

LAWEEKLY

NEW REVIEW GO GODSPELL

This 1971 musical, conceived by John-Michael Tebelak with music and lyrics by Steven Schwartz, is a sort of anti-Hair. That 1967 show utilized a colorful tribe of hippies to mount a protest against the Vietnam War and challenge the status quo. Godspell took a similar tribe, sanitized and de-radicalized it, and put it to work in the service of the Gospel of Saint Matthew. In Act 1, the preachiness is held at bay by solid songs and unbuttoned comedy, and Christianity is given a feel-good New Age spin. Act 2 is soberer, going past the parables to Christ's crucifixion. In this production, director Chuck McCollum and choreographer Allison Bibicoff have brought ready wit and clever detail to the show, and have cast it with a crew of wonderfully able, infectiously enthusiastic performers. Sterling Sulieman is a strong, forthright Jesus, with Rene Guerrero doubling as John the Baptist and Judas. Jenny Weaver delivers a potent "Day by Day," Maria Lee gives a vampish turn to "Turn Back, O Man," and Jason B. Hightower keeps the comedy coming. The fine ensemble includes Zach Bandler, Talo Silveyra, Cloie Wyatt Taylor, Kelly Boczek and Tracy Thomas. Conductor Jan Roper provides solid orchestrations/musical direction, and John Paul de Leonardis designed the handsome set. Knightsbridge Theatre, 1944 Riverside Drive, Silver Lake; Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 3 p.m., through July 12. (323) 667-0955 or www.KnightsbridgeTheatre.com. (Neal Weaver)