

"JERRY SPRINGER: THE OPERA"

Bill Donohue

January 2018

"Jerry Springer: The Opera" debuted in 2002 at the Edinburgh Festival, and then moved to London's west end in 2003. After two years, it began a U.K. tour, which lasted another year. Then it was scheduled to run in New York in 2005.

When I learned that the opera was coming to New York, I issued a news release on March 1, 2005, "'Jerry Springer' Better Stay in Britain." I detailed why by citing the following three media sources.

- The opera "contains up to 8,000 profanities and features tap-dancers dressed as Ku Klux Klan members and a showdown between Satan and a diaper-wearing Jesus." Amidst songs like "Chick with a D..." and "Eat Excrete," the show portrays "the Messiah as a fat, diapered man who sings he's 'a little bit gay.'" (MSNBC News, 1-7-05)
- The show features a "semi-naked 'gay' Jesus" who is being fondled by a disheveled Eve, as the Devil looks gleefully on with an inebriated Adam." Also, "the Virgin Mary turns up to talk about her trials as the mother of a wayward saviour, and blitz of four-letter words." The show ends with Springer telling Jesus to "grow up for Christ's sake and put some f—ing clothes on." (*Sunday Telegraph*, 1-9-05)
- "Surely no more blasphemous, vulgar or salacious piece of musical theatre than Jerry Springer—the Opera has graced the London stage in modern times." (*Evening Standard*, 4-30-03)

I labeled the show "Satanic" and pledged to arrange a "massive protest" if it comes to New York. But it didn't: the show was cancelled.

The opera did make it to New York's Carnegie Hall for two nights at the end of January in 2008. I pressured Carnegie Hall's sponsors to register a complaint, and succeeded in getting Bank of America to do so. In fact, it told Carnegie Hall's officers that it wanted the public to know that its patrons had nothing to do with the show.

By that time I had seen the DVD version of the musical. Besides the non-stop obscenities, and trashing of Christianity—it really has it out for

Catholicism—the most disturbing aspect of the show is its celebration of moral nihilism. At the end of the show, the actors scream, "Nothing is wrong and nothing is right." They add, "there are no absolutes of good and evil." At the time, I said, "This is exactly what the Nazis said in their defense in Nuremberg."

The following script summary, from beginning to end, demonstrates just how morally debased this show is.

- The studio audience for a taping of the Jerry Springer show sings about what they want to see on the show. Some hope for bare breasts, some for lesbians or bisexual dwarfs, some for a "chick with a d***."
- The character of the "Warm-Up Man" gets the crowd excited before the Jerry Springer-character comes out. He sings to the crowd that Jerry is "bigger than Dave Letterman, bigger than Bob Hope. And give or take a few million, bigger than the f***ing pope."
- A cast of losers sing about their problems. These are all vulgar and graphic. For instance, there is a "chick with a d***," and a guy who wants to be his girlfriend's "baby." By this he means that he wants to wear a diaper and have her treat him like an infant, as this will get him aroused.
- The chorus sings that people all have different interests, explaining the sexual deviants on the show. One line is, "For some, morning Mass, for others, hairy a**."
- More deviants are brought out. In one scene, a stripper's mother, wearing a large crucifix, confronts her daughter. The mother informs her daughter that she wishes she died at birth.
- The KKK is introduced. Klansmen dance around in front of a burning cross, and a man in a diaper tries to shoot one of them, but misses and hits Jerry instead.

- Jerry learns he has gone to Hell. The "Warm-Up Man" from his show, it turns out, is actually Satan. The viewers see pictures of naked men descending into Hell.
- Satan wants Jerry to host a conflict resolution show for heaven and hell. Satan is angry with God for casting him out of heaven, and hopes to be an angel again; he wants an apology from Jesus. Satan gives Jerry cue cards to read for the show, and he reluctantly agrees to be the host.
- There is a set, and a sign reading, "Jerry Springer Show—in Hell." A disclaimer is shown that reads in part, "It may not be suitable for viewers without a strong grasp of Judea-Christian mythology."
- Jerry reads one of Satan's cue cards to introduce the next guest. Jerry balks at first, but then introduces the guest as "The hypocrite son of the fascist tyrant on high, Jesus of Nazareth."
- Jesus appears (he is the same actor who played the man interested in dressing up as a baby). Jesus is fat, effeminate, and wearing a loincloth. Jesus tells Satan to sit down on his a**.
- Satan breaks into song, singing about Jesus: "So he turned the water into wine, oooh! So he walked across the freaking seas, oooh! So you got yourself crucified. Here's a little biscuit from me." Satan holds up an off-white biscuit that resembles the Eucharist.
- Jesus then grabs the biscuit from Satan and holds it above his head before throwing it down, singing, "I am Jesus, son of man, son of Mary, son of God. So do not, do not, do not f*** with me. I do not want your biscuit. I want your love and your respect, for I am love and I love all mankind."
- The chorus then sings, "Jesus is gay, Jesus is gay."
- Jesus yells at the choir, telling the singers to stop, but then admits, "Actually, I am a bit gay."

- Jerry reads aloud one of the cards. He says, "You call yourself Jesus, but you are not worthy of the name." Then Jerry looks up from the card and asks, "Who wrote this s***?"
- At this point, Adam and Eve come out as the next guests. Adam is singing to Eve, "put your f***ing clothes on, you stupid b****." Eve responds, "Talk to the a**!"
- Jerry tries to resolve a conflict between Adam, Eve and others. Eve sings to Jesus that she shouldn't have been cast out of the garden for one simple mistake. Jesus responds that Eve had her chance, and she blew it.
- Eve reaches under Jesus' loincloth and fondles his genitals. Jesus sings that he was crucified and Eve didn't even care. Eve and Jesus continue arguing and eventually come to physical blows.
- Jerry tells Jesus he has to apologize for hitting Eve, but Jesus refuses. Satan then sings that Jesus should get over the crucifixion, "and give us all a f***ing break."
- When Jerry suggests to Satan that it may be impossible for him to get Jesus to apologize for casting Satan out of heaven, Satan and the choir sing out a warning, indicating that if Jerry doesn't succeed, he will be "f***ed up the a** with barbed wire."
- Jerry announces that it is time to bring in the next guest, "the teenage mother of Jesus, Mary."
- The choir sings, "Raped by an angel, raped by an angel, raped by an angel, raped by God!"
- Our Blessed Mother enters. She is angry and pointing at Jesus. She sings a song to him asking things such as, "Where were you when I was getting old? Where were you when the children cried?"

- Satan sings back, "Jesus wasn't there. He didn't care."
- Jerry tells Satan that there is no way of resolving all these conflicts short of a miracle. At this point, God descends onto the stage. He is a fat man in a white suit.
- God sings that it isn't easy being God, as everyone makes bad choices, blaming God for all their problems. God invites Jerry up to Heaven to "sit in heaven beside me, hold my hand and guide me." Jerry gratefully accepts, but Satan and God then get into a fight over him. Jerry is put in a cage and is going to descend into a pit of fire. He then gives a speech to convince everyone to keep him away from hell. He steals lines from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.
- Jerry ends with his own words: *You're never going to agree on everything. And what's so bad about that? Satan, you're never going to get your apologies ... Jesus, grow up for Christ's sake and put some f***ing clothes on. Haven't you people heard of yin and yang? Love and hate? Attraction and repulsion? It's the human condition we're talking about here. Energy is pure delight. **Nothing is wrong and nothing is right.** And everything that lives is holy. And in conclusion, f*** you. F*** you all.*
- All the action on the stage stops, and images of angels are projected onto the stage. The angels have the curves and breasts of females, along with male genitalia. The chorus starts to sing Jerry's words: "Energy is pure delight. **Nothing is wrong and nothing is right.**"
- Everyone is pleased with what Jerry said, and he is free to go. One of the perverts from the show, Baby Jane (she also got her sexual kicks from acting like a baby) lets him out of the cage. Jerry tells her that he wants to stay in hell because he likes it there.
- Baby Jane repeatedly sings "Jerry Eleison" (a spin from the Greek Kyrie Eleison, or "Lord have mercy"). Jerry finds himself back on earth, dying

from the gunshot wound. The crowd watches him die, asking if he has any final thoughts.

- Jerry pontificates, "I've learned that ***there are no absolutes of good and evil***. We all live in a glorious state of flux....For better or for worse, history defines us by what we do and what we choose not to do. Hopefully, what will survive is love. So until next time, take care of yourselves."

- Jerry then dies, and the chorus sings a closing song with the frequently repeated line, "3 nipple closet f***er, what the f***." The chorus comes out all dressed as Jerry, singing about how it's not easy to be Jerry Springer.

The show's message—"nothing is wrong and nothing is right" and there are "no absolutes of good and evil"—is brought to life on stage.

Good and evil trade places (Jesus is a gay fascist who must apologize to Satan); nature-based differences between the sexes are blurred (women are depicted with male genitalia); terrorists are portrayed as friendly (tap dancing Klansmen); and Christianity is defamed (the Mass and the Eucharist are trashed, the crucifixion is ridiculed, and the Virgin Mary was raped by an angel). To say the theme is demonic is hardly an exaggeration.

Those who reviewed the opera, both in the U.S. and the U.K., offer more proof of just how sick it is, though given the need of critics to appear broad-minded, they went out of their way to show their tolerance for intolerance. Here's a sample.

London's *Evening Standard* dubbed it "slightly anti-Catholic," making one wonder what it would take to call it "demonstrably anti-Catholic." It said, approvingly, that those with "religious convictions" can "survive a little battering." (4-30-03)

The same newspaper later noted that the opera "coolly blends blasphemy with salaciousness." (11-11-03)

A critic for the *Sunday Mercury* (Birmingham, England) said the musical is "probably the filthiest thing I have ever seen on stage." (6-20-04)

The Associated Press picked up on "arias about transvestitism, pole-dancing and diaper fetishism." (9-8-04)

When it played in San Francisco in 2010, the executive director of the Victoria Theatre in the Mission district bragged that it was "an extremely risqué and vulgar show." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 9-9-10)

Media giants like the BBC and the *New York Times* provide an even clearer picture of how cultural elites viewed the show.

In 2005, the BBC aired the opera on television, but not without engendering a backlash. One activist said that "people do resent bad language, profanity and blasphemy being blasted into their homes." He made the point that if the show were a spoof on Jews or Muslims, "they simply wouldn't do it." (MSNBC News, 1-7-05).

In 2005, Mark Thompson ran the BBC; today he runs the New York Times Company. He was convinced that "there was nothing blasphemous in the production." Nothing at all. (BBC News, 1-10-05)

Anthony Pitts, the senior radio producer at the BBC, did not agree with Thompson. "The blasphemy was far, far worse than even the most detailed news reports had led me to believe." He resigned as a result. (UPI, 1-12-05)

The *New York Times* called the show "a musical wilderness of amorality" (3-17-02), "enormously entertaining" (5-11-03), a "rhapsodic look at talk-show trashiness" (7-17-03), and "intentionally offensive" (10-7-03).

What about the key character himself, Jerry Springer? In 2008, he commended those who produced the show, saying "I thought they did a really good job" (*Miami Herald* 2-3-08). But what he said about the script in 2005 was revealing. "I wouldn't have written it. I don't believe in making fun

of other religions or in saying things that could be insensitive to other people's religions" (CNN, 3-30-05).

The opera's creators, Stewart Lee and Richard Thomas, obviously delight in bashing religion, choosing Christianity as their favorite target. Thomas calls the show's critics "ignorant and bigoted" (BBC News 9-24-14). Lee says that his "core audience" are those who are "depressed about Brexit and Trump—so I feel it's time to cheer them up" (crawleyobserver.co.uk, 9-20-17).

If gays objected to gay bashing, would they be labeled "ignorant and bigoted"? No, that's because they don't deserve to be trashed. Christians do. It's also nice to know that those who love to bash Christians are liberals who are out of step with their fellow countrymen.

Finally, there is the New Group, which is hosting the opera. It calls it a "profane musical" (chortle.co.uk, 6-22-17) that is "deeply in tune with the chaos and unrestrained id of our times" (*New York Times*, 6-22-17). Sadly, that is an accurate depiction.