

The Performing Arts Series of
First Presbyterian Church, Davenport
presents:

★ ALTAR BOYZ

Award-winning Off-Broadway Hit Musical!

Saturday, March 21, 2009 - 7:30 PM

Sunday, March 22, 2009 - 4:00 PM

Adults \$12 Students \$8



“Consumers are demanding more God in their entertainment than ever before,” declares a character in *Altar Boyz*, the current off-Broadway hit about a Christian boy band. The musical, the longest running off-Broadway show in over ten years, takes the form of a concert, a premise also employed by *Forever Plaid* (about a doo-wop group) and *Nunsense* (about stagestruck convent sisters). But underneath the witty song parodies, slangy dialogue, and comically sexy and athletic dances, *Altar Boyz* offers an intricately constructed narrative about five young friends whose emotional and moral journeys bring them to a personal and professional crossroads. Irreverent but never mean-spirited, this sweet, smart show preaches inclusion, brotherly love, and spiritual and ethical self-exploration while satirizing intolerance and holier-than-thou hypocrisy. It also cleverly tweaks stereotypes, finding the humor in these images even as it challenges them.

The *Altar Boyz* (“We’re here to alter your mind”) aren’t stars—they’re small-town kids who believe they’ve been directed by G.O.D. to spread the holy spirit through hip-hop. Each represents a distinctive boy-band type, but they’re not just caricatures. Like other teenagers, each is struggling to find his place in the world by finding his place in the group. And all are confronted by questions about their loyalty to one another and to the tenets of their faith.

The musical’s creators revel in double entendres, inside jokes, and savvy spoofs of hip-hop clichés, all delivered with hilarious naivete by the *Altar Boyz*. The flamboyant, tightly synchronized dances are exhilaratingly athletic and supremely silly. The songs—inspired by the likes of *’N Sync*, *New Kids on the Block*, Ricky Martin, and Michael Jackson—comically fuse religious imagery and a goofy pop-culture sensibility with lyrics like “Jesus called me on my cell phone.” And in a nod to the corrupting influence of record-industry money on musical artists, the Boyz are backed by a high-tech “Sony Soul Sensor DX-12,” which digitally displays the number of sinners in the audience. (It’s not important how the device works, Matthew explains, but merely that it does.)

Matthew, played by Tom Hales, is the embodiment of wholesome, confident establishment Christianity. He’s the group’s front man, composer, and guardian of its image, delicately steering his comrades clear of inappropriate language like “evolution.” Mark, played by Nolan Petersen, is the choreographer and the sensitive one. Mark shares Lance Bass’s fascination (of *’N Sync*) with space travel and is innocent and kind. He idolizes Matthew, who once saved him from a beating by “Episcopalian thugs.” Juan, portrayed by Tom Taylor, is a macho Mexican. He gives the group an “ethnic” flavor in his solo “La Vida Eternal.” Abandoned by his parents, he’s come to the United States to

search for them and has the Iglesias hip-swivelling moves that drive the girls crazy. Rebellious hip-hop dancer Luke, played by Chris Page—recently returned from the New Horizon Rejuvenation Center where he was treated for “exhaustion”—has an edgy rapper attitude and the clothes to match, but his baggy jeans don’t impede his acrobatic dancing. And Abraham, portrayed by Adam Page, is the yarmulke-wearing Jewish human beatbox. He writes the lyrics for Matthew’s melodies but can’t figure out why the Lord has directed him to join this band. Turns out his presence is a test of faith—for everyone. Abe’s unorthodox relationship to his Catholic brethren is fundamental to the show’s twist ending.

The cast is drawn entirely from the music ministry of First Presbyterian Church, Davenport. The musical production is under the direction of Rebecca Buening-Ferris, Kay Ferris, Adrienne Hoffman, and Steven Jobman, the church’s Minister of Music. A professional band will accompany the music and the action.

Altar Boyz will be held in the Sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church, 1702 Iowa Street, Davenport, Iowa, on Saturday, March 21, 2009 at 7:30 PM and Sunday, March 22, 2009 at 4:00 PM. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$8 for students. Group rates are available. All seating is reserved and tickets are available weekdays in the church office. For further information contact the church office at (563) 326-1691.

THE PERFORMING ARTS SERIES OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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