

HOST TO ANTI-CATHOLIC PLAY RECEIVES FEDERAL FUNDS

From April 26 to May 21, the Irondale Ensemble Project will perform the anti-Catholic play, "The Pope and The Witch," at the Theater for the New City in New York's East Village.

Written by the 1997 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Dario Fo, the play has been characterized by *Newsday* as involving "a heroin-addicted, paranoid Pope called John Paul II, along with scheming priests, bumbling nuns and monks, corrupt cops and other assorted worthies from Fo's stable of demons." Similarly, the *Albany Times-Union* has said that the play is a "sharp satire about the present pontiff," one that portrays the Holy Father in a "sacrilegious manner." The pope, for example, is depicted as advocating birth control and the legalization of drugs.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

"Dario Fo is a Stalinist and an anti-Catholic bigot, thus making him indistinguishable from many in the crowd he runs with. Also lacking in distinction is the fact that the Irondale Ensemble Project, as well as the Theater for the New City Foundation, receives federal funds via the National Endowment for the Arts; no anti-Catholic troupe that we are aware of has ever been turned down for its Catholic bashing.

"Those who think that the Catholic League's criticisms are arguably biased should do themselves a favor and tap into the Irondale Ensemble Project's website at www.irondale.org and check out the *Special Vatican Issue*, Volume 3, No. 1, Spring 2000. After reading 'The Pope and The Witch' statement, no one will dispute our conclusion.

"We are writing to every member of congress who serves on the

Appropriations Committee requesting that all future federal funding of the Irondale Ensemble Project and the Theater for the New City Foundation be stopped. It is one thing for Catholics to put up with bigotry, quite another to force them to subsidize it.”

“THE VIRGIN SUICIDES” EXPLOITS CATHOLICISM

“The Virgin Suicides,” which opened in select theaters on April 21 in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, is a film about five Catholic teenage girls who are reared in a sexually repressive home; all of them eventually commit suicide. Written and directed by Sofia Coppola, the daughter of Francis Ford Coppola (who produced the movie), the film opens with an attempted suicide that shows the blood falling on a holy card of the Virgin Mary with rosary beads in the background.

Throughout the film, Catholic imagery and ritual are prevalent. The repressive parents make their girls virtual prisoners in their own home, making them destroy their rock records after having heard a “spirited church sermon.” The movie is scheduled to open nationwide in May.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, addressed the film today:

“The *New York Times* says ‘The Virgin Suicides’ speaks of boys in the movie who seek ‘to free the girls from the prison of their strict Catholic household.’ *Newsday* said ‘The putative villain may be Mom (Kathleen Turner), who runs her house like a convent.’ From the *San Jose Mercury News*, we learn of a ‘guilt-racked Catholic [mother] ready to lock her girls away

like so many storybook Rapunzels.' And so on.

"Our own take on the movie isn't much different: a nexus is crafted, the purpose of which is to tie the teachings of the Church on sexuality to the girls' suicides. Now if this film were about the real world—and not the stereotypical view of Catholicism as entertained in Hollywood—it would show a Catholic home where the girls lived rather ordinary lives and grew up to be mothers. A true story about sexuality and teenage suicide would show what happens to adolescents exposed to a 'value-free' Sixties-type home. It is not the kids who learn from the Dr. Lauras who wind up a psychological mess, it is the ones who were told by the Dr. Ruths to act on their own appetites who wind up that way. And oh, yes, the movie's opening on Good Friday was not lost on the Catholic League."

JOINT STATEMENT FROM NJ TRANSIT BOARD CHAIRMAN JAMES WEINSTEIN AND NJ TRANSIT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JEFFREY A. WARSH

NEWARK, NJ, April 20, 2000 – "NJ TRANSIT wishes to express its sincerest apologies to the Rev. Kevin Ashe, the Park Performing Arts Center in Union City and any other group or individual that may have been offended by NY TRANSIT's decision not to include the 'Passion Play' performers in Opening Day festivities for the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System April 15."

“NJ TRANSIT realizes that this incident has caused considerable embarrassment, anguish and undue hardship to all of the dedicated professionals associated with the play – particularly Father Ashe who has been and continues to be a prominent and instrumental figure in the local community. NJ TRANSIT apologizes for any offense this incident may have caused to members of the Catholic faith and the general public.”

“In the spirit of Holy Week, it is especially fitting that NJ TRANSIT acknowledges its mistake and we ask for the forgiveness of of Father Ashe and any other members of the New Jersey community who may have been offended by our actions. It is our solemn pledge that, in the future, we will make every effort to assure that there is no repeat of this most regrettable incident.”

NEW JERSEY TRANSIT DISCRIMINATES AGAINST CATHOLICS

Officials at New Jersey Transit denied a Catholic group the right to sing at a celebration of a new light rail system last Saturday while allowing a Gospel group the right to perform. Up until the day before the event, the Catholic group, the Park Performing Arts Center in Union City, was told that it could participate in the celebration. But then the head of the group, Father Kevin Ashe, was told on Friday that because of separation of church and state concerns, actors who perform the Passion Play at his Union City Center could not participate.

However, the Monumental Baptist Church of Jersey City was permitted to sing. A Transit spokeswoman, Penny Bassett Hackett, explained her agency's decision as follows: "Gospel music is widely accepted as a mainstream category of music in the music industry and by the public."

Catholic League president William Donohue expressed the league's position today:

"We are exploring all kinds of avenues to deal with this blatant double standard. The reasoning advanced—that gospel singers are mainstream and therefore they don't trigger church-state problems, but Catholic singers do—is so transparent as to be laughable. After all, what exactly is the source of gospel music if not the Gospel?

"Moreover, since when did singing songs—religious or secular—become anything other than a free speech issue? According to the perverse logic as entertained here, Catholic singers can't sing at state events but it would be perfectly legal for Marilyn Manson to belt out one of his satanic songs. Is there any state office holder in New Jersey who wants to argue this in an election year?

"We will have a field day with this. After dealing with the political geniuses in Washington involved in the House Chaplain issue, we now have a chance to see how bright their state counterparts in New Jersey are. This is going to be fun."

ANTI-CATHOLIC GAY GROUP

RESURFACES FOR EASTER

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of homosexuals dressed as nuns, have events scheduled for Good Friday and Easter Sunday in San Francisco. On Good Friday, they will sponsor "Hot Cross Buns," a fetish fashion show that provides "a chance to get spanked" (free Sticky Buns are awarded to those who get spanked). Dr. Carol Queen will be there featuring his/her (?) Good Vibrations Dildo Fashion Show.

On Easter Sunday, The Great Tricycle Race will take place in the Castro district. It will conclude with the Sisters' annual Easter Bonnet and Hunky Jesus contest.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, commented as follows:

"Homosexuals can get dressed up as nuns, win the support of local government officials, receive a tax-exempt status for their efforts, and can do virtually anything they want to insult Catholics, just so long as they don't ride their tricycles without a helmet. Too bad we don't send them to Cuba and let Elian stay here—then they could learn how much tolerance Fidel has for their lifestyle, with or without their helmets."