

“BARE” WITH US

The musical “Bare” first debuted on October 25, 2000 in Hollywood and was included in the league’s *2000 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism*. The play has recently been resuscitated in New York for a run in an off-Broadway theater. The kitschy, self-indulgent “pop opera” revolves around a gay love affair between two high school students, Jason and Peter, at St. Celia’s Boarding School—a Catholic institution. *Variety* magazine called the story a “tragedy that cannot be prevented by the sympathetic but theologically narrow-minded counsel of the school’s priest.”

The play includes a scene in which Peter has a hallucination of the Blessed Mother after he ingests some hashish-laced brownies. She appears, the *New York Post* reported, as a “Diana Ross-like Virgin Mary offering loving advice to gays.” The *Philadelphia Inquirer* described her as an “African-American woman weary of 2,000 years of being addressed as ‘Hail Mary.’”

The musical’s final song, “No Voice,” is described by *Variety* magazine as “an ominous indictment of a church that fails to hear or understand them [the characters in the play].” Does it ever occur to anyone that perhaps the characters don’t bother to hear or understand the Church?

An actor from the original production, John Griffin, commented to the *Los Angeles Times*, “Some people think it’s a very anti-Catholic show, and some people think the exact opposite.” It would seem more than a stretch to call this show pro-Catholic; perhaps Mr. Griffin and his friends have devoured their share of hashish brownies, too. The *Los Angeles Daily News* said, “The Catholic church may not thank [the musical’s creators] for ‘Bare.’”

The Associated Press reports that the New York staging

features a set “dominated by a giant, circular stained-glass window hanging over the stage—menacing but beautifully ornate.” The window features a huge cross; it is very telling that the Associated Press writer finds this “menacing.” To come to that conclusion, one would have to agree with the premises of the play, as formulated by the show’s creator, Damon Intrabartolo. He told the *Los Angeles Times* that he left the Catholicism “with a great boyfriend and a lot of anger.” He confided to TheaterMania.com: “I’m really worried about the dark side of religion. It’s so easy to say, ‘F— this, I’m not going to church,’ but you can never entirely escape your religious demons.”

Intrabartolo also collaborated on a Los Angeles production of “Corpus Christi” in 2001 with Kristin Hanggi, who directed both stagings of “Bare.” When Intrabartolo said you can’t escape your “religious demons,” he wasn’t exaggerating. Maybe what he needs is an exorcist.