

Production Team

Director.....Jim Augustine
Lighting Designer.....Alison Cherry
Sound Designers.....Steven Anderson, Alan Wilkis
Technical Director.....Bill Barksdale
Stage Manager.....Hilary Beck
Marketing Coordinator.....Elyse Gonyo
Head Electrician.....Derek Miller
Assistant Technical Director.....Jason Evarts
Set Construction Crew.....James Adams, Angela Antonucci,
Kate Brown, Jeremy Burgomaster, Rene Carag, Megan Carey,
Adrian Chang, Lauren Cullum, Ivy Gorman, Victoria Ianni,
Lori Jennings, Courtney Kimball, Robert Laudenslager, Philip Park,
Jessi Pierce, Adam Ressa, Miranda Sanderson, Maura Sinnenberg,
Scott Spangler, Sara Stevens, Sara Venaglia, Kate Ware, Trish Whitney
Electrics Crew.....Patrick Starling, Peter Goldschmidt,
Jennifer Mathre, Lindsey Matteson, Alex Michael,
Derek Miller, Joanna Orentas
Marketing Team.....Megan Carter, Brittany Furr, Buffy Lucas,
Katie Olson, Katie Saunders
Lighting Board Operator.....Lindsey Matteson
Sound Board Operator.....Jim Davis
Box Office Managers.....Mary Peck
Front of House Manager.....Victoria Arbona

Special Thanks

Anna Deavere Smith	Alison Hart	Gita Srinivasan
Jim Augustine	Tamara Jones Dunn	Ruben Polendo
Steve Anderson	Sophia Fox-Long	Aysan Celik
Alison Cherry	Hugh "Mark" McGowan	Scott Zigler
Melody Zobel	Joe Burzynski	Diana Akiyama
David Johnson	Brett Halsey	Megan Carney
Monte Francis	Robert Brustein	Elyse Gonyo
Kathy Hendricks	Nancy Houfek	Erin Dammeyer
		Randy Ward

New York University Department of Performance Studies
American Repertory Theater



Virginia Tech Department of Theatre Arts
in the School of the Arts presents:

The Gospel According to Matthew

by Matthew Francis

Theatre Arts
2005-2006 Season

Director's Notes

"I'm not gonna faint. Are you?"

-Billie Hunt

I am extremely proud to have collaborated on *The Gospel According to Matthew* over the last year of its development. In that time, I have helped to mold the nearly five hundred pages of personal anecdotes, interview transcriptions, sermon notes, academic papers, and diary entries that Matthew has compiled over the last ten years into a piece of theater that is audience-ready. Words, words, words—*The Gospel According to Matthew* has never been at a loss for words.

But then, what would The Gospel be without the word? Though the central conflict of *The Gospel According to Matthew* may well be the collision of sexuality and faith within the context of Christian Fundamentalism—a conflict which is, no doubt, of pressing concern to those who trace an ever-expanding Christian influence in U.S. politics—the central theme of the piece is more generally a search for self and individual voice in the torrent of so many words—so many opinions—on how best to live the one life that we're given. What words become us? What words are our own? What words do we follow? What words follow us?

The documentary form of *The Gospel According to Matthew* is functional in concretizing this theme. The verbatim, interview-based monologues—words from every side of the faith/sexuality divide—that have been woven into The Gospel are not simply ornament to an otherwise isolated, self-contained personal history. Rather, they offer Matthew an opportunity to rehearse the experience of his identity formation—his coming into social being—through the practice of mis/taking someone else's voice for his own. He breathes life into these words, as if testing them in his mouth, on his body. If only for a moment, he becomes these words—and they become him. He is animated—he is possessed—by someone else's words. And by their exorcism, he begins to find his own.

Matthew's work is, undoubtedly, much informed by, and indebted to, the work of Anna Devere Smith with whom he worked for more than a decade. Smith's use of verbatim interview-based monologues has been likened to a kind of Shamanism—a channeling of energies and personae for the purpose of community dialogue and healing. Smith has also sustained critique for having had, on several occasions, no contact with her subject community prior to her decision to create a piece. Matthew Francis' spirit possession may certainly be likened to Smith's channeling; however, Matthew Francis speaks not from the outside, but rather from the intimate center of two communities in conflict. He is a virtuosic performer whose love of craft and storytelling are only matched by his penchant for inspiring civic dialogue; and his unique situation has inspired a piece that is poignant yet sincere, and on the razor's edge of political debate.

The Gospel According to Matthew is a compelling and important piece of theater. I have been extremely proud to help Matthew see this work to completion, and am excited to witness the conversations and debates among audience members that it is sure to inspire.

- Jim Augustine

Artistic Team

Matthew Francis* (Playwright/Performer) Matthew's acting work includes: (at the American Repertory Theater) Cleomenes in *The Winter's Tale*, George in Scott Zigler's production of *All My Sons*, and Boodkin in Yuri Yeremin's *Ivanov*. Other credits include: the international tour of Julie Taymor's *The King Stag*, a leading role in *Holes Before Bedtime*, a new rock musical, and involvement in the development of *Gone Missing* by The Civilians. He is a graduate of Stanford University, where he developed a one-man show entitled *She Just Stopped Breathing* under the tutelage of Anna Devere Smith concerning the death of his mother. He was awarded a Golden Grant from Stanford to create a docudrama about Twinsburg, Ohio, using the techniques of Ms. Smith. He was also cast as a lead in her production, *The O.J. Simpson Project*. For *House Arrest*, her most recent docudrama exploring the relationship between the press and the presidency, Matthew traveled with Ms. Smith through the south to conduct interviews about black church burnings and with the Christian right at the Republican National Convention. He has continued to work closely with the playwright/actress, including stints at the Institute for the Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard University and at the graduate program in Performance Studies at NYU. He is also featured in a chapter of her book, *Talk to Me : Travels in Media and Politics*. A classically trained singer, Matthew studied at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, France. He holds an M.F.A. in acting from the Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University/Moscow Art Theater School.

Jim Augustine (Director) Broadway: *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Asst. Choreographer, 2002 Tony Awards for Best Choreography and Best New Musical), Nicky Silver's *The Boys From Syracuse* (Asst. Choreographer); Other NYC: *God Hates the Irish* (Rattlestick), *Gone Missing* (Joe's Pub, The Zipper, and Nat'l Tour), *Paris Commune* (Mazor Theater); Regional: *Marty* starring John C. Reilly (Asst. Choreographer, Huntington Theater), *Lysistrata* (A.R.T.). Associate Artist for OBIE Award-winning Civilians Theater Company, 2005 Guest Artist at Harvard College. Jim holds a B.A. in Women Studies from Harvard and an M.A. in Performance Studies from NYU/Tisch.

Alison Cherry (Lighting Designer) grew up in Chicago and earned her B.A. in photography at Harvard University. Though she moved to New York City to pursue her lighting career immediately following graduation, she returns to the Harvard arts scene once a year to teach master classes in lighting design and photography. Alison has lit shows at the American Repertory Theatre, the Hangar Theater, the 78th St. Theatre Lab, Ars Nova, DiCapo Opera, Collective Unconscious, the HERE Arts Center, the Williamstown Theatre Festival workshop, Gallery Players, and the Flea Theatre, among others. She would like to thank everyone who continues to support and humor her as she pursues her goal of being a less-starving artist.

*Matthew Francis appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association.