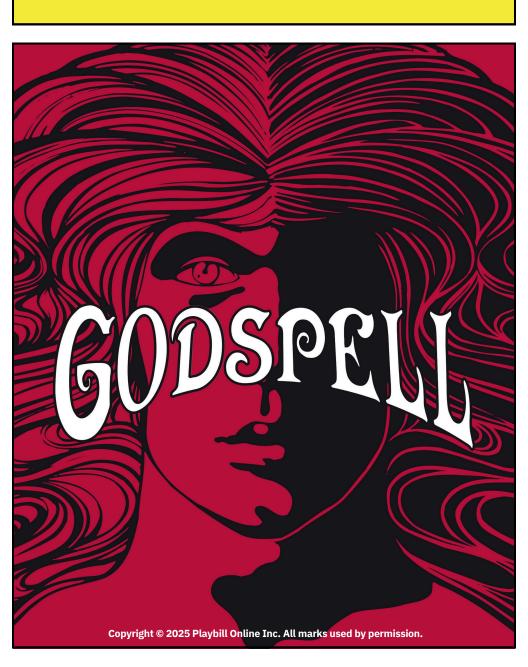
# PLAYBILL®

8TH AVENUE PLAYERS



#### 8TH AVENUE PLAYERS

Present

# GODSPELL

Conceived and Originally Directed by JOHN-MICHAEL TEBELAK

Music and New Lyrics by STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Originally Produced on the New York Stage by EDGAR LANSBURY / STUART DUNCAN / JOSEPH BERUH

Florence Simmons Performance Hall 2025 March 14-16 & 20-23

Scott MacAulay Performing Arts Centre
2025 March 26-27

Godspell is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).

All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

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# **ABOUT THE SHOW**

This production of *Godspell* will be performed by the *8th Avenue Players*, a group of actors and musicians who are committed to producing professional quality musical theatre on Prince Edward Island. Their most recent production was *Little Women* performed in 2023.

Each of us goes through periods of pain and suffering. What if one man wanted to help us see how beautiful life could be, and what if that one man was punished for trying to do just that? Godspell is the story of that one man.

Godspell (full title: Godspell: A Musical Based on the Gospel According to Matthew) was originally featured as an Off-Broadway musical in 1971, created by John-Michael Tebelak with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz (who also composed the score of the popular musical Wicked). It was adapted as an American musical comedy-drama film in 1973. The two-act musical is structured as a series of parables, primarily based on the Gospel of Matthew, with a troupe who team up with Jesus to teach his lessons in a new age.

Godspell has received many awards, including Broadway.com's favourite musical revival in 2012. The 1972 Toronto production helped launch the careers of many actors, including Victor Garber, Eugene Levy, Andrea Martin, Gilda Radner, Dave Thomas, Martin Short, and the show's musical director, Paul Shaffer. In 1977, Godspell was nominated for a Tony Award in the category of Best Original Score. The song 'Day by Day' reached #7 on the Canadian Billboard charts.

Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God, and Atheists don't believe in God at all; but most people know someone who has tried to change the world for the better and was persecuted for it. Godspell is the story of one of those people.

In the spirit of Reconciliation, we acknowledge that the land upon which we gather is unceded Mi'kmaq territory. Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island), Mi'kma'ki, is covered by the historic Treaties of Peace and Friendship. We honour these treaties, which recognized Mi'kmaq rights and established an ongoing relationship between nations. We pay our respects to the Indigenous Mi'kmaq People who have occupied this Island for over 12,000 years; past, present and future. We are all Treaty People.

## CAST

CAS	ST
Jesus	Hayden Lysecki
John the Baptist	Ryan Whitty
Babekah	Rebekah Brown
Rico	Eric Cerisano
Jubi	Julia Cerisano
MacK	MacKenzie Cutcliffe
Didi	Adia Laureijs
Gaston	<mark>Mariu</mark> s Lavoie
Samwich	Sam Marchionda
Peach	Carter McDevitt
Will	James Ronahan
Emsie	Emi Smith
CharChar	Charlee Whitty
MUSICIANS	
Bass	_
Drums / Percussion	
Guitar	3
Guitar	
Piano	
Keyboards	
CRE	
Producer	
Co-Directors	
Music Director	M <mark>ar</mark> k Ceri <mark>sa</mark> no
Assistant Music Director	
Vocal Director	Hayden L <mark>ys</mark> ecki
Choreographer	Charlee Whitty
Assistant Choreographer	
Stage Manager & Production Assistant	Vanessa MacArthur
Set Design & Construction	Ryan Whitty
Head of Wardrobe	Cadina Meadus
Wardrobe Assistant	Rebekah Brown
Audio	
Lighting Sama	
Marketing & Social Media Manager	
Social Media Consultant	Rebekah Brown

Puppet Design & Construction ..... Eric Cerisano

## ACT I

Tower of Babble	Company
Prepare Ye	John the Baptist
Save the People	Jesus
Day by Day	Didi
Learn Your Lessons Well	Babekah
Bless the Lord	Jubi
	Jesus / John the Baptist
All Good Gifts	Rico
Light of the World	Peach
ACT II	
A	ACT II
-	
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise)	Samwich
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise) Turn Back O Man	Samwich Emsie
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise) Turn Back O Man	Samwich Emsie Jesus
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise)  Turn Back O Man  Alas for You  By My Side	Jesus  CharChar / Jubi / Babekah
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise)	Samwich Emsie Jesus CharChar / Jubi / Babekah Gaston
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise)	Jesus  CharChar / Jubi / Babekah
Learn Your Lessons (Reprise)	Samwich Emsie Jesus CharChar / Jubi / Babekah Gaston

# SPECIAL THANKS

"Best of luck to all the performers, from the R.Seegers Construction Team!"

"Pane & self-love is an Italian sourdough pop-up bakery located in Charlottetown, PEI who invites everyone to enjoy bread and pastries; and we wish the production of Godspell a successful run!"

To Colton Carrick from Redemption Church, Darren Fairhurst, and all of our business sponsors; thank you so much for your generous donations! You are helping to keep theatre alive on PEI, we couldn't do it without you!

- \*\*To Carl Arsenault from Arsenault Bros. Construction for donating the majority of the building materials used to construct our set, to North Rustico Home Hardware for painting supplies, and to Kent Ronahan from Stow It All for transporting our set around to our various locations.
- \*\*To Sheena Sunil at the Holy Redeemer's Jack Blanchard Parish Centre, and Gloria Hastie at the Holland College Florence Simmons Performance Hall for providing us with ample space to hold our rehearsals.
- \*\*To Charlee Whitty, Ryan Whitty, and Albert Kays; for opening their homes to us for additional space for rehearsals and set construction.
- \*\*And to all of you, for coming to see the show, and telling your friends. Without all of you filling the seats, our hard work would have been for naught. So this show, it's all for you, we hope you love it. Enjoy!

## **DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

For those of you unfamiliar with Godspell, this musical refuses to be confined to a script or single narrative idea - each production is up for interpretation as unique as the community that brings it to life. When we set out to stage Godspell on Prince Edward Island, we embraced that spirit of reinvention, striving to create a version that speaks to audiences today just as powerfully as it did when it first took the stage in 1970. This is not just the story of Jesus - it is the story of humanity. It is a celebration of connection, of strangers becoming friends, of lessons learned through child-like play, and of the simple yet profound power of love. No matter who you are or where you come from, Godspell invites you to be part of its beautiful community.

We wanted our production to feel immediate, joyful, and deeply connected to our world today. Setting it in a playground felt like the perfect way to capture the spirit of childhood—a place of discovery, laughter, and even conflict, where we learn some of life's most important lessons; how to share, how to trust, and how to care for one another. Framing our story over the course of a single day, from morning's first light to evening's quiet stillness, allows us to explore how these characters evolve in real time, leaving forever changed. Just like childhood games that begin at sunrise and fade as the sun sets, their journey is fleeting yet transformative - a reminder to embrace every moment and every lesson while we can.

None of this would have been possible without our remarkable cast, whose passion and dedication have shaped every moment of this production. This final product is the result of the interpretation and ideas of the entire team. This show is, above all, a celebration of theatre's ability to bring people together. In a global social climate that feels more divided than ever before, we hope *Godspell*'s message of unity and love resonates with each of you. May we all leave tonight reminded to embrace every moment, every lesson, and - above all - to always lead with love.

Charlee Whitty & Hayden Lysecki
CO-DIRECTORS





MARK CERISANO (Producer / Music Director / Bass Guitar)

Mark has produced musicals such as *Broadway Revues* (*Grace Notes*) and *Little Women* (8th Ave Players), for which he has also been the director and music director. He has also musically directed Les Mis, The King and I, The Sound of Music, The Greatest Showman, and West Island Story (Learning Tree Co-op). Mark received his professional performance experience as a freelance trumpet player in the jazz and salsa scene in Montreal, and as a professional trumpet player on Carnival and Holland America Cruise Lines.



# VANESSA MACARTHUR (Stage Manager / Production Assistant)

Vanessa is thrilled to be re-joining the 8th Avenue Players for their production of Godspell. Having worked with this and other theatre companies, both on and off the stage, she's excited to be back at it again from behind the scenes! She has previously worked on local productions of Little Women, Mousetrap, and Dear Jack, Dear Louise. Born and raised in western PEI, she now resides in Freetown with her partner Andrew, and their pets. She graduated from Holland College in 2017 as a cabinetmaker and has since been employed in her field with Tops to Floors. In her free time you can find her singing, reading, and hanging out with friends! Find her social media @nessamac93.



HAYDEN LYSECKI (Jesus) (Co-Director / Vocal Director)

Hayden (He/Him) is elated to bring the 8th Ave Player's vision of Godspell to PEI. Hayden fell in love with the story of Godspell while preparing for this role and he hopes its message of community and love stays with each audience member. He would like to thank the entire cast for all the support and love they have put into this entire process and hopes you enjoy the show! His theatre credits include Moody Spurgeon MacPherson in Anne & Gilbert (Island Theatre Festival), Mark Cohen in RENT (ACT), Christopher in Munschables (CCOA), Emmett Forrest in Legally Blonde (First Act Youth Company), Action in West Side Story, La Cienega in Bring It On, Sebastian in Little Mermaid, Nathan Detroit in Guys & Dolls, Fagin in Oliver! (Oshawa Little Theatre). Find him online @hayden\_lysecki



CHARLEE WHITTY (CharChar) (Co-Director / Choreographer)

Charlee is a performer, choreographer, and director from Newmarket, ON. She graduated from Huron Heights Secondary School's arts program, and the performing arts program at Sheridan College. Now living in New Glasgow, PEI, Charlee continues to pursue her passion for theatre. Godspell has been a wonderful experience, as its message of love, empathy, and human connection resonates deeply with her. She feels honored to work with this extraordinary cast and crew to bring this story to life. Her theatre credits include Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz (The Queensville Players), Dr. Frank N. Furter in The Rocky Horror Show (Sheridan College), Jovie in Elf (Revolution), Mrs. Pye in Anne & Gilbert (Island theatre festival), and Choreographer for RENT (ACT). Find her online @charlee.whitty.



RYAN WHITTY (John the Baptist) (Set Design & Construction)

Ryan is from Uxbridge, ON, and a Sheridan Alumni who has planted his roots on PEI. He is ecstatic to be bringing *Godspell* to the masses with such an incredibly talented cast, and with them share such a beautiful show. Some of his other credits include *Tom Collins* in *RENT. George Banks in Mary Poppins. Dewey Finn* in *School of Rock*. And is excited to debut in his first professional production in the upcoming *Anne and Gilbert* 2025 season. Find him on social media @whittyryan Please enjoy the show and "prepare ye" for an unforgettably whimsical evening.



# REBEKAH BROWN (Babekah) (Assistant Choreographer / Assistant Wardrobe)

Born and raised islander Rebekah Brown is currently based in Charlottetown, PE. Recently seen as *Anne Shirley* in *Anne & Gilbert*, Rebekah has found her happiest is when she is performing alongside those who share just as much passion as her. She is thrilled to be joining this talented cast and to be a part of such a passionate show. Her theatre credits include *Anne Shirley* in *Anne & Gilbert (Island Theatre Festival)*, Featured Performer in *MUNSCHABLES (CCOA)*, *Mimi* in *RENT (ACT)*, *Jo March* in *Little Women (8th Ave. Players)*, *Lucinda* in *Into The Woods: Concert (The Guild)* and *Heather Chandler* in *Heathers (Blackbox Theatre Co.)*. Find her on social media @rebekahebrown09 & @lefunkband



# ERIC CERISANO (Rico) (Puppet Design & Construction)

Eric Cerisano is a musical theatre actor and filmmaker in Charlottetown, PEI. Acting since the age of seven, he recently graduated from the Toronto Film School and aspires to become a producer and cinematographer. He has demonstrated his talents in productions such as *Little Women, The Outsiders*, and various *Feast Dinner Theatre* productions. Eric is extremely excited to be a part of *Godspell* and hopes you all have a groovy time. You can follow him on social media @eric\_chris\_cerisano.



## JULIA CERISANO (Jubi)

Julia is a singer and actress based in Charlottetown. She is currently studying at the University of Prince Edward Island. Her theatre credits include Josie Pye in Anne and Gilbert: The Musical (Island Theatre Festival), Jo March in Little Women (8th Ave Players), Feast Dinner Theatre productions, Johnny Cade in The Outsiders (Black Box Theatre co.), and Hodel in Fiddler on The Roof (TLT co-op). Find her on social media @julia\_cerisano. Julia is so excited to share the stage with this amazing group of talented performers and friends!!



# MACKENZIE CUTCLIFFE (MacK) (Swing)

Born and raised on Epekwitk/PEI, MacKenzie moved to NYC to study dance and pursue a career in musical theatre before returning to the island. Since moving home, she has discovered a supportive theatre community she deeply treasures. MacKenzie is thrilled to be part of this passionate Godspell company. Her favorite performance credits include Anne & Gilbert, White Christmas, Legally Blonde, Mary Poppins, Annie, and Reefer Madness. She was an original cast member in Time Step, The Unseen, and Song & Dance Men. Her choreography credits include Anne & Gilbert, Reefer Madness, Legally Blonde, and Bagels From Benny (NBC New York's must-see holiday shows). Find her on social media @mackenziecutcliffe.



#### ADIA LAUREIJS (Didi)

Adia Laureijs is thrilled to be joining the talented cast of *Godspell*. Having previously performed in productions of *Anne & Gilbert*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Anne of Green Gables*, she possesses a deep passion for theatre, and recently received recognition at the National Music Festival as the 1st Place winner for musical theatre in her category. In addition to theatre, Adia is heavily involved in the music program at Three Oaks Senior High School, where she performs as a lead vocalist in the RnB band and as a first flute in the concert band. You can find her online @adialaureijs and she sends lots of love to her family, friends, and teachers whose support make it all possible!



#### MARIUS LAVOIE

#### (Gaston) (Marketing & Social Media Manager)

Marius is excited to be a part of such a unique musical production. A proud Francophone and Romanian, born and raised in Charlottetown, he is currently studying voice in the UPEI Music Department. His prior performances include *Anne & Gilbert, Radium Girls*, and *Newsies*. Specializing in over seven genres of dance from a young age, he studied ballet for multiple professional summer sessions at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School and the Quinte Ballet School of Canada. Marius has also performed in the Island Fringe Festival and Street Feast, completed intensive training at Island Dance Academy, as well as assisted with and created choreography for *Matilda the Musical*, *The Addams Family Musical*, and *Newsies* in various high schools. Find his social media @marius.lavoie.



# SAM MARCHIONDA (Samwich) (Swing)

Sam (she/her/elle) is so excited to be part of this production! She hails from Welland, Ontario and studied Musical Theatre Performance at St. Lawrence College. Selected credits include Paulette (Legally Blonde), Sister Robert Anne (Nunsense), Judy Haynes (White Christmas), Joanne and Gilmer (Godspell), and two performances with Feast Dinner Theatres (Summerside). By day, Sam helps people in recovery from mental health and addictions and just celebrated four years of sobriety. A huge thank you to the 8th Ave Players team, to her husband Brandon for his unconditional love and support, and to YOU the audience for sharing your time with us. Find her on social media @samoutloud and enjoy the show!



# CARTER MCDEVITT (Peach)

Carter is thrilled to be part of *Godspell*! Originally from Quispamsis, NB, Carter moved to PEI for school four years ago, and has since become active in both the music and theatre communities. He is lead guitarist of the Music PEI-nominated band '*Lefunk*' and has also performed with *Feast Dinner Theatre*. Previous stage credits include *RENT* (featured ensemble). You can find him on social media @carter.mcdevitt. Carter is grateful for the opportunity to share this experience with such a talented cast and crew. Enjoy the show!



JAMES RONAHAN (Will)

James is a performer born and raised on PEI. He is currently in his second year at UPEI studying music. James has always had a love theater and has been doing shows for quite some time now. He is so excited to be a part of the Godspell cast! Some of his theater credits include Davey in Newsies, Beast in Beauty and the Beast, Gerry in Rainbow Valley, Buddy in Elf the Musical, and was in the Tunes and Tales of PEI! You can find him on social media @ronahan\_wj17.



## EMI SMITH (Emsie)

Emi Claire Smith is thrilled to join 8th Ave Players in their production of Godspell. A classical soprano, R&B/soul performer, and singer-songwriter from Kensington PEI, Emi is in her third year at UPEI pursuing a Bachelor of Music Education with a major in voice. Growing up in a family of musicians, Emi discovered her passion for performing at a young age. After stepping away from theatre for several years, she is excited to return to the stage for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic and to share this experience with old and new friends alike. Find her on her personal account @emicsmith and on her music account @emiclairemusic



CHRIS SMITH
(Assistant Music Director / Guitar)

Chris Smith is a graduate of UPEI's Department of Music. He is an East Coast Music Award winner who played guitar with the group "Este Mundo", and was also the vocalist and guitar player for the band "Seventh Stone". Chris has had the privilege of performing lead roles in the musicals Jesus Christ Superstar (Judas), Into the Woods (The Baker), and A Christmas Carol - The Musical (Scrooge). He is excited to join the 8th Avenue Players for their production of Godspell, where he will once again bring his guitar skills to the stage. He is especially thrilled to share the spotlight with his talented daughter, singer/actor Emi Smith. Currently, Chris is working on the follow-up to his solo EP "Falling Forward".



# ALBERT KAYS (Drums & Percussion)

Albert brings a wealth of experience to the orchestra pit, with over 40 years as a drummer and a history of standout stage roles including *Judas* in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Che* in *Evita*, and the vengeful barber, *Sweeney Todd*. He has performed with various rock bands and several musical acts and now channels his expertise into *Godspell's* vibrant score. When he's not behind the drums or on stage, Albert helps people find their dream homes through his real estate brokerage in Charlottetown. Albert's blend of theatre and musical experience makes him the perfect fit for this production, and he's thrilled to help bring the magic of *Godspell* to life.



#### VIKTOR SHALKIN (Guitar)

Viktor Shalkin is a jazz guitarist from Belarus, currently studying music at the University of Prince Edward Island. His creative journey spans over eight years in drama, videography, and photography. Now he blends his love for music and specifically guitar with his work as a videographer. Viktor collaborates with local musicians, using his videography and photography skills to promote their art. With a unique mix of performance and visual storytelling, Viktor continues to build a diverse artistic path that connects music, creativity, and community. Find him on social media @sour\_vector. Come see the show! Wonderful actors, great musicians, outstanding production team, "it's all for the best".



## JENNY SOMERS (Piano)

Jenny is a high school student in Summerside, PEI. She has performed on stage in A Christmas Carol and Beauty and the Beast (Madame de la Grande Bouche) and has been a member of the Three Oaks R&B Band, College of Piping Pipe Band, UPEI Wind Symphony, PEI Senior Honours Band, and the NS Youth Wind Ensemble. Among past credits, Jenny has represented Summerside in the Provincial Music Festival for voice and piano, and PEI in the National Music Festival. In addition to performing, she teaches piano lessons and accompanies choirs and soloists for concerts and festivals. You can find Jenny online @jenny\_sophia27. She is thrilled to be part of this production, and excited to be joining the band alongside her mother, Sandral



# SANDRA SOMERS (Keyboards)

Sandra is delighted to have the opportunity to be involved in this production and to be making music with such talented people, especially her youngest daughter, Jenny. She studied at Dalhousie, then completed a Bachelors degree in Toronto and an ARCT from the Royal Conservatory. Sandra lives in Summerside with her family and is a piano teacher, accompanist and child care provider. She wants to "Thank the Lord for all His good gifts" including a life full of countless music making experiences with her family, individuals and groups across the Maritimes and Ontario.



# CADINA MEADUS (Head of Wardrobe)

Cadina is a professional soloist, choral singer, and flute accompanist from Toronto, Ontario, with over 22 years of experience in theatre. She has directed The Sound of Music and Beauty and the Beast and is deeply involved in costume design, stage decoration, and props. Theatre: Head of Wardrobe for Rock of Ages Toronto (More Entertainment) Donna in Mamma Mia, Fantine in Les Misérables, Glinda in The Wizard of Oz, Golda in Fiddler on the Roof, Mother Abbess in The Sound of Music, Sarah in Guys and Dolls, Miss Stacy/Mrs. Blewitt in Anne of Green Gables, Maggie in A Chorus Line, and The Witch in Into the Woods (THEA nomination). She is thrilled to be a part of this performance of Godspell and is especially proud to work alongside her talented daughter and son-in-law Charlee and Ryan Whitty.

# **PRODUCER'S NOTE**

Welcome, and thank you for attending this 8th Avenue Players production of Godspell.

The name, 8th Avenue Players, was taken from the name of the street just north of Broadway. I chose this name for our group because my dream was to produce professional Broadway quality musical theatre on PEI, just north of Broadway.

This all-island cast of actors, musicians, and crew, as well as the cast and crew of our first two productions of *Little Women*, have helped make that dream come true, and I couldn't be more honoured to be part of this team.

I am also proud to say that every person involved in this production, from Director to Roadie, is being paid for their contribution, which makes this a professional, not-for-profit theatre group. Being professional does not just refer to being paid. It refers to how much you commit and by that definition, each of these actors, musicians, and crew are true professionals.

A portion of each ticket price goes directly to the actors, musicians, and crew. If you would like to help support our cast and crew, please encourage your friends and family to attend one of our shows, and consider returning for a repeat performance. Also, if you enjoyed our show, please consider using the donation link which can be found in this program so that 8th Avenue Players can continue producing Broadway style performances on our island. In doing so, you are supporting musical theatre on PEI and helping support our extremely talented island artists.

Thank you again for being here and sharing this special story of hope and community with us.

Mark Cerisano PRODUCER To learn more about us, or to donate to our production, visit us online at: www.8thaveplayers.com





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