

Personal file:

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'Godspell' casts own spell with talent, music

The actors and actresses of the Godspell production seemed to cast their own spell on its audience Sunday afternoon.

It was fascinating how it happened so quickly. The stage was dark and quiet; empty except for a single white sheet which was raised to a point above the curtain and four wooden crates.

However, as soon as Tom Cravens began singing 'Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord' the stage came alive, complete with vivid colors of the casts' costumes.

After a few bars from Cravens, the remaining cast members, with the exception of Bill Nicholls who portrayed Jesus, ran from behind the audience onto the stage, joining Cravens.

The spell continued, as the cast, all dressed in radical, extraordinary costumes, twirled and jumped until each was on stage.

Nicholls then appeared from behind the white sheet, and the story of the Gospel according to St. Mathew began.

Although the contemporary routines of the parables from the Bible seemed to capture the audience's full attention, the facial expressions of each cast member certainly contributed to the fascination of the production.

For example, no one in the audience could take their eyes from Maria Arzeni when she sang her solo, "Turn Back, O Man" to the male cast members, winking and smiling at each as she strolled past them.

Not only did the cast succeed with facial expressions during the parable routines, but they also succeeded with their musical talent. The songs in Godspell are well known, and the voices singing throughout the production were obviously talented and professional.

Mary Greenhood, for example, complemented perhaps the most popular song from the play "Day by Day" with her musical talent.

Perhaps the most sensitive portion of the production came at the very end with the scene from the Last Supper.

Nicholls led the cast as each sang and washed each other's makeup—as though washing each other of his sins.

Next, Nicholls said his last goodbye to each of his followers bringing each to tears as he came closer to his death.

As the story of Jesus, Nicholls dies. He was then put on a steel trapeze, making a cross of his body by extending his arms outwardly and spreading his feet on either end of the trapeze.

Finally, Nicholls was raised above the players. To end the production, the cast took Nicholls down from the trapeze and carried him on their shoulders off the stage.

The immediate spell was over, but Eastern's 'Godspell' will last much longer.