

# Theatre Guild's 'Godspell' entertaining, insightful

Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford presents "Godspell" 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 3-4, and March 10-11, and 2 p.m. Sunday, March 5, at the theater, 15138 Beech Daly, Redford. Tickets \$12, discount for groups of 10 or more, call (313) 531-0554.

By ROBERT WEISSEL  
SPECIAL WRITER

The Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford's "Godspell" is an entertaining and insightful rendering of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Thirty years ago, "Godspell" (and "Jesus Christ Superstar") blazed a new trail in musical theater — the rock opera. The goal of John-Michael Tebelack (music and words by Stephen Schwartz) was to present religious themes to a younger generation in terms they could understand. Its timeless message cre-

ated a much wider audience, accounting for its continued popularity over the years.

Though some have taken great liberties with interpretation, director, Jennifer Rembicz has fashioned essentially a straightforward production for the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford.

The ensemble cast of 16 give rousing and energetic performances. Though one wishes their style was more spontaneous, with a less-rehearsed quality, as the disciples learn of Jesus' joyous message of faith, hope and love.

The musical unfolds as a series of parables: the sower, the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and so on — in the form of pantomime, song and dance.

Kevin Hentkowsky's warm and humane persona serves him well in the role of Jesus. He could use

a little more edge at times, however, to create a more charismatic character.

Caleb Gilbert is very good in multiple roles; principally, John the Baptist and Judas.

Other players include Dennis Day, Jim Digs, Karen Kelly, Teri Giordano (also vocal director), Linda Gozdzick, Bryon Harvey (also assistant director), Melissa Leininger, Annette Ripper, Matt Ripper, Sue Schuler, Jennifer Schuler, Jane Teachout and Dennis Michael Whaling.

Keri Wayne does a nice job with the choreography, especially considering the size of the cast and limited space. Musical director Julie Yurconis, with Andrew Fanco, Matt Vorhees and Ted Miller, support the cast not only with solid rock, but with jazz, vaudeville, swing and revival tunes.



The show's most famous number is "Day by Day," performed radiantly by Sue Schuler. Linda

Gordick had fun with her box in "Turn Back, O Man" Kevin and Caleb do a catchy soft-shoe rou-

**Musical: "Godspell" cast members take a break from rehearsal at the Theatre Guild of Livonia-Redford.**

tine in "All for the Best" — which by the way includes a strobe.

## Cast showcases their comedic flair in 'The Skin of Our Teeth'

The Bonstelle, Wayne State University's undergraduate theater company, presents the Thornton Wilder classic, "The Skin of Our Teeth" until Sunday, March 5. Performances 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, March 3-4, and 2 p.m. Sunday, March 5. The Bonstelle Theatre is at 3424 Woodward Ave., call (313) 577-2960.

By SUE SUCHITTA  
SPECIAL WRITER

Thornton Wilder's comedy about George Antrabus and his family is a rambling, rollicking comedy that spans the history of mankind and survives good times and bad "by the skin of their teeth." They are Adam and Eve, or John and Jane Doe. They have survived fire, flood, pestilence, the seven-year locusts, the Ice Age, the black box, a dozen wars and as many depressions. They are alternately calm or panic-stricken, heroes or clowns, but they are always optimistic.

Thornton Wilder designed "The Skin of Our Teeth" to be not in any town familiar to the theater patrons, so the Bonstelle compa-

**'The Skin of Our Teeth' is a clever comic romp, with easy laughter, and insight if you want to look for it. The talented Bonstelle company pulls off this performance with skill and ease — certainly not by the skin of their teeth.**

ny cleverly made references to Ferndale, Detroit, and other Michigan locales. Written in 1942, "The Skin of Our Teeth" is an allegorical fable that takes the average suburban family through time, with frequent references to the Bible and other historic events. The play takes place in three acts, which are roughly divided by disaster: Ice age, flood, and war.

The large cast takes full advantage of the wackiness in "The Skin of Our Teeth" to showcase their creative and comedic flair. Many of the crowd scenes are presented with controlled chaos and excess energy. They represent Moses, the muses and majorettes.

The show is narrated by the seductive housekeeper Sabina, played with enthusiasm by

Angela Hogue. Although all the characters step out of their roles at times, Sabina steps out of character and establishes a rapport with the audience, telling them her problems and amusing them with her on-stage arguments with the long-suffering stage manager, played with indignant rage by Blair Franklin.

Mr. Antrabus, played by Randy Barrett Topper of Farmington Hills, was a cross between an absent minded professor and Fred MacMurray's portrayal of the clumsy father in "My Three Sons." Bumbling but sturdily protective of his family, he kept busy inventing the wheel, fending off Sabina's advances, and surviving war and a host of historical annoyances.

Mrs. Antrabus, played by

Kristi Sorkin, is the long-suffering but tenacious Eva. Sorkin brought a spunkiness to the role that made us cheer her on when she went head-to-head with the lascivious Sabina, bartered for fire, or kept infidels and other strangers at bay.

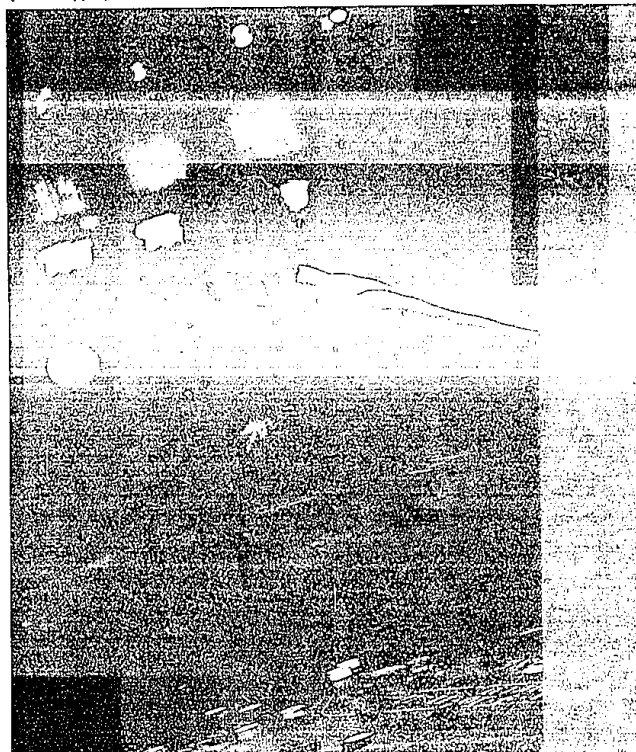
The costumes brought to mind the post-war period of the 1950s, when people defined their role by the trappings of suburbia,

and a fur was a victory of the hunt in more than one way.

The set was like a colorful surrealistic painting, which enhanced the wacky and creative tone of the play. The chimney rose and fell according to the demands of the plot, the window dropped to odd angles, and a convenient trap door mid-stage led to a bomb shelter. The fireplace was capable of appearing lit, an

important detail, since our ancestors depended so greatly on a warm hearth for survival — and much waiting occurs when it was allowed to go out.

"The Skin of Our Teeth" is a clever comic romp, with easy laughter, and insight if you want to look for it. The talented Bonstelle company pulls off this performance with skill and ease — certainly not by the skin of their teeth.



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