

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

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[Jo Ann Rosen](#) · January 14, 2010



*Pictured: Sebastian Cintron and Joshua David Bishop in a scene from *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (photo © Paul Newland)*

Stephen Adly Guirgis challenged history when he wrote the *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, an ambitious play questioning the motives and guilt of Judas's betrayal of Jesus. In this play, Judas gets a second trial. Set in a court room in present-day purgatory, Guirgis erases timelines and summons a Civil War judge to preside over testimony given by a colorful array of witnesses from one century or another. Among them are: Mary Magdalene, Mother Theresa, various Apostles, Pontius Pilate, Satan, and Caiaphas the Elder. The two dueling attorneys—the buxom, brainy Irish defense lawyer and the fiery Middle Eastern prosecutor—interrogate and cross-examine. Judas—after all these years—looks like your typical Upper West Sider except that he is catatonic. Not so the parade of witnesses.

They are ironic, blasphemous, hilarious, deferential, literary, and irreverent. Everyone has an opinion, including the judge, but Guirgis spares no one and skillfully punctures holes in the most convincing of arguments. Rebecca Hengstenberg's direction is crisply paced and designates pauses precisely where you think you need a moment to digest a biblical reference or to acknowledge a clever comeback.

The cast of 15 play 27 roles, and they are, for the most part, terrific. There are standouts, however. Jonny Beauchamp's got all the moves in his spandex mini-dress as he depicts a contemporary hip-hop version of St. Monica. Andrew Harriss shines on two fronts—first, as

droll, opinionated Judge Littlefield, who wields power with his gavel, and later as the marvelously evasive and shifty-eyed Caiaphas the Elder, the Jewish high priest who, according to the Gospels, presided at the original council that condemned Jesus. Okieriete Onaodowan delivers a powerful monologue as Pontius Pilate, and Joshua David Bishop gives Mother Theresa all the humor she needs in a single word: "yes." Jason Loverde swishes Satan across the room with devilish confidence, and Sebastian Cintron fills the air with aggressive combat in his earnest desire to win the case of the century and again condemn Judas. Lisa Mamazza's defense attorney counters with a cool presence, sometimes too cool, in her attempt to keep all her cards close to the vest.

The clever set, designed by Joshua David Bishop, places a fractured Roman clock as the backdrop of the courtroom to give the play historical reference and relevance. Jill Wetzel's costumes bring the characters into the 21st century. Joe Novak and Trevor Dallier designed lighting and sound, respectively.

The play is filled with humor, smart language, and thoughtful philosophical debate. First produced in 2006, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* is running until February 7th as a polished revival by Wide Eyed Productions. It is a funny, intelligent drama and a unique evening of entertainment.

Opened: January 14, 2010

Closed: February 7, 2010

Artists Involved

- **Cast:** Jonny Beauchamp, Sebastian Citron, Joshua David Bishop, Trevor Dallier, Billy Dutton, Ali Gilbertson, Andrew Harriss, Lincoln L. Hayes, Jason Loverde, Brianne Mai, Lisa Mamazza, Mavis Martin, Colin McFadden, Okieriete Onaodowan, Sage Seals
- **Author:** Stephen Adly Guirgis
- **Director:** Rebecca Hengstengberg
- **Costumes:** Jill Wetzel
- **Lighting:** Joe Novak
- **Sets:** Joshua David Bishop
- **Sound:** Trevor Dallier
- **Producer:** Wide Eyed Productions