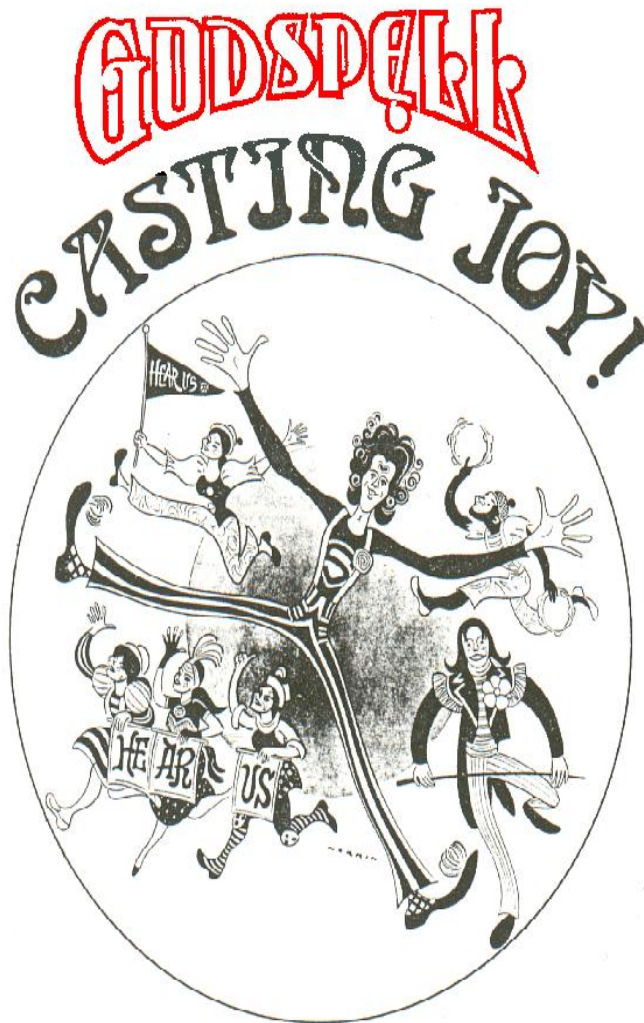


Devotional—day 1

"Where do we begin?"

An Article from *Dramatics*, January 1975



By Brad Munson

An excerpt from this article:

....How do you explain John-Michael Tebelak's *GODSPELL*? Simply put, it's a modern musical retelling of the story of Christ and His parables, taken from the *Godspell* according to St. Matthew. It's neither a revival meeting, nor a pitch for Christian conversation. By using a variety of outrageous staging techniques that include pantomime, vaudeville routines, slight-of-hand magic and a collection of beautifully written songs by Stephen Schwartz, *GODSPELL*'s message of love and happiness denies any real sectarian boundaries that might be expected in a play about Christ and His teachings. During its incredibly successful professional run, it was applauded by all denominations--not just Christians--for it brings life and beauty to some powerful ideas: Live, don't merely survive. Love yourself and love your neighbors, friends and enemies alike. And be **joyful**--above all things, be **joyful**!

How Godspell Began

Excerpt from interview in *Dramatics Magazine*, January 1975

The following is from John-Michael Tebelak:

“...Finally, I turned towards the Gospels and sat one afternoon and read the whole thing through. Afterwards, I became terribly excited because I found what I wanted to portray on stage—**Joy!** I found a great **joy**, a simplicity—some rather comforting words in the Gospel itself—in these four books. I began immediately to adapt it.

I decided to go to Easter sunrise service to experience, again, the story that I had gotten from the Gospel. As I went, it began to snow which is rather strange for Easter. When I went into the cathedral, everyone there was sitting, grumbling about the snow, and the fact that they had already changed their tires. They weren't going to be able to take pictures that afternoon. Snow was upsetting their plans. As the service began, I thought it might be a little different. Instead, an old priest came out and mumbled into a microphone, and people mumbled things back, and then everyone got up and left. Instead of "healing" the burden, or resurrecting the Christ, it seems those people had pushed Him back into the tomb. They had refused to let Him come out that day.

As I was leaving the church, a policeman who had been sitting two pews ahead of me during the service, stopped me and wanted to know if he could search me. Apparently he had thought I was ducking into the church to escape the snowstorm. At that moment—I think because of the absurd situation—it angered me so much that I went home and realized what I wanted to do with the Gospels: I wanted to make it the simple, **joyful** message that I felt the first time I read them and recreate the sense of community, which I did not share when I went to that service. I went to my teachers at Carnegie and asked if I could work at my own special project for my masters' degree, and they agreed. That following fall, in October, we began rehearsals at Carnegie.”

Godspell continued

An Interview with Stephen Schwartz on www.stephenschwartz.com

Stephen Schwartz had his first encounter with *Godspell* on March 7, 1971 at the Café LaMama off-off-Broadway:

“It was a pretty shaky time in my life. I had been musical director of a show that had just flopped and I had just lost my job at RCA Records. I got a call from Charlie Haid, whom I had known at college; he was working with two producers, Edgar Lansbury and Joe Beruh, who had heard me audition the score for *Pippin*. He told me they were thinking of moving a show called *Godspell* from LaMama to Off-Broadway and asked if I would be interested in writing a score for it. I went to see it that night. I remember the energy and freshness and being astonished that John-Michael Tebelak, the conceiver/director, had discovered so much humor in material which I had always seen treated with ponderous solemnity. Above all, I remember feeling the **joy** I shared with the other members of the tiny audience.

Five weeks later, we went back into rehearsal with my score (and one song we retained from the LaMama production, the lovely “By My Side.”) The rehearsal period was intense and strenuous, though **full of laughter**, and there was a kind of focus that I didn’t know then was unusual. We did not think at all past opening night, about things like hit or flop, reviews and ticket sales. There was no second-guessing. I remember late in previews, one of the cast members saying with wonder, “Do you realize critics are going to write about us?” and all of us looking at him with astonishment. It had never really entered our minds.

I know there was a sort of innocence and purity about that experience which I spent too long trying to find again. But *Godspell* will always be a special show for me, and that spring of 1971 a special time.”

"I come not from a Christian upbringing and therefore I really didn't know the New Testament. I was reading some of these parables for the first time and the hymns that I set with new music for the show are all from the Episcopal Hymnal.

I basically was responding to the material fresh,
for the first time."

- Stephen Schwartz -

JOY

Main Entry: joy

Pronunciation: 'joi

Function: noun

Etymology: Middle English, from Old French joie, from Latin gaudia, plural of gaudium, from gaudere to rejoice; probably akin to Greek gaiaion to rejoice

1 a: the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires :DELIGHT

b: the expression or exhibition of such emotion :GAIETY

2: a state of happiness or felicity :BLISS

3: a source or cause of delight

Old Testament "JOY":

Deuteronomy 28:45-48

46 These curses will be a sign and a wonder against you and your descendants forever.47 Because you didn't serve the Lord your God with **joy** and a cheerful heart, even though [you had] an abundance of everything,48 you will serve your enemies the Lord will send against you, in famine, thirst, nakedness, and a lack of everything. He will place an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

Psalms 5:10-11

10 Punish them, God; let them fall by their own schemes. Drive them out because of their many crimes, for they rebel against You.11 But let all who take refuge in You **rejoice**; let them shout for **joy** forever. May You shelter them, and may those who love Your name boast about You.

Psalms 4:6-8

6 Many are saying, "Who can show us anything good?" Look on us with favor, Lord.7 You have put more **joy** in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound.8 I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone, Lord, make me live in safety.

Psalms 51:10-13

10 God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me.11 Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.12 Restore the **joy** of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit.13 Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways, and sinners will return to You.

Proverbs 10:28

28 The hope of the righteous is **joy**, but the expectation of the wicked comes to nothing.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

18 Here is what I have seen to be good: it is appropriate to eat, drink, and experience good in all the labor one does under the sun during the few days of his life God has given him, because that is his reward.19 God has also given riches and wealth to every man, and He has allowed him to enjoy them, take his reward, and rejoice in his labor. This is a gift of God,20 for he does not often consider the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with the **joy** of his heart.

Time for personal reflection (Day 1):

*** Be prepared for Group Discussion*

In the information on the preceding pages, one of the main themes that appears multiple times is the importance of the presence of “joy” in a production of *Godspell*. Why is “joy” such a necessary ingredient?

What is the difference between “being happy” and “being filled with joy?”
Hint: They are not the same.

Why, as a Christian, should “joy” (based on its definition and use in scripture) be a part of my daily life?

Who do I know that exudes “joy” on a daily basis? What does that person do that makes me feel the “joy” in their life?

Is “joy” present in my life? And if so, how does it show itself to others around me on a daily basis? And if not, why don't I?

Time for personal reflection...

By the end of the summer, I want my fellow cast and crew members to describe me as...