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'Godspell' performance was uplifting

By Evie Malm Mar 13, 2019



Members of the cast of Godspell during a recent rehearsal.

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This past week the world seems to have turned upside down -- well, maybe even more so than usual.

As an octogenarian, I am disheartened to see the threads of discord and resistance replace reason and objectivity. Have we lost our way and forgotten the lessons of history? What will it be like when our grandchildren and great-grandchildren step into the working world? Will they be a self-centered, lazy generation lacking kindness and empathy for their fellow man?

These are dark thoughts. But after a week viewing numerous examples of hostility replacing civility, I really was questioning the future.

All that changed at the Orpheum Theater last Saturday afternoon, where I attended an absolutely outstanding production of "Godspell" which showcased a talented cast of teens under the direction of Laura Canfield. Many of these players had a history of youth musicals directed by Canfield, and it showed.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Canfield since she moved to Foxboro with her husband. As many readers know, she built a career around teaching piano and voice and has been involved in all phases of music at St. Mary's Church.

But her mission to build musical theater programs in Foxboro's elementary schools was something very new -- and special.

As a part-time writer for this newspaper, I had the privilege of watching her stage "Willie Wonka," "The Lion King" and "Suessical," to name a few. While she was a hard driver who demanded respect and hard work, her own drive, spontaneity and enthusiasm were infectious. Every show reflected the dedication of parents, students and community members.

Fulfilling a promise she made to stage one more musical before current cast members scattered after high school graduation, she chose "Godspell." It was Canfield's first play with an all high school cast and it was one of the first under her own theater company, LRCStage Productions LLC.

Canfield explained the choice in her biography: "This show is not about religion, it's about community and it's about love. I couldn't think of a better community to share it with."

She goes on to say, "Despite the divisive times we are living in and the challenges we face, there is still love and hope in the world. We should never let go of that. Ultimately, that is what 'Godspell' is all about. Its message is timeless."

There was nothing amateurish about the production. The soloists and the entire company rose to the demanding level of the music. Their voices blended beautifully and the lyrics were clear and distinct.

All the soloists belted out their songs with passion and stage presence, and there were no missteps in the intricate dance numbers. The players moved on to various levels and platforms within the stage setting and worked their way up the aisles to engage the audience, who were clapping and tapping their feet to be beat.

They even had a live band made up of local students who all added that big-time Broadway feeling to the show.

As was the case with Canfield, the cast biographies speak volumes about these young talents. They were not only having fun together, you could sense their love for each other and their sense of community. Think of the values they are strengthening -- hours memorizing songs and dance routines, accountability to each other, and scheduling their time around school responsibilities.

Needless to say, my faith was renewed over the course of the afternoon. As my friend Hilda and I said to each other, when you see a production like this, it truly gives you hope that the world will get back on track.

And if these cast members can somehow hang on to the values learned at a community playhouse in Foxboro, the world surely will be a better place.