

Godspell makes local history for theatre group

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Godspell, the first musical staged in Stouffville by the York Durham Academy for the Performing Arts, comes to EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church today through Saturday.

"We really wanted to do a production in town," said academy founder Wayne Hill, "especially in the winter".

All previous academy productions have been at the Vaughan City Playhouse.

The rock musical, written in the 1970s, unfolds in a series of vignettes portraying familiar stories such as those of the loaves and fishes and the Good Samaritan. The second act deals with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, but in an unusual way.

Jessica Reesor, a Grade 11 Unionville High School student, portrays Jesus while 15-year-old Rachel Peters plays the dual roles of Judas and John the Baptist.

The production is purposely understated, with a minimum of props and costumes, Mr. Hill said.

Godspell is very different from any other play she has ever been in, Ms Peters said.

The complexity of the role led her to research Bible stories and characters before attempting the roles. She wanted to find out why Judas wanted to betray Jesus. Performing in the musical has

made her look deeper into his life.

"You see him more as a real person," instead of just someone who is evil she noted.

Ms Peters, a Grade 10 student at Unionville's Pierre Elliott Trudeau High, has been in youth group pantomimes at Christ Church Anglican for six years.

Many of the 20 cast members, who range in age from 13 to 17, are also in other, more elaborate academy productions and Godspell gives them a chance to "rely on their artistic abilities as opposed to the production aspects of the musical", Mr. Hill said.

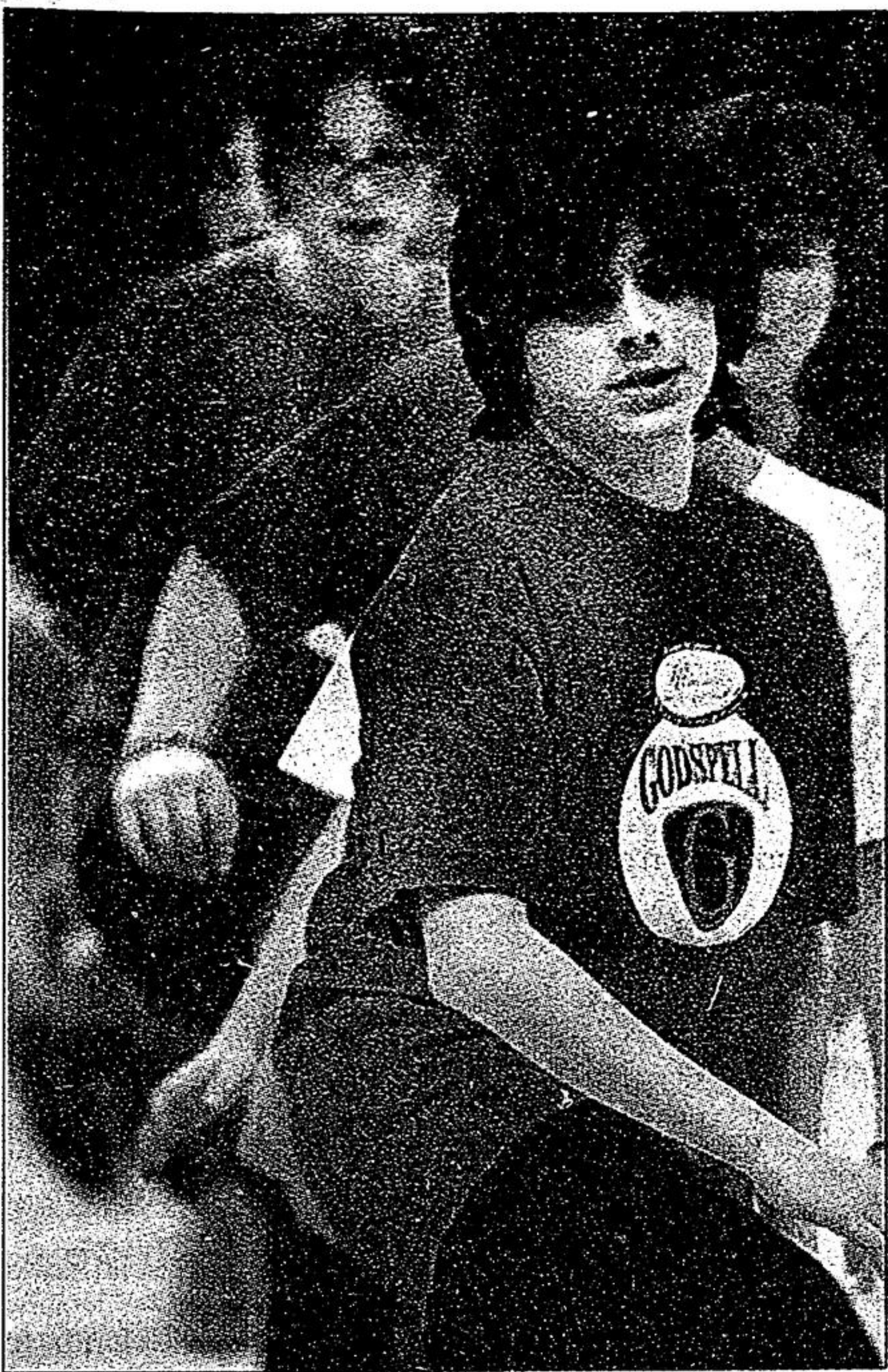
The show has been adapted for this production, since it was originally written for nine cast members. In the origi-

nal production, disciples had their faces painted with clown makeup after they were baptized. In the academy version, the baptized receive coloured T-shirts to denote their new relationship with God.

Godspell is the third of this season's five academy productions. Annie plays from April 29 to May 1 and The Music Man from May 27 to 29.

Tickets for Godspell are \$19 for adults and \$16 for seniors and students. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Tickets are available at the door at the church on 10th Line south of the Stouffville Country Market and by logging on to www.y-shows.ca



STAFF PHOTO/TOM BARNETT

Marcello Sperandio rehearses with fellow cast members for the production of Godspell, that opens today in Stouffville.

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