



See "Lily Tomlin" This Sunday

U. S. POSTAGE
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Permit No. 217
Rocky Mount, N. C.

The Decree

Non-Profit Organization

VOLUME XVI, NUMBER 5

ROCKY MOUNT, N. C.

THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1975



"Godspell" Smash Hit At NCWC

Recently North Carolina Wesleyan experienced its' first of the school year 1974-75. Other clubs had tried, fraternities had tried and even the athletic department had tried, but it took the Theatre Department with Richard Kagey as their leader to bring Wesleyan what it had waited oh so long for, A WINNER!!!! That winner was Godspell. Coltraine Theatre has never been packed so many times for a production. It was a complete sellout a week in advance of its last three nights with a waiting list of about sixty trying to get at least a look at Kagey's masterpiece. This may sound a little candy-striped to some, but if it does then you probably didn't see the show. Below are three different reviews written during various performances of the shows two-week run. If you missed it, don't try and make it up by seeing the movie, a winner it wasn't.

Good News About Godspell

By DAVID JONES

Richard Kagey has scored a triumph with his production of "Godspell" at North Carolina

Wesleyan College. His direction demonstrates that indeed "the show's the thing," for "Godspell" achieves with a bare naked simplicity of set design what a more elaborate staging would surely have lost: an immediate theatre experience.

The show is presented "in the middle," and I do not mean "as it were." The company performs squarely between (and now and then among) the divided audience, a consummate conception. You are there, and unless you are an emotional cretin, you are "in there" with the players.

Ah, the players. The show is nicely balanced by splendid acting and sweet naturalness, Sandy Saunders, in the role of Jesus, simply looks innocent and vulnerable in his own joyous way, the more so as the performance moves along. Despite a pronounced Virginia accent on "ou" vowel combinations, (by its end he is thoroughly convincing) and the audience must ask itself once more "why must a good man die?"

You are not likely to see more winsome naturalness on stage than in the performance

of Sharon Lockwood. When she sang "Where Are You Going?!" one could only wait for the answer, so captivating was the question as she sang it.

Tim Hill belongs in this kind of production. He is perfectly at home in song and dance numbers, and "Godspell" gives him another chance to do what he does best. In a pinch, and there were only one or two, he can carry a group number. He is complemented nicely by Sandy Evans. Her performance was delightful and superbly timed. A good production can become exceptional if the players insist rigorously on doing the little things that support a big scene. Miss Evans never forgot this.

Something of the same can be said for Lynn Parker, and she deserves an accolade for possession, far and away, the best female singing voice in the cast.

Betsy Massey obviously enjoyed performing, but her "Day by Day," a winner of a song, was too undefined to be successful. Miss Massey performed well in ensemble numbers.

Mike McCoy was challenged to portray both John the Baptist and Judas, no small task, and to my mind he was

perfectly cast for the brief Judas role, but rather less persuasive as he herald of the Son of God. He too performed well in ensemble.

Gail Shearer sparkled. She blended perfectly with the company, and she sang "Turn Back O Man" like a true professional. It was the musical hit of the night.

For the past three and a half years, Doug Elder has reigned as the king of the Wesleyan players. He is a talented actor and a better than average singer. He has a performer's sense of timing, and is blessed with that instinct that separates those who walk through their lines from real actors: a feeling for the audience. Mr. Elder never stops acting, and he has proved again that he can create a character. Along with Tim Hill and Sandy Evans, he never allowed the company to forget it was on stage, even when it enjoyed itself most spontaneously.

Perhaps the chief delight of a theatre-goer is the discovery of a new talent. This reviewer was captivated by Richard Newman, and only superlatives can describe his performance. Mr. Newman is a gifted actor, and he dominated the show (on Friday, February 14). It is to

his credit that he did not steal it, but it must be said that he paced it. He is the best actor to appear on the Wesleyan stage in some time. At least one member of the audience wondered whether "Godspell" might not have achieved even greater balance and symmetry by an exchange of roles between Mr. Newman and Mr. Saunders.

Kagey had at his disposal, besides his own obvious directoral talent and a fine cast, a first-rate show. Stephen Schwartz and John-Michael Tebelak gave him a running start, and he and his players, with solid support from John Davis' musical direction and Cheri Caudill's choreography, translated it into a delightful experience. Nobody can finally save a bad play, but too many can spoil a good one. Here the essentials—the play, the director, and the cast—blended into a unity which far transcended minor flaws in casting and performing, a unity that was breathtaking in the scene of parting between Jesus and his disciples. Kagey deserves every decibel of applause he will receive. For myself, I am exceedingly glad that I do not

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