

GODSPELL

Music and Lyrics: Stephen Schwartz
Book: John-Michael Tebelak

Dir. Joseph Lee
Prod. Olivia O'Connor

Welcome to *Godspell*!

Godspell by John-Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz (*Wicked*, *Pippin*, *Enchanted*) is one of the biggest off-Broadway and Broadway successes of all time. We beseech thee, read this packet for production expectations and audition information! If you have any more questions, please contact Joseph Lee (joe.lee@yale.edu) or Olivia O'Connor (olivia.oconnor@yale.edu)

A Quick Note from the Director

Religion is nothing if not a performance! If I learned anything from growing up in the church, this is it. And when I left the church, I also learned that it's not a very good one. But Stephen Schwartz sure can write a show, and *Godspell* has been a favorite musical of mine for a while (despite my opposition to institutional Christianity). To be fair, the musical itself is not explicitly Christian: Schwartz himself is Jewish and bases his story on the Gospel of Matthew, which is [Judeo-centric](#). The story of *Godspell*, according to its authors, serves as a celebration of the community that can be formed in the wake of devastation, NOT as a retelling of the Gospel. We are not bound to biblical tradition, or any tradition at all. Above all, my greatest hope is that our team will commit to the joy and festivity of the show. This show is deeply meaningful to me, so I am beyond grateful that you are interested in building the world of *Godspell* together. I'll leave you with a few lyrics from a *Godspell* song, "Beautiful City," that will be at the heart of the vision for our show:

When your faith is all but killed
You can give up, bitter and battered
Or you can slowly start to build
A beautiful city
Yes, we can
Not a city of angels
But finally, a city of man*

**I don't endorse this specific word, but you get the message, I hope.*

Show synopsis

(Adapted from MTI)

Godspell follows a small group of ordinary people as they are chosen to become disciples of Jesus Christ. The nine disciples help Jesus tell different parables by using a wide variety of games, storytelling techniques and a hefty dose of comic timing! Possible theatrical elements include: puppetry, clowning, improvisation, instrumental music, being silly, onomatopoeia, etc. The show's structure allows for the incorporation of whatever gifts and talents actors have to offer. An eclectic blend of songs, ranging in style from pop to vaudeville, is employed as the story of Jesus' life dances across the stage. Dissolving hauntingly into the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, Jesus' messages of kindness and love come vibrantly to life. There is an abundance of opportunity for actors to explore light-hearted comedy, philosophical dialogue, and serious drama as the story unfolds.

Time Commitment Expectations

First and foremost, we want to emphasize the wellbeing of anyone involved in the show: you are people first, students second. That being said, we hope that actors will be as excited about the show as we are, so we expect a high level of commitment to rehearsing and preparing the show. If you have any personal mental/physical health needs that need to be accommodated during the process, do not hesitate to let us know. Accessibility is at the core of the show's messaging, and we will reflect that in our theatermaking practices as well.

The music for the show is admittedly difficult, both technically and dramatically since all songs are intertwined with the script and the blocking. Furthermore, this show is heavily focused on the ensemble of the nine disciples. If you are not singing your solo song, you will be singing challenging parts or solo lines in the background. This should excite you! Regardless of what role you get, you will play a significant and active part in telling the story.

Typical rehearsals during January's music learning and table work (see timeline below) will take up 2-4 hours a week. It is recommended, but not required, that you familiarize yourself with your solo[s] before each rehearsal. The songs are super catchy, so this shouldn't be too hard (but if you're unable to, we completely get it!).

Once February rolls around, we will amp up to 3-6 hours a week. The cast will begin working with our movement choreographer—you are NOT expected to be a dancer. Expect to learn some fun moves and devise some of your own. By Early March, we will start stumble-throughs and stitch all of the show's elements together, taking about 3-6 hours a week. As for tech week... we will try to make it as painless as possible.

More information to come once we have the whole team assembled!

Rehearsal Timeline

December: Introductory meeting/Read-through

December 21–January 17: Winter Recess

January: Table Work and Music Learning

February-Early March: Blocking/Choreography + Stumble-throughs

March 10-26: Spring Recess

March 27-29: Tech “Week”

March 30-April 1: Performances

The Creative Process

The production and design team will have a strong vision for the creative and dramatic direction we want to take the show in. Our dramaturgy will focus on decolonizing the Judeo-Christian aspects of the show, recognizing them as long-established faith traditions that predate white appropriations of these belief systems. However, ultimately, the show will center the universal, non-religious messages of community, learning, and interconnectedness.

As for the cast, we hope you will be open to the ideas we have for your characters (and we will be open to any ideas you may have). Collaboration is at the root of this process and can only make our production stronger. This is a world we are building together!

Character Descriptions

Content Warnings: Torture, indentured servitude, gun violence, animal slaughter, stoning, eternal damnation, crucifixion, castration, death. Almost all of these are mentioned in an ironic or comedic context, save for the last three. Regardless, we will address all themes of the show with the utmost respect and care.

Adapted from descriptions by Stephen Schwartz. We are committed to an imagination of this show that includes all identities. Anyone can be cast in any of these roles! If you have concerns or questions about casting, please feel free to reach out.

We have included the solos of each character to provide you an opportunity to hear what each character sounds like (and what they believe in). If you would like, we recommend that you listen to the [2011 Broadway Cast recording](#).

We’ve also listed instances of staged violence/intimacy so actors know what to expect. We plan to work with a violence/intimacy coordinator from UP. If we are unable to secure one, we will be modifying these according to actor comfort and safety.

JESUS — Must be the most charismatic individual in the cast. High energy, charming, funny, gentle but with strength. They are the sort of person others instinctively follow.

Solos: Save the People, Learn Your Lessons Well, All for the Best, Alas for You, Beautiful City

Staged violence/intimacy: Slaps Judas on the face, Lifted by entire cast, Kisses Judas on cheek

JOHN THE BAPTIST/JUDAS: They have attributes of both Biblical figures: they are both Jesus' lieutenant and most ardent disciple and the doubter who begins to question and rebel. Like Jesus, they are also charismatic, but in more of an overt revolutionary way, with an undertone of sexuality. They are the most "serious" and intellectual of the group, though as with all the actors, they must still possess a good sense of physical comedy.

Solos: Prepare Ye, All for the Best, On the Willows

Staged violence/intimacy: Slapped by Jesus, Choked by George, Cheek kissed by Jesus

NICK: Very high energy. Impish and playful. In the original, they played several musical instruments, including concertina, recorder, and guitar (this will not be required in our production. If you are willing to learn, we will celebrate and support you!).

Solo: We Beseech Thee

TELLY: Not the brightest in the bunch, they are a little slow on the uptake. But there is a great sweetness and innocence about them.

Solo: All Good Gifts

GEORGE: The comedian, the class clown. The person who can do a hundred voices and imitations.

Solo: Light of the World

Staged violence/intimacy: Chokes Judas, Lifts Morgan

ANNA MARIA: A bit of a tomboy, but basically open and sweet. Perhaps the youngest of the group. They are the first of the group to commit to following Jesus in the song "Day by Day."

Solo: Day by Day

Staged violence/intimacy: Chokes Morgan

LINDSAY: The confident one, the show-off. The first one to volunteer, sometimes they jump in before they really understands what's going on.

Solo: Bless the Lord

UZO: The shy one. Sometimes a little slow to get things, but when they do, they commit all the way. Has an "earth mother" kind of warmth to them.

Solo: By My Side

MORGAN: Sassy and slightly cynical. Also the “sexy” one, but their sexiness contains a large element of put-on, in the manner of Mae West or Madonna (who in fact once played this role.)

Solo: Turn Back, O Man

Staged violence/intimacy: Choked by Anna Maria, Lifted by George

CELISSE: The other class clown. Goofy and a cut-up. In the 2012 Broadway revival, they played several instruments as well, including conga, ukulele, and guitar (again, not required for our production. If you are willing to learn, we will celebrate and support you!).

Solo: Learn Your Lessons Well

Audition Timeline

November 28–December 5: Auditions

December 6–10: Callbacks

December 11: (Tentative) Casting Day

Auditions and Callbacks

Good, you’re still here! More information will be released soon about in-person audition times and alternative video submissions. For now, here’s what to expect:

To audition, you will have to a) Sing us a song, and b) Teach us a lesson.

Please prepare a selected cut from one of the following songs:

1. “Learn Your Lessons Well” measures 70-100 1:46-2:43
2. “By My Side” measures 1-34 0:00-1:00
3. “Turn Back, O Man” measures 59-79 2:18-3:06
4. “Alas For You” measures 53-86 1:13-1:48

Sheet music [here](#) Backing tracks [here](#)

Please arrive 5-10 minutes early, if you can. The audition should not take more than 20 minutes. When you enter the room, we will have a quick chat, and you will sing your song! After a few notes (and questions, if you have any), we may ask you to sing it again. Then, you will teach us a quick, fun lesson in under 5 minutes. It can be about anything you’d like! Tell us what’s on your mind, tell us about something we should know—and convince us that it matters, no matter how silly it may seem. You can use props, logos/pathos/ethos, or whatever gets the job done. This show requires festivity, letting loose, and dedication to the bit: we will be on the lookout for these qualities!

We will contact you by the next morning of your audition informing you of whether or not you have been called back. If you are not called back, we thank you for your interest and ask that you consider joining our production team! If we’d like to see you again, you will be called for specific

characters in group auditions. There will be a quick movement component led by our choreographer (no dancing, just moving!). You will then sing an excerpt of specific solo[s] and/or ensemble parts, as well as read a side from the script (PDFs of which will be provided before your callback). While still looking for the previous qualities mentioned, we will be seeing how well you collaborate creatively. Again, this is an ensemble-heavy show—play well with others!