By David Shaw

Godspell began as an off-Broadway play, was made into a movie, and then performed nationwide by road companies. One would think that after so many years the play would have lost its excitement, but seeing the MIT Musical Theatre Guild's production of Godspell proves that the play still is exciting and holds a few surprises as well.

Godspell is a musical based upon the Gospel according to Matthew, with music and new lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. The cast of ten sings, dances, and acts its way through numerous parables and psalms, presenting each as a short comedy sketch.

The parables include "The Prodigal Son," "The Good Samaritan" and a slightly altered recounting of the Noah's Ark story. The play is loosely structured to allow the actors to improvise, although there are set lines. The actors are truly an animated bunch, and their improvisations are excellent. Fortunately there is only one MIT joke used, the cast relies on other things for laughs.

It is the songs that make this show, and most of them are performed quite well. Each of the actors has a song to solo with. The theatre is small enough so that microphones are usually unnecessary, most of the singers project well enough, but one or two songs get drowned out. "All Good Gifts," sung by Mark A. Jackson, and "Day By Day," sung by April Waters, were particularly outstanding.

The central character is, of course, Jesus. In the tradition of most Godspell performances, this Jesus, portrayed by Kirk Trombley, has the usual Superman shirt, sneakers, suspenders, and curly hair. His performance is quite good and he sings "Save The People" and "Alas For You" rather well. The part of John the Baptist/ Judas, the play's only tragic role, is well played by B. John Greer. One of the show's high points is the song "All For The Best," where John and Jesus perform a vaudeville soft shoe number.

The choreography throughout is superb. The choreography in "Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing," performed by Daryn Feldman, is one of the best moments of the show. The band, led by Richard Meyers, produces its share of good music here and there. "I "Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing" song, sung by Mark A. Jackson, and "Day By Day," sung by April Waters, were particularly outstanding.

The lighting was adequate, and the actors usually didn't need the microphones. The set lines are superfluous, and the actors are truly an animated bunch. The actors are truly an animated bunch, and their improvisations are excellent. Fortunately there is only one MIT joke used, the cast relies on other things for laughs.

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