

# Arts & Entertainment

## Youth theatre group called 'hidden gem'



From left, St. Paul's Phoenix Youth Theatre Group members Elissa Whitman, Stephen Ground, Julianne Dransfield, Juli Heinz and Kate Longley prepare for next week's production of *Godspell*.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

*Hope to gain exposure with latest production*

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
*The Champion*

For the past five years, hidden behind the walls of St. Paul's United Church, a group of young actors has been putting on yearly productions that the majority of Miltonians have yet to see.

Director Rob Croezen hopes this will be the turn-around year for St. Paul's Phoenix Youth Theatre — the year when the public comes to know what the group is and gets a little taste of the hard work that's invested year after year. It's time for Milton's hidden gem to shine out in the open.

"Youth theatre is a great tool to express themselves and build confidence," Mr. Croezen said. "Anyone who does youth theatre understands what I'm talking about."

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There's no better chance for the community to see the group in action than to attend its upcoming performance of *Godspell*, which will run from November 18 to 20 at St. Paul's United Church, 123 Main St. E.

"They (the public) can expect professional quality youth theatre, a lot of storytelling parables and excellent singing," Mr. Croezen said. "It's a powerful show, regardless of your beliefs."

This is the group's sixth performance. It's made up of about 15 students aged 13 to 19. Although most attend St. Paul's United Church, Mr. Croezen emphasized that the group is open to any teens in the community, church-goers or not.

*Godspell* will feature nine actors, and a five-musician band. This is the second time the group is performing *Godspell*. The first was in 2000, and it went over well with audiences, Mr. Croezen said, adding it's a musical that can be enjoyed by both young children and adults, and features plenty of comedy.

"It's one of those plays that strikes a chord," he said. "It's based on the Gospel of Matthew and tells the teachings of Jesus through entertainment and music. Even if you're not of the Christian faith, it's entertaining."

He used words like "folky", uplifting and light rock to describe the music. Mr. Croezen — who's been involved with community and youth theatre much of his life — said it's rewarding to watch group members grow in confidence and abilities. Many of the students have been with the group for a number of years now.

"Seeing them have more ability to be dramatic than they thought, or that they could sing when someone told them they couldn't — there's something magical about it."

There's an unmistakable sense of caring in the group, he added.

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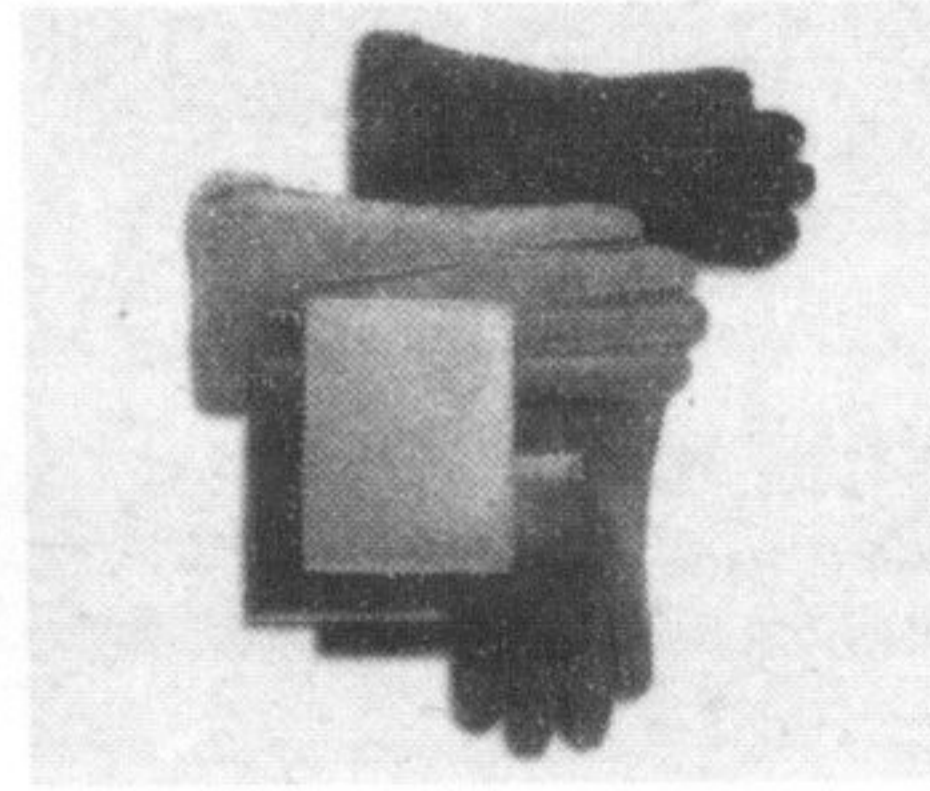
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