

# The Arts

January 24



**Los Angeles, CA**– “A Comfortable Truth: The Story of a Boy and His Priest” opened in the West Hollywood Lee Strasberg Creative Center. The play’s website said the work addresses “the controversial subject of juvenile molestation in the Church.” It was written and directed by Mark Kemble, and produced by David Lee Strasberg. Kemble said the play was about “the danger of blind faith in the leaders of any religious organization.”

Joel Hirschhorn in *Daily Variety* wrote that the actor who plays the boy delivers “each church-crucifying zinger masterfully.” To demonstrate that the boy was traumatized by the molesting priest, he was depicted playing in a rock group by the name “Fourth Reich Vatican Nazis.” William Lobdell of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, “The play’s set looks like a cross between a church and a bombed out train station with a few religious icons, including a busted Madonna fallen to the floor...a crucifix disguised as a piece of junk—scraps of wood and metal topped by an upside-down milk pail with the spout serving as Christ’s nose.”

March 12

**Madison, WI**–Terrence McNally’s play “Corpus Christi” was staged at the Evjue Theatre, part of the non-profit Bartell Community Theatre. It was performed by StageQ, “a group formed to bring gay and lesbian theater and works by gay and lesbian playwrights” to the Madison area. The play depicts a Christ-like figure who has sex with the 12 apostles.

April

**New York, NY**– The musical “Bare” ran for the first time off-Broadway. Described as a “pop opera,” it revolved around a gay love affair between two high school students, Jason and Peter, at St. Celia’s Boarding School. *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 included 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,” was described by *Variety* as “an ominous indictment of a church that fails to hear or understand them [the characters in the play].” Damon Intrabartolo, the show’s creator, told the *Los Angeles Times* that he left 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.”

## **April 8**

**San Francisco, CA**—The Contemporary Jewish Museum hosted a traveling exhibition put together by Independent Curators International called “100 Artists See God.” It included Norm Laich’s 2002 “CluelessJesus.com,” that depicts a game board with a “feckless-looking” Jesus surrounded by symbols of “seemingly insurmountable social problems.” Another was Jeffrey Vallance’s 1992 “Relics from Two Vatican Performances” that showed a note from the Vatican to the artist acknowledging the reception of the artist’s painting of Veronica’s Veil. Next to the note was a handkerchief with the artist’s face impressed on it with espresso in imitation of Veronica’s Veil. A final piece was the Rev. Ethan Acres’ 2002 “WWJD?”; it showed a nude, androgynous crucified person floating over the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles. The artist identified himself as a clergyman “ordained” by mail.

## **May 12**

**St. Petersburg, FL**—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was performed by Gypsy Productions at a theater in the Suncoast Resort (which caters to homosexuals). The play depicts a Christ-like figure who has sex with the 12 apostles.

## **July 8**

**Denver, CO**—Lady Sublime Productions presented the world premiere of "Lady Sublime and the Fantesticles" at the Phoenix Theatre. The musical was billed as "An Evening of Sex in Song" that is "all about sex—mostly gay sex." According to the *Denver Post*, one of the scenes depicted "a lusty encounter between an altar boy and a priest."

## **July 22**

**Cheshire, CT**—The play "Shakespeare's R&J" by Joe Calarco was performed by the Cheshire Performing and Fine Arts Committee in conjunction with the Parks Department as a "Shakespeare in the Park" production. The original play featured four boys in a "repressive" Catholic school where Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" is forbidden. A tone of homoeroticism is the undercurrent of the play. In the version performed here, girls were substituted for the boys.

## **August 19**

**Green Bay, WI**—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was staged at the Green Bay Community Theater, by Warehouse Productions. (The group had previously staged its first ever production, about the murder of homosexual Matthew Shepard, the summer before.) "Corpus Christi" depicts a Christ-like figure who has sex with the 12 apostles.

## **October 1**

**New York, NY**—Ernesto Pujol, a Cuban artist, performed a piece called "The Nun" at El Museo del Barrio. In the piece, Pujol dresses like a nun and wounds himself to the background tune of a children's lullaby. According to the *New York Times*, he then gazes at a table of phallic sculptures with "the

intensity reserved for religious contemplation.”

## **November 2**

**New York, NY**—The *New York Post* reported that an anti-Christian poster was featured at a polling place in Manhattan’s SoHo district. The poster showed a soldier pointing a gun alongside the words, “Say it, one nation under God. Say it, you love Jesus. Say it.”

The poster was on a wall in the Puffin Room art gallery. It was in clear view of citizens waiting in line to vote. Ed Skyler, the press secretary to New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, denounced the posters as “totally inappropriate.” William Donohue issued a formal complaint to the Board of Elections. He was informed by the Board that the polling place had been inspected before its use, but that the posters were hung up afterward. He was also told that there will be no more voting at this venue in the future.

## **November 11**

**New York, NY**—Phillips, de Pury and Co. auctioned “The Ninth Hour” by Maurizio Cattelan. The artwork depicts Pope John Paul II being crushed by a meteorite while clutching his crozier. While the work is open to interpretation, the artist confessed that it is a “little” bit anti-Catholic. It sold for \$3 million.

## **November 18-20**

**Tulsa, OK**—Once again, the Nightingale Theater staged a production of the notorious anti-Catholic play, “Sister Mary Ignatius Explains it All for You,” written by Christopher Durang. The play mocks Jesus Christ and the Blessed Mother with a vengeance. When it first surfaced in the 1980s, it was condemned by Catholic, Jewish and Protestant organizations.

## **December**

**Minneapolis, MN**—The Hennepin Center for the Arts presented a drag queen starring in a sexually oriented Christmas show

entitled "Fall on Your Knees: Six Yule Orientation." The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* called it "an off-kilter mix of slaughtered Christmas carols."

## **December 1**

**Portland, OR**—A filmed version of the play "Jesus Has Two Mommies" by Faith Soloway was shown at the Hollywood Theatre as part of the Oregon Film and Video Foundation/Hollywood Theatre Project. Called a "multi-media schlock opera," the play featured Ms. Soloway, who played herself, and Christine Cannavo, who played her pregnant Irish-Catholic girlfriend. The two women join in a "commitment ceremony." Ms. Soloway meets Jesus, who assuages her fears about her non-traditional relationship: he admits to having two mommies, Mary and Josephine.

## **December 2**

**Boston, MA**—Ryan Landry's play, "Who's Afraid of the Virgin Mary?", a parody of Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", was performed at Machine. The lead roles of the arguing couple were played as St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother. Landry, a drag queen, played Mary. They are visited in the stable on Christmas Eve by Kris Kringle and his wife (also played by a man). Landry said, "I consider myself a Christian. I see nothing wrong with 'playing' the Virgin Mary in drag or [suggesting] that she has a drinking problem."