

The Golgotha Project

By Jeff Zimmer

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Special Thanks to God, who was my co-writer and constant inspiration, and to ELATE (Emmanuel Lutheran Actors Theatre Ensemble) for performing the first production.

STORY OF THE PLAY

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection truly is "the greatest story ever told." But why is it so often told in ponderous and arch fashion? "The Golgotha Project" brings to life the people of 2,000 years ago by finding the humor and humanity in them. The story is told in a series of amusing monologues, dialogues and brief scenes involving people who witnessed the events in Jesus' time. The show is very modular. Productions can either choose to eliminate certain scenes or characters with little effect on the overall show. This Easter story is fresh and entertaining yet profoundly moving as it ends on the shadow of the cross and the words of Jesus. About 90 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

"The Golgotha Project" had its world premiere at the Lincoln Stegman Theatre in North Hollywood California on March 8th, 2013 and included the following artists:

Merchant and Rami Rumi: Tim Aberdeen	Xavi and Miri: Kristen Longfield
Namrok: Bernard Baima	Weezel: Michael Oberholtzer
Jacob: Bradley T. Bomemann	Pallu, Malchus, Hiram: Andrew Piecka
Salome: Carol Bratcher	Zibiah and Olevia: Barbara Piecka
Centurion: Terry Bratcher	Narrator and Stahn: Skip Pipa
Anonymous, Saul Rumi, Demas: Stanley Brown	Fazool, Skeptis, Advocate, Ali: Tom Reilly
Noemi: Norma Burgess	Shari and Cibi: Hannah Rickertsen
Choopas, Eb: Roger Eschbacher	Edan: Liz Rickertsen
Gretch: Rod French	Avis and Granddaughter: Petra Rickertsen
Goth and Zebulon: Tyler Guillory	Voice of Jesus: Scott Stegman
Bernice: Therese Hawes	Caleb and Simon of Cyrene: PJ Waggaman
Deli and Aliz: Wendy Hirschman	Beth and Mary: Bethany Watrous
Jeremiah: Vern Larson	Claudia and Mona: Libby West
Sadie and Sapphira: Marilyn Lazik	Japhia: Gerrie Wilkowski

Directed by Jeff Zimmer, Produced by Norma Burgess and Tom Reilly
Lighting Designer: Jamie Hitchcock, Technical Director: Mark Stegman
Light Board Operators: Gary Louks and Kari Stenberg
Costumer: Christine Sullentrop, ELATE Cafe Manager: CaroleJean Willis
Graphic Designer: Michael Wykowski, Poster by Terry Bratcher
House Managers: Carol Bratcher and Debbie Sadlouskos

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8-10 actors with doubling.

Without doubling 24 m, 19 w, 7 flexible.)

The number in front of the character name represents the number of lines.

MEN

- (86) NARRATOR:** The leader of the troupe. Considers himself a master showman.
- (109) JACOB:** A member of the acting troupe that conducts interviews with witnesses.
- (1) MERCHANT:** Promoter of Eau de Nebuchadnezzar.
- (7) SKEPTIS:** A skeptical merchant.
- (9) PALLU:** A middle-class husband to Zibiah, only speaks in tongues.
- (38) SOL RUMANI:** Fast-talking rug merchant who speaks with great passion.
- (38) RAMI RUMANI:** His brother who is equally as fast-talking and passionate.
- (14) ZEBULUN:** Zany servant to the Pharisees.
- (9) CALEB:** Servant of Ramada in Jerusalem.
- (13) MALCHUS:** A slave to the powerful Chief Priest.
- (14) WEEZEL:** (We-ZELL) Official spokesperson for Prefect Pilate.
- (15) CENTURION:** Senior Commander at Golgotha.
- (5) SIMON OF CYRENE:** A Greek trader forced to help carry Jesus' cross.
- (19) CHOOPAS:** A date farmer dominated by his wife, Deli.
- (6) GRETCH:** Was blind before healed by Jesus.
- (32) STAHN:** Bears a vague resemblance to comedian Stan Laurel.
- (30) ALI:** Bears a vague resemblance to comedian Oliver Hardy.
- (5) NAMROK:** The cemetery caretaker.
- (6) DEMAS:** Owner of the cemetery.
- (1) DOUBTING DOOFO:** Frustrated; could-have-been a showbiz legend.
- (16) LOUKS:** Proud worshiper of the Egyptian gods.
- (6) EB:** A farmer from Bethlehem.
- (1) JERIMIAH:** A frightened farmer.
- (14) HIRAM:** Husband to Mona, witness to the risen Christ.

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WOMEN

- (108) **NOEMI:** A member of the acting troupe that conducts interviews with witnesses.
- (7) **MARY:** Sister of Lazarus.
- (10) **ZIBIAH:** A middle-class wife and translator for Pallu.
- (4) **AVIS:** Young daughter of the colt and donkey rental dealer.
- (8) **JAPHIA:** Older lady who is losing her hearing.
- (9) **CARA:** Japhia's granddaughter.
- (24) **XAVI:** Talkative young lady. Best friends with Beth.
- (21) **BETH:** Talkative young lady. Best friends with Xavi.
- (13) **SHARI:** Daughter of the homeowner at the Last Supper.
- (7) **EDAN:** Simple woman married to the gardener of Gethsemene.
- (14) **CIBI:** Daughter of Kyle, something of a "Valley Girl."
- (6) **CLAUDIA PILATE:** Wife of the Prefect of Judea.
- (5) **BERNICE:** An older woman who is gifted at sewing.
- (22) **DELI:** Grows dates with Choopas, whom she dominates.
- (5) **SADE:** Angry wife of Shezmu.
- (7) **OLEVIA:** Frightened follower of Jesus.
- (4) **SALOME:** Wife of Zebedee and sister of Mary.
- (16) **ALIZ:** Wisecracking waitress at ShishkaBob's.
- (14) **MONA:** Hiram's very protective wife.

FLEXIBLE

- (6) **FAZOO:** Head of the Chamber of Commerce.
- (8) **ANONYMOUS:** Holds a mask on a stick in front of their face as a disguise. Anonymous speaks in a high, annoying falsetto.
- (2) **KNARC:** The type who spends his life finding things to complain about.
- (14) **ADVOCA'TE:** Attorney for Barabbas.
- (1) **SAPPHIRA:** Suspicious and defensive citizen.
- (4) **MIRI:** Air-headed beach goer and sun worshiper.
- (17) **CLEO:** Proud worshiper of the Egyptian gods.

PROPS/ COSTUMES

Narrator, Jacob, and Noemi dress in Roman togas
Skull with "GOLGOTHA" written on it
Centurion wears a helmet with crest
Stahn and Ali wear ill-fitting uniforms
A small rug
Rug with an obvious fake stain in the sign of the cross
Rug with a ridiculously perfect Jesus caricature on it in the form of a spill
Sign: RESUR-RUG-TIONS
Beet

ACT I

(AT RISE: The stage is dark. MUSIC: fanfare. The LIGHTS come on what appears to be an outdoor theater circa 36 AD. The NARRATOR, dressed in Roman toga, stands behind a podium at SL. He is a bit pompous and considers himself a master showman. Note that the Narrator mispronounces the name of the town as GULL-GOTH-AH.)

NARRATOR:

Last summer the members of the Great Emperor and General Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus Traveling Theater Company and Petting Zoo visited Gull-GOTH-ah in the Hill Country of Judah, just outside of Jerusalem and conducted interviews of the local residents. During the next year we would return to Gull-GOTH-ah a number of times and do hundreds of interviews.

(JACOB enters. He's also dressed in a toga and is a little nervous to be interrupting the boss. He's also somewhat embarrassed for him.)

JACOB: Sir?

NARRATOR: Not now, Jacob. The show is starting.

JACOB: Yes sir. But...I'm sorry sir, but you said GULL-GOTH-ah. It's Goal-guth-ah.

NARRATOR: ...Goal-guth-ah?

JACOB: Yes.

NARRATOR: Not—

JACOB: No.

NARRATOR: ...You're sure?

JACOB: Sir, I just spent the entire summer living there and interviewing local residents. Unless they're all wrong and you're right—

NARRATOR: What do they know? A bunch of Babylonian bumpkins.

(LIGHT comes on NOEMI. She is dressed in the female version of a Roman toga. She's had about enough of this.)

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NOEMI: Goal-guth-ah.

NARRATOR: Et tu, Naomi?

NOEMI: *My name is Noemi!* Not Naomi! Noemi!

NARRATOR: Yes. Sorry. But I when I studied geography at the university in Kayro (Kay-ro) we—

NOEMI: *Cairo.*

NARRATOR: What?

NOEMI: The university in Cairo. Not Kay-ro, Cairo.

NARRATOR: Look, Naomi—

NOEMI: *Noemi!*

NARRATOR: I went to the university for four years, I *should* know how it's pronounced.

NOEMI: Yes. You should.

(Long pause. Stare down. The NARRATOR finally relents.)

NARRATOR: Oh. Well, I don't suppose it matters. You say Cairo, I say Kay-ro...

JACOB: *(Tries to lighten the mood.)* You say Naomi and I say Noemi...

NARRATOR: *Kayro!*

JACOB: *Cairo!*

NARRATOR: *Naomi!*

JACOB: *Noemi!*

NOEMI: Let's call the whole thing off.

(NOEMI tries to exit. NARRATOR stops her.)

NARRATOR: Wait! Sorry. I got off subject. I have a weakness for musical theater. Goal-guth-ah it is. *Noemi.* Let us continue.

NOEMI: Please. I have to be somewhere by *Tuesday.*

(NOEMI and JACOB move out of the light. Jacob leans back in.)

JACOB: I have to say you are in very fine voice tonight, sir.

NOEMI: C'mon!

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(NOEMI yanks JACOB off stage. From now on, Golgotha is pronounced GOAL-GUTH-AH.)

NARRATOR: Thank you, Jacob. *(Back in "performance" mode.)* Now as I was saying, our troupe conducted interviews of the local residents in and around...*Golgotha*. The play you are about to see is constructed from those interviews as well as some stuff we frankly just overheard. Company member Jacob.

(LIGHT on JACOB with FAZOOOL, a dignified member of the upper class.)

JACOB: My first interview was with Fazool, the head of the *Golgotha* Chamber of Commerce.

FAZOOOL: Welcome to Golgotha. Golgotha! "Gateway to Jerusalem." Perhaps the place where Abraham offered his only son Issac up to God for sacrifice! A holy place! A "must-see" place!

JACOB: What does the name "Golgotha" mean?

FAZOOOL: *(Attitude changes. This is not what he wants to talk about.)* It's an Aramaic word meaning "the skull."

JACOB: How did it get that name?

FAZOOOL: I don't know. Some say it's because the landscape resembles a skull. Others say it borders a cemetery and refers to the abandoned skulls that would be found there.

JACOB: "Abandoned skulls"?

FAZOOOL: *Want one? (FAZOOOL offers him a skull. On it is written "GOLGOTHA.")*

JACOB: No thanks.

FAZOOOL: In any case, the name is not exactly good for business. I wanted to change the name to *Fairview*. People like coming to a place named "Fairview." I mean it's *fair*... and has a *view*. Who wouldn't like that? But no, they had to name it *Golgotha*. The *skull*.

JACOB: That's too bad.

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FAZOO: Mount Pleasant. Paradise Hill. Oxnard. (*Or change Oxnard to local community.*) All good names. But no, (*Sighs and looks at skull like Hamlet.*) *Golgotha.*

(LIGHTS out on FAZOO.)

JACOB: My next interview was with Mary. No. Not THAT Mary.

(LIGHT comes up on MARY.)

MARY: When your big brother is Lazarus, you're never going to have much of an identity of your own. But I've accepted it. Everyone calls me—

JACOB: Mary, sister of Lazarus.

MARY: I came to him in Bethany. They said he was at the home of Simon the Leper, next door to Hezron the Squat. Jesus had brought my brother back to life. I wanted to bring him a gift, so I took my best alabaster jar and filled it with pure nard.

JACOB: Nard! (*Whistles.*)

MARY: And 100% pure! I went and offered it to him. He allowed me to pour it onto his head. Then I used my hair to wipe it on his feet.

JACOB: You used your hair to wipe it on his feet? ...Weren't you worried about getting "*athlete's hair*"?

(JACOB laughs at his own joke. NARRATOR rolls his eyes. MARY just stares Jacob down.)

JACOB: (*Cont'd.*) You know, athlete's *foot*—athlete's *hair*... heh...heh...heh...uh...go on.

MARY: I was honored to do it. One of his followers complained that we were wasting money. He said that the nard should have been sold and the money given to the poor.

JACOB: How much was this nard worth?

MARY: One pound of pure nard, 300 denarii. God's love, priceless.

(LIGHTS up on MERCHANT.)

NARRATOR: Curious, Jacob contacted a local merchant to find out more about nard.

MERCHANT: *Nard?* Forget it! I can get you a deal on Eau de Nebuchadnezzar, it makes the ladies stop being ladies— if you know what I mean, and I think you do. Nard...Pah! Nard is not really a perfume that you would use on a hot date. It's usually just used in *embalming*. You know, on *dead bodies*? This is not a turn on...to *most* women.

(LIGHTS off MERCHANT.)

NARRATOR: Three hundred denarii per pound...in this economy most workers only get a single denarii for a 12-hour work day.

JACOB: Did Jesus agree with the man who complained about wasting money?

MARY: No. He told them I was right. He said, "The poor you will always have with you, and whenever you wish you can do them good. But you do not always have me."

JACOB: What do you think he meant by that?

MARY: I think he meant, "The poor you will always have with you and whenever you wish you can do them good. But you do not always have me."

JACOB: ...That's what I think too.

(LIGHTS out on MARY and JACOB.)

NARRATOR: Everywhere we went we found people were reluctant to talk about what happened on Golgotha. Some were embarrassed. Many were scared.

(LIGHTS on ANONYMOUS. He or she holds a mask on a stick in front of their face as a disguise. Anonymous speaks in a high, annoying falsetto.)

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ANONYMOUS: Look, don't use my name but it never would have happened if the Romans hadn't invaded.

NOEMI: The first person I interviewed was a citizen of Jerusalem who disguised his voice and spoke on the condition of anonymity. I'll just call you "Mr. Anonymous," okay?

ANONYMOUS: No! *Don't call me that!*

NOEMI: Why not?

ANONYMOUS: *That's my name!*

NOEMI: Oh. Sorry. Then I'll just call you... Larry.

ANONYMOUS: *(Slaps his forehead in frustration.) You did it again! Why don't you give them my address while you're at it?!*

NOEMI: Sorry...Larry. What was it you were telling me about Jesus?

ANONYMOUS: Look, you didn't hear it from me, but there's always been a conflict between Imperial Roman and local rule. This Jesus fell in between the cracks for a long time.

NOEMI: You think if the Romans hadn't been there Jesus would not have been killed?

ANONYMOUS: *(Deep normal voice.)* You better believe it, baby. *(High-pitched voice.)* I mean— If the local authorities were in charge, they'd have stopped Jesus and his gang long before it came to that. But the Romans? *Fff!*

NOEMI: So you don't believe he was what he says he was?

ANONYMOUS: ...I believe he was a troublemaker. And the last thing I want is trouble. With *anyone!*

NOEMI: Then why are you speaking in that annoying high-pitched voice?

ANONYMOUS: My regular voice might get me recognized.

NOEMI: Maybe, but that voice may get you beat up.

(LIGHTS out on ANONYMOUS.)

NARRATOR: Our troupe members spoke to a lot of other townspeople who also had their doubts.

(LIGHTS up on SKEPTIS, a gruff merchant.)

End of Freeview

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