

GODSPELL

Flint Repertory Theatre

Godspell

September 27 - October 20, 2024

Conceived and Originally Directed by John-Michael Tebelak

Music and New Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz

Directed by Michael Lluberes

Principal Sponsor



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Educator Resource Guide



Flint Institute of Music



Flint Institute of Music

We are excited to welcome you and your class to a production of FIM Flint Repertory Theatre. Before you see the play, take some time to discuss the following expectations with your students so that everyone may fully enjoy the performance:

- Please **arrive promptly** so that the show may begin on time.
- **Silence or turn off** all cell phones and/or electronic devices. Put them away and do not use them during the performance.
- The theatre is small and intimate, and any sound can be distracting to the audience and performers. Please avoid talking to your friends during the performance.
- Please use the restroom as needed before the show begins. It is not only distracting to the audience and the performers, but the entire room becomes a stage at Flint Rep and what is normally a regular doorway is a space that an actor will exit or enter through. Your re-entry may be delayed significantly.
- There is **no recording** or flash photography.
- **Reacting** to the show (clapping, laughing, gasping, crying) **is encouraged!**

In this resource guide, you will find information, activities and resources for your students. We have included several prompts for writing or discussion throughout. I have also attached a list of additional resources where you can find discussion questions and activities for all subject areas. You are free to share any pages from this resource guide with your students, whether you choose to print them or share them digitally. I hope you find this resource guide useful and easy to use!

Thank you and enjoy the show!

Amanda Carpenter-Sauvie
Manager of Community Programs

Flint Repertory Theatre
Godspell
*Landmark Musical Reimagined
in a Pool of Water*
September 27 - October 20, 2024
FIM Elgood Theatre

**Conceived and Originally Directed by
John-Michael Tebelak**
Music and New Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
Directed by Michael Lluberes

**Starring Chanelle Beach, Shayna Blass,
Jason Briggs, James Cech, Gia Mae Chessa,
Sabrina Dahlgren, Travis Darghali, Alec Diem,
Bryana Hall, Enrique Miguel and Kyle Patrick**

Plot Synopsis

Flint Repertory Theatre opens the season with a splash! This bold new production, directed by producing artistic director Michael Lluberes, will be reimagined with actors performing in a pool of water. The original *Godspell* was the first major musical theatre offering from three-time Grammy® and Academy Award winner, Stephen Schwartz, and it took the world by storm. Boasting a score with chart-topping songs, *Godspell* is a sensation that continues to touch audiences. A group of disciples help Jesus Christ tell different parables by using a wide variety of games, storytelling techniques and a hefty dose of comic timing. Dissolving hauntingly into the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, Jesus' messages of kindness, tolerance and love come vibrantly to life.

FIM 2024-25 Season Sponsor
The Whiting Foundation



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The Story of Godspell

Godspell is a musical retelling of the Gospel of Matthew. It began as a project by drama students at Carnegie Mellon University in 1970 as a collection of improvised scenes with music based on traditional hymns written by John-Michael Tebelak. After some revisions and new music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, *Godspell* became one of the longest-running Off-Broadway musicals, eventually moving to Broadway in June of 1976. *Godspell* ended its run in 1977. The musical has had several productions around the world, including a 2011 Broadway Revival.

The show begins as John the Baptist gathers a diverse group of people together who are invited to follow and learn from Jesus. The members of the group become Jesus' disciples and help him tell different parables by using songs, a wide variety of games, storytelling, and comedy. The play ends with The Last Supper and the Crucifixion, and Jesus' messages of kindness, tolerance and love come vibrantly to life.



Original 1970 cast at Carnegie-Mellon University

Character Descriptions

Other than John the Baptist/Judas and Jesus, the characters take the names of the actors who portray them. Each character is also a soloist for one song. Below is the cast of the Flint Repertory Theatre's production of *Godspell* along with a character description of each:

- **John the Baptist/Judas** is Jesus' most devoted follower, but also someone who begins to doubt him and rebel. He is charismatic and intelligent. He is played by Enrique Miguel.
- **Jesus** is charismatic, charming, funny, and gentle but strong. He is a natural leader. He is played by Kyle Patrick.
- **Bryana** is a bit of a tomboy, but open and sweet. She is the first of the group to commit to following Jesus in the song "Day by Day." She is played by Bryana Hall.

- **Chanelle** is a class clown. She is goofy and eager to make others laugh. She is the soloist in the song "Learn Your Lessons Well." She is played by Chanelle Beach.

- **Gia Mae** is confident and a bit of a show-off. She is often the first to volunteer but sometimes she jumps in before she really understands what is going on. She is a soloist in the song "Oh, Bless the Lord." She is played by Gia Mae Chessa.

- **Jason** is sometimes a little slow on the uptake. But there is a great sweetness and innocence about him. He sings "All Good Gifts." He is played by Jason Briggs.

- **Travis** is a total class clown. He is the life of the party. He sings the song "Light of the World." He is played by Travis Darghali.

- **Shayna** is sassy and cynical, but her tough exterior may be a bit of a put on. She is the soloist in "Turn Back, O Man" and is played by Shayna Blass.

- **Sabrina** is shy and warm, like a mother figure. When she commits to something, she is all in. She is the soloist in the song "By My Side." She is played by Sabrina Dahlgren.

- **James** is extremely high energy with a playful and impish spirit. He sings the song "We Beseech Thee." He is played by James Cech.

Activity

Read through the list of characters. Choose one that you identify with the most. Explain why you connect with that character.

After watching the play, come back to this character and consider their actions in the play. Do you still feel connected to that character, or did you find yourself identifying with someone else?

Themes

Love

In *Godspell*, love is a central theme throughout the play. This love is seen as a powerful force that can transform a person and connect them in a community. The characters are taught to care for and trust one another. Through love and community, we see the characters grow as individuals.

Community

Each of the characters who come together in this play have unique personalities, and yet these individuals come together to support one another on their journey to understand the teachings of Jesus. Although they tease and play around, no one is bullied or excluded. The play shows the importance of a community in achieving personal and spiritual growth.

Forgiveness

In *Godspell*, forgiveness is a powerful healing force that can help build community and bring about personal growth. Jesus teaches the group to forgive unconditionally, and as the characters experience conflict, they also experience the joy of both giving and receiving forgiveness.

Betrayal

Humans are imperfect, and even in the strongest and most loving communities, there is the possibility of betrayal. Although betrayal is destructive, it allows the audience to consider the importance of redemption and the power of forgiveness.

Joy and Celebration

Godspell celebrates life and love through joyous songs, laughter, and fun interactions. We see that faith and love should be expressed joyfully and that happiness can come from community and spiritual connection.

Activity

Consider the themes in Godspell and share your thoughts. Where do you see these themes in your life? How are they connected to one another? After watching the play, which scenes or songs did you find especially powerful? In those moments, which themes listed above were explored?



The 2011 Broadway Revival cast at Circle in the Square Theatre. Photo: Jeremy Daniel.



Flint Repertory Theatre's cast of *Godspell*.

Making a Splash

The next dream on the horizon is a reimagined adaptation of Stephen Schwartz's pop-rock musical, *Godspell*, which premieres on September 27. Lluberes will be directing the show himself and has chosen a fluid artistic concept.

"There is a baptism in the show," explains Lluberes, describing the seed of inspiration that has grown into his newest vision. "So, I thought, why not make the whole thing a baptism? It could be a fun way to see this classic musical in a way you've never seen it before." And this baptismal experience will take place in a literal pool of water, with the audience on three sides — if all goes as planned.

While the idea of turning the Elgood stage into a pool might sound a little outlandish, it is just one of many productions in which Flint Rep has explored a communal relationship with H₂O. After reopening the former Flint Youth Theatre space as Flint Repertory Theatre in 2018, the first production by the new company, *The Boatman*, took place in the waters of the Underworld. In 2022, *Wrong River* explored the Flint Water Crisis, and even the 2023 production of *Rain on Fire* used water elements as a means of both consequence and cleansing amidst themes of death and drug addiction.

"Flint's relationship with water is always interesting territory to explore," says Lluberes, adding that his Flint audience is always top-of-mind when planning season programming. "And this season I wanted to open with something hopeful, healing and joyful about community. I thought *Godspell* was the perfect thing because it is a community formed around telling stories, which is what theatre is all about."

Ok ... but is it even possible to stage a production in a giant pool? Lluberes, by his own admission, does not easily accept "no" for an answer.

"You find things within the limitations," he says with enthusiasm. "You set goals and figure out how to make it work. How will we build a pool? How will we keep it clean? Where will we put the band? How will we mic it? There are much smarter people than me who figure that out. And we all love the challenge of making it work."

Activity

*Reflect on what you have learned from the article. What makes this production unique and challenging for the cast and crew of *Godspell*? What do you imagine the play will be like?*

Theatre Vocabulary

The Script

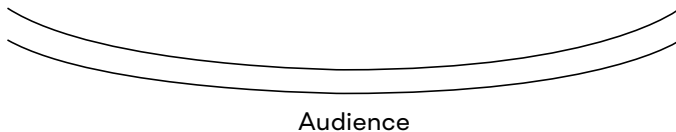
Those who create scripts for the stage are not called authors; rather, they are called **playwrights**. For example, Arthur Miller is the **playwright** of *Godspell*, but the **author** of the novel *Focus*. Musicals, however, do not have playwrights. Instead, they usually have a team of three creators: the **librettist**, the **lyricist**, and **composer**. The librettist writes the **libretto**, or the scripted dialogue and stage directions. The lyricist writes the words sung during music, or **lyrics**, and the **composer** builds the **score** of music that accompanies the lyrics.

The Stage

At the FIM, we have many venues with varying architecture. These differences affect the **house**, or the area where the audience sits. To describe these differences, we must identify a space each theatre has in common: the **stage**.

The stage, or playing area, has five main **directions**. We interpret these directions from the actor's perspective—on stage and facing the audience. Try using the accompanying diagram to help understand the following:

Upstage Right	Upstage Center	Upstage Left
Stage Right	Center Stage	Stage Left
Downstage Right	Downstage Center	Downstage Left



Why is it called **“up/downstage?”** Stages used to be **raked**, or on an incline. Take a flat piece of paper. Tilt it somewhere less than 45 degrees, with one edge touching the table. “Walk” two fingers up and down this incline. Naturally, this is how stage directions were named! Though raking used to be standard for stages, today stages are flat and audience seating is raked instead.

In **proscenium** styling, the audience sits downstage of the playing area, which is typically framed by the **proscenium arch**. This is the style you are most likely familiar, since movie theaters are set up similarly. You could consider the borders of the screen as film’s “proscenium arch.” The Whiting Auditorium and the Capitol Theatre have prosceniums.

You will attend a production and a new adaptation of *Godspell* at FIM Flint Repertory Theatre’s Elgood Theatre

(pictured below). This is performed on a **thrust-style stage**. A thrust has the audience seated on three sides of the playing area. Though this design typically allows the audience to be closer to the action, the actors must then perform to stage left, stage right, *and* downstage.

The side the audience sits on and views the performance through is called the **“fourth wall.”** If a character speaks directly to the audience, that is referred to as **“breaking the fourth wall.”** Think of Jim in *The Office* staring straight into the camera. In proscenium staging, this “fourth wall” is made obvious by the framing of the proscenium arch.



FIM Capitol Theatre – proscenium arch



FIM Whiting Auditorium – proscenium arch



FIM Elgood Theatre – thrust-style stage

Activities and Discussion Prompts

The following prompts can be used for discussion or more formal writing assignments. We would love to see what your students come up with! You can email responses to asaavie@thefim.org or send them to us by mail to:

Attn: Community Programs

Whiting Auditorium
1241 E. Kearsley St.
Flint, MI 48503

- Choose a moment from the play (a song, a parable, etc.) that you found especially powerful. Go online and look up the script or the lyrics for that section. Prepare an analysis of this moment from the play. You could consider the message, the interpretation by the actors, the impact on the audience, or the reason you selected this moment above all others.
- Look up movie and play reviews online. Using what you find as a model, write a review of Flint Rep's production of *Godspell*.
- Imagine that you are the producer! Which famous actors would you cast for each character? What would be the setting for your production of *Godspell*?
- *Godspell* has been enjoyed for years by people of many different spiritual backgrounds and beliefs, but it is a retelling of a Biblical story from a Christian perspective. Do you think it was appropriate to see it on a school field trip? Why or why not?



Resources

The following resources have excellent activities and discussion questions for *Godspell*. We encourage you to explore their contents!

Godspell Broadway Revival Study Guide

This excellent study guide was prepared for the 40th anniversary revival of *Godspell* on Broadway. Inside you will find excellent discussion questions for before and after the play. You will also find printable handouts for multiple grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school) and multiple subject areas (language arts, social studies and visual arts).

https://broadwayeducators.com/studyguides/Godspell_StudyGuide.pdf

Villanova Theatre Godspell Study Guide

This study guide was prepared by the Villanova Theatre in Pennsylvania. This study guide has some excellent side by side comparisons of the lyrics in the songs to the parables and verses in the Bible that they are based on. This allows students to see how an ancient story can become a contemporary song.

villanovatheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Godspell-Study-Guide.pdf

Godspell Lyrics

This link lists all the songs in *Godspell*. You can click on them to read the lyrics.

<https://www.allmusicals.com/g/godspell.htm>

Godspell Lyric Sources

This link lists the songs in *Godspell* along with the specific Bible verse that they are based on.

godspell.com/godspell-lyric-sources/