

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there only one version of GODSPELL?

Stephen Schwartz: Subsequent to the 2012 Broadway revival, a second version of GODSPELL has been made available, incorporating the slight cuts, changes and structural reorganization from that production. To further distinguish them from one another, the character names of the 2012 version have been changed to those of that Broadway cast, rather than the names of the original cast in the original version. So now presenting organizations may use the original version or the Broadway revival version, depending on their preference. That being said, each time GODSPELL is presented, it is done so with a certain amount of updating and personalization. In terms of what may change, it's done in order to update and personalize the enactment of the parables, etc.; so, as long as the actual words of the parable are used, the surrounding enactment and additional ad-libs are completely at the discretion of the director and cast. For instance, the "Good Samaritan" has been done as a hand puppet show, as in the original production, as a television "reality cop show," as in the 2000 tour, which Scott Schwartz directed, as a breaking news story, as in the British tour, etc. Similarly, the putting on of the makeup has been substituted for by all sorts of techniques – pinning on a badge, putting on a specific costume piece that Jesus hands out, etc. The point is that the underlying intention, as described carefully in the script, should remain the same, and Jesus' actual words should remain the same, but everything else is up for grabs. This can be as small a thing as changing the Joanne character's ad-lib about the storehouses from "I'll store all my tuna noodle casserole" to "I'll store all the _____s I bought at (name of local store)" or as elaborate as doing the Prodigal Son parable using a closed-circuit video camera in front of a green screen and showing the changing backgrounds to the audience. It's up to each production. **(If your GODSPELL script doesn't include detailed director's notes, please contact the licensing organization where you obtained your performance license to request the most current script. It includes a note from Stephen Schwartz to the director and also includes notes and direction throughout the script).**

May we use the new GODSPELL Orchestrations for our production?

Yes. To arrange for use of Michael Holland's orchestrations for the 2012 revival, contact Music Theatre International at www.mtishows.com. To arrange for use of the orchestrations for the National Tour Cast version of GODSPELL by Alex Lacamoire, you should contact him at ALacamoire@mac.com. To arrange for use of the orchestrations for the 2000 Off-Broadway Cast version of Godpsell by Dan Schachner, you should contact him at danschachner@gmail.com.

May we use the song Beautiful City in our production of GODSPELL?

Yes. No special permission is needed to incorporate Beautiful City into the show as long as the lyrics used are the ones featured on the recent recordings, not the ones from the 1972 movie. This version of the song is available in the Stephen Schwartz Songbook published by Warner Brothers.

Stephen Schwartz: I feel that the new lyrics are vastly superior to the ones used in the movie, which I find "drippy" and somewhat cloying. So I would prefer wherever it is used within the show, directors use the new lyrics. I don't feel they are too specifically about Los Angeles if one doesn't know they were originally written for that purpose; I feel their reference to urban blight and violence is universal enough.

Where can we use Beautiful City in our production of GODSPELL?

Stephen Schwartz: I have seen “Beautiful City” used in several of the more recent productions of GODSPELL. It is always in the second act, which makes sense, because it would be strange to sing about what the community can accomplish together before the community is built, which occurs during the first act. Most of the productions I have seen, which included “Beautiful City,” used it in place of the “Day by Day” reprise during the make-up removal sequence. In that instance, it began as a solo for Jesus while he watched the others, and then the rest of the group joined in during the bridge or towards the end of the song. Often, a shorter version of the song was used here. This was a very effective placement for the song. In the recent British tour, the song was used at the very end in place of the “Long Live God” and “Prepare Ye” reprise—in other words, as the Finale. This was also extremely effective, though more daring. In this instance, one person began the song, then others gradually joined, until finally the whole group was singing. It was used as part of the healing after the Crucifixion and also as a declaration that the group would carry the message on into the world. As I say, it worked exceedingly well, but it does subtly alter the message at the end of the show, putting more emphasis on human responsibility. The other place I have seen it used (in the 2000 national tour) was in an up tempo version to open the second act in place of the “Learn Your Lessons Well” reprise. This worked also, but had less dramatic impact than the other possibilities. I leave it to the director and company of each individual production to decide if they want to include “Beautiful City” and, if so, where to use it.

What is the history of GODSPELL, and how did Stephen Schwartz get involved?

Stephen Schwartz: GODSPELL began at Carnegie-Mellon University as a directing project for John-Michael Tebelak, who was in the theatre department there. John-Michael, who had thoughts of becoming an Episcopal minister before he decided to become a theatre director, had recently attended an Easter service in Pittsburgh and was struck by the lack of joy and celebration in the service, as well as by the personal hostility he felt from some of his fellow churchgoers because of his youth and long hair (it was during the height of the Vietnam War and its accompanying “Generation Gap”). The show was presented at Carnegie, where it included interpolated pop songs and Episcopal hymns set to music written by cast members, as well as the song “By My Side,” written by CMU students Jay Hamburger and Peggy Gordon (a member of the cast). Being very well-received, it was presented the following year in New York City at an off-off-Broadway theatre called the Cafe la Mama. This was in February and March of 1971. There, it was seen by producers Edgar Lansbury and Joseph Beruh (brought there by former CMU student Charles Haid, who became the associate producer of the show). They became interested in giving the show a commercial production at an off-Broadway theatre. At that time, I was contacted by the producers, who had heard me audition my score for PIPPIN, and I signed on to write music and new lyrics. We retained the song “By My Side,” and the rest of the score—except for the song “Learn Your Lessons Well,” which was added during rehearsals—was written in time for the start of rehearsals on April 11, 1971. The show opened May 17, 1971.

Do we have to dress like hippies in our production of GODSPELL?

Stephen Schwartz: No, you do not. The characters in GODSPELL were never supposed to be hippies. They were supposed to be putting on “clown” garb to follow the example of the Jesus character as was conceived by GODSPELL’s originator, John-Michael Tebelak, according to the “Christ as clown” theory, propounded by Harvey Cox of the Harvard Divinity School (among others). Mr. Cox wrote a book called Feast of Fools that goes into detail about this. The chapter that is most relevant to GODSPELL is called “Christ the

Harlequin.” Because the show was originally produced in the hippie era, and because the director of the GODSPELL movie somewhat misinterpreted the characters as hippie-esque, that misunderstanding has come to haunt the show a bit.

Has the Prologue been cut from GODSPELL?

Stephen Schwartz: The “Prologue” has most certainly NOT been cut from GODSPELL, as both John-Michael Tebelak and I felt it was vital to set up the idea of the show. If you’re doing a show about the formation of a community, don’t you think you have to see what the individuals are like when there is no community? I cut the song from the record for commercial reasons, because we wanted the album to “cross-over” as a pop album, which it was able to do, but I would never dream of cutting the Prologue from the show.

Why are you credited for writing “new” lyrics for GODSPELL?

Stephen Schwartz: The lyrics for many of the songs, including “Turn Back, O Man,” “Save the People,” “Day by Day,” “Bless the Lord,” “All Good Gifts,” and “We Beseech Thee” are from the Episcopal hymnal. They are re-settings of traditional Episcopal hymns. That’s why my credit on GODSPELL reads “Music and New Lyrics,” as opposed to “Music and Lyrics.” It may amuse you to know that when the film version of GODSPELL opened, I was roundly criticized for the lyrics for “Save the People” by Richard Schickel; the movie critic of Time Magazine quoted them disparagingly. Apparently, he’s not Episcopalian.