing of tradition, knowledge transfer, or sympathetic magic) did you notice and how did it affect you?
12. How is Act 2 different from Act 1? How does this shift affect the characters?

Write a Review

After seeing *Godspell*, generate a review of the show. These can be in written form to be put in a journal, they can be in podcast form, or they can be used as the basis for a roundtable discussion. If you were going to tell a friend about the performance, explore the main story using these suggested points:

1. Describe one of the actor's performances and discuss how that performance added to your enjoyment of the show.
2. Describe one of the costumes. How did it help to tell the story? What did the costume tell the audience about the character?
3. Describe the set. How did it create the world of the story?
4. What point did the director or playwright try to make? What main idea were they trying to convey to the audience? Were they successful? Why or why not?

Resources

For additional reading:

Godspell.com: Website by Stephen Schwartz' biographer with additional history and lyric sources for the songs.

History of Musical Theatre: For a broad history of the genre.
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Musical_Theater

Stephenschwartz.com: Stephen Schwartz' official website.

About Iowa State University Department of Music and Theatre

The Department of Music and Theatre offers a strong undergraduate music and theatre program, where students study with full-time faculty professionals in a supportive environment that encourages students to become their best.

Our faculty

Faculty in the Department of Music and Theatre represent a distinguished combination of professional and academic excellence.

Mission and vision

The Mission of ISU Theatre and Performing Arts is to empower citizen artistry by engaging students and the community in transformative theatre and performing arts experiences which examine the human condition, encourage lifelong learning, teach artistic skills, prepare professionals, inspire empathy, explore creativity, build relationships, and embrace diversity.

We love to hear from our audience members!

Send letters, drawing or reviews to:

ISU Theatre

0310 Carver Hall

411 Morrill Road

Ames, IA 50011

Email: isutheatre@iastate.edu

Website: www.theatre.iastate.edu

THEATER ETIQUETTE

We are delighted to have you as our guest and want your experience to be an enjoyable one. Attending a live performance is very different from watching television or going to the movies. You are not simply watching what is happening on the stage; you play an active role. The artists have worked very hard to prepare this performance for you, so please remember the golden rule:

Treat others the way you would like to be treated.

Here are a few guidelines to help you—and your fellow audience members—enjoy the performance:

Be Prepared

- Arrive early. Please plan to arrive at the theater at least 15 minutes before curtain time. Be generous in your estimation of travel and parking time.
- Plan ahead to meet anyone in your group who travels separately. Once inside the theater, 'saving seats' for friends will only prove frustrating to all involved.
- Remember to turn off all beepers, cell phones, and watch alarms before entering the theater (And then double check!) and leave all laser pointers, cameras, etc. at home.

Be Courteous

- Walk, don't run, when entering or leaving the theater. The term "break a leg" means good luck to the performers not the audience!
- Do not take food or drink into the theater, and please – NO GUM!
- Please take children out of the theater if they become restless and disrupt other's ability to listen.
- Actors love to hear applause—it shows how much you enjoyed the performance. If you like something, applaud— if not, don't. It's rude to boo or whistle.

Be Aware

- It's ok to talk *quietly* with those sitting next to you before the performance; however, when the lights dim, it's time to be quiet and direct your attention to the stage.
- Practice the International Sign of "Quiet Please!" by **silently** raising your finger to your lips to politely remind a neighbor or friend. You communicate your wish for quiet without adding to the distraction. Excessive noise or motion can disturb not only other audience members, but the performers as well.
- Take everything you brought with you when you leave. Once the cast has taken their bows and the house lights come up, check under your seat for any items (coats, backpacks, etc) you might have placed there.

Be Open

- A good audience member is open to new sights and sounds. Enjoy!



GETTING TO AMES

Stephens Auditorium is part of the Iowa State Center located at the corner of University Boulevard (formerly Elwood Drive) and Lincoln Way in Ames, Iowa. Plentiful parking is available on all sides of the building. Please follow traffic directors' instructions if you are asked to park in a specific location. Handicapped-accessible and limited-mobility parking is available on the west side of the auditorium.

