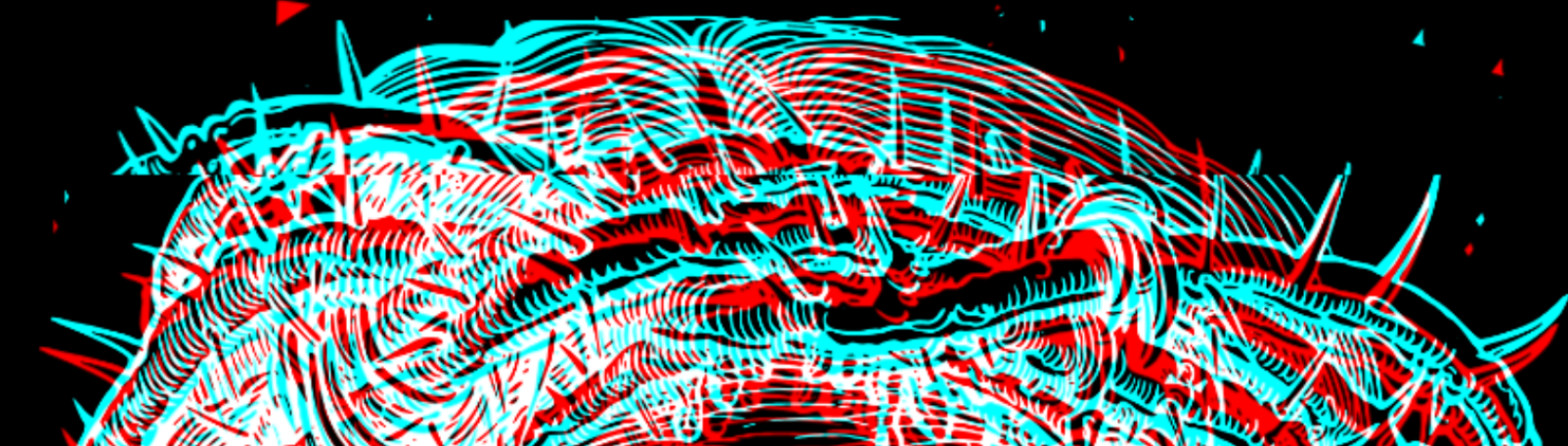


DOGTOWN DANCE THEATRE PRESENTS  
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THE  
LAST  
DAYS OF  
**JUDAS  
ISCARIOT**

WRITTEN BY STEPHEN ADLY GUIRGIS  
WRITTEN BY STEPHEN ADLY GUIRGIS  
DIRECTED BY DREWE GOLDSTEIN  
DIRECTED BY DREWE GOLDSTEIN



**AUDIENCE GUIDE**

# THE TEAM

Choreographer  
LIAM STORM

Costume Designer  
HAILEY PARKER-COMBES

Original Music  
RICHELLE FOLLIN &  
DILLON DOUGLASSON

Lighting Designer  
EMILY STEINMILLER

Production Stage Manager  
GRACELYN SHALASKI  
& CRIMSON PIAZZA

Vocal/Dialect Consultant  
ERICA HUGHES

Dramaturg  
EMMA BILSKI

Assistant Stage Manager  
IZZY ZOELLER

Production Assistant  
KEEGAN FERRELL

Assistant Director  
GARRETT RINKER

Produced by  
DOGTOWN DANCE

Written by  
STEPHEN ADLY GUIRGIS

Directed by  
DREWE GOLDSTEIN

# SYNOPSIS

*The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* is the recipient of the 2019/2020 VCUarts Undergraduate Research Grant. Written by Pulitzer Prize winning author Stephen Adly Guirgis and directed by up and coming director Drewe Goldstein.

*The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* follows the Bible's most notorious apostle. Judas was a disciple of Jesus who betrayed his friend and teacher to the Romans. He is seen as the man responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus; in popular Christian belief, Judas fell into despair and hung himself from an olive tree; since then, he has been suffering in Hell, and will continue to do so for all eternity. Set during Judas's final court appeal, the audience is forced to reconsider what they know about forgiveness, faith, and eternal damnation.

# SETTING

## liminal

adjective, from the Latin *limen* meaning threshold

(1) :of, relating to, or situated at a sensory threshold : barely perceptible or capable of eliciting a response

(2) :of, relating to, or being an intermediate state, phase, or condition : IN-BETWEEN, TRANSITIONAL

"Between Heaven and Hell – there is another place. This place: Hope. Hope – is located right over here in downtown purgatory." Purgatory, by definition, is a liminal space. A space between "what was" and what's "next," where your fate is determined, where you are transformed, and where you wait. This is where *Judas* takes place: a courtroom in Hope.

# A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

In what ways are we similar to and different from Judas?

This is how I started our rehearsal process; a two week long discussion of our lives and how they relate to 'The Bible's Greatest Villain.' In what ways do we see betrayal, greed, and despair daily in modern media? As you walked into the space you may have noticed the many news clips playing. These exemplify how frequently we see this greed and betrayal today, usually as a product of despair. Opening with Jesus' ballet we see the pain caused by Judas' greed, and welcome ourselves into the space and story. In this we invite you to begin your jurisdiction over Judas to find him either guilty or innocent.

Spiritually, you don't need to believe in the idea of heaven or hell to adjudicate - humans are naturally inclined to judge themselves and others by their actions. Because you are invited to be on the Jury we can view it under the non theological lens of 'guilty or not guilty' (though the outcome in Judas' case would be heaven or hell) as if in a modern American courtroom.

"Rain is God's way of shedding his tears for the one who has sinned, and the one who is the victim of sin" - Chakraborty

Welcome to the Jury.

Drewe Goldstein  
*Director*

# CHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

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There is no information available about Judas outside of retellings of the New Testament narratives, so little to no proof exists of his actual life. There is disagreement even among the Gospels as to what exactly happened between Jesus and Judas, but what they do agree on is that Judas was a disciple of Jesus and he betrayed his leader, turning him over to a crowd led by chief priests, in exchange for money (30 pieces of silver, according to Matthew). Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all specify that Judas distinguished Jesus by kissing him when the crowd approached in the Garden of Gethsemane. The crowd then brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate—he was tried and crucified.

There are several theories of the origins of the last name Iscariot. The name could be linked to Judas' membership in the Sicarii (an offshoot of the Zealots). It could also be linked to a Semitic root word meaning "to lie," or another word referring to the occupation of dying cloth red. Finally, it's possible the name refers to a town called Kerioth, which would make Judas the only one of the disciples not from Galilee. In this production Judas is played by Jacob Dodson.

El-Fayoumy is a fictional character, created for the purposes of this script. He is an attorney assigned to prosecute in the case of "God and the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth v. Judas Iscariot." We know from the script that El-Fayoumy is a current citizen of Hell who is Egyptian and grew up in Cairo. Stephen Adly Guirgis' own father was an Egyptian immigrant who was baptized in the Coptic Church, which may have influenced this character.

In this production, the actor playing El-Fayoumy, Elijah Williams, and our Director, Drewe Goldstein, played with the idea that El-Fayoumy may not be who he says he is. His full name is quite long (as you'll soon see), and many of his "names" come from vastly different cultures. Who is the real El-Fayoumy?



EL-FAYOUMY

## JUDGE LITTLEFIELD



Littlefield fought for the Southern Confederate army during the Civil War, and died in 1864 following Robert E. Lee's surrender. In the afterlife he has become a judge in Hope while he awaits his own sentencing. He presides over the courtroom you see onstage looking out into Hope and flanked by the presiding jury.

There was, in fact, an actual Confederate Army officer named George W. Littlefield, though the real officer did not die until 1920 of natural causes in his home. He was born in Mississippi and died in Texas, and does not appear to have any significant connection to Georgia like the Littlefield in the script. Judge Littlefield is played by William Cardozo.

Sometimes referred to as "the devil," in modern times Satan is viewed in pop culture as the ruler of Hell. The Hebrew word šātān means "accuser" or "adversary." This word appears several times in the Hebrew Bible and is used to refer to enemies both human and celestial. This "Accuser" position is a job, rather than a name, and seems to essentially involve being the prosecuting attorney of the court of YHWHY (God).

Eventually other names for the Accuser began to appear, such as diabolos (the Greek word from which "devil" comes) and Satan, and he became equated with the snake in the Garden of Eden. The Satan of the New Testament is portrayed as a glorified prison warden who has been corrupted by his own power. The stories of Satan in the New Testament reflect a struggle for spiritual freedom. The Satan we think of today was developed out of several centuries of influence from a wide variety of cultures. "Stephen drew on the image of the army commander, who hones in on the prey's weakness." In this production, we've chosen to play with the idea of Satan as a shapeshifter who can choose whatever form best serves them in any given moment. Satan is played by Trinitee Pearson.



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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Stephen Adly Guirgis** is a member and former co-artistic director of LAByrinth Theater Company. He won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play *Between Riverside and Crazy* (Atlantic Theater and Second Stage). His plays have been produced on five continents and throughout the United States. Some of his best know and most recent plays include *Our Lady of 121st Street* (Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics Circle Best Play Nominations), *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* (Edinburgh Festival Fringe First Award, Barrymore Award, Olivier Nomination for London's Best New Play), and *The Motherfucker with the Hat* (6 Tony nominations, including Best Play). He has received the Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award, the Yale Wyndham-Campbell Prize, a PEN/Laura Pels Award, and a TCG fellowship. He is also a New Dramatists Alumnae and a member of MCC's Playwright's Coalition, The Ojai Playwrights Festival, New River Dramatists, and LAByrinth Theater Company. He has also worked as an actor in theater, film and television and is a former violence prevention specialist and H.I.V. educator. He currently lives in New York City.

## BEHIND THE SCENES: CHOREOGRAPHY

**"Throughout the entire dance Jesus is struggling between fulfilling his role as being 100% God and being 100% human at the same time." - Liam Storm (Choreographer)**

The dance that begins and ends this production is modeled after the Stations of the Cross. **The Stations of the Cross** are a 14 step Catholic devotion that commemorates Jesus's last day on Earth incarnate. The Stations of the Cross are commonly found in churches as either a series of small icons or images (such as stained glass). As the individual moves from station to station they recall and meditate on a specific event from Christ's last day. The stations are as follows: (1) Jesus is condemned to death; (2) he is made to bear his cross; (3) he falls the first time; (4) Jesus meets His mother; (5) Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry His cross; (6) Veronica wipes Jesus' face; (7) Jesus falls the second time; (8) The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus; (9) Jesus falls a third time; (10) He is stripped of his garments; (11) He is nailed to the cross; (12) Jesus dies on the cross; (13) The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross; and (14) Jesus is laid in the tomb.

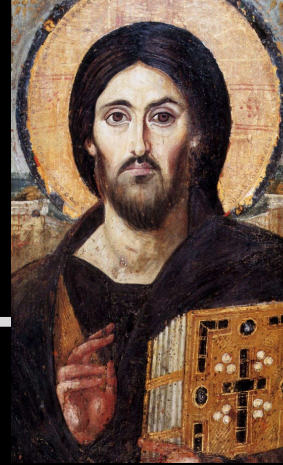


### Christ Between Peter and Paul, 4th Century

This image was painted in the Catacomb of Sts. Marcellinus and Peter on the Via Labicana in Rome. Here, Christ is depicted between St. Peter and St. Paul, and above Gorgonius, Peter, Marcellinus, and Tiburtius as they point to the Lamb of God on his altar.

### Christ Pantocrator, 6th Century

This image was painted on a wooden board in the 6th or 7th century. *Pantocrator* means "he who has authority over everything" in Greek; in order to represent these qualities, Byzantine iconographers used symbols such as the open right hand seen here. Christ Pantocrator has become a specific and traditional way of depicting Christ in painting - this painting was the first. Additionally, the different expressions on the sides of his face may represent his nature as both human and divine.



### Christ Pantocrator, 13th Century

This is another example of the depiction of Jesus as Pantocrator. This is a detail image of the central figure from the Deësis mosaic in Hagia Sophia, Istanbul.



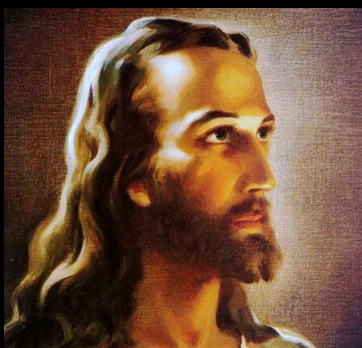
### Christ Blessing, El Greco, 17th Century

This piece was painted by famous artist, El Greco, around 1600. The composition is traditional, as seen above, though here Jesus appears to be holding a sphere or globe that represents the world, rather than the traditional book of scripture. Additionally, the Jesus presented here has incredibly white skin compared to that of the Jesus we saw depicted in the 4th Century.



### Head of Christ, Warner Sallman, 20th Century

This painting was completed in 1940 by American artist Warner Sallman. Since then, it has been reproduced over half a billion times world wide. This painting is said in popular belief to have "become the basis for [the] visualization of Jesus." His hair is long, as is his beard, and his skin is white.



# THOUGHTS FROM THE CAST



Yennifer Arguelles  
Jesus

**Q:** What is the significance of the movement in this production? How did this element of movement affect your preparation as a performer, and what do you think this movement says about the character?

**A:** Jesus' opening dance number was inspired by the Stations of the Cross. In the dance, 11 out of the 14 stations are represented. You will see his journey carrying the cross, falling to the ground, the moment he sees his mother, and when he is stripped of his clothing. The dance also represents the divide of Jesus as human and Jesus as divine. As he moves throughout these stations, you see when he's most human and when he's the powerful son of

God. These movements required that I felt like every moment was occurring with or without items and people. I have to add weight, force, and emotion to each move in order to tell the story realistically. This can be seen specifically when I am "carrying the cross" or when Jesus' "clothes are being stripped off." Throughout the dance, I am reminded of his humanity and his love for the human race. The dance shows how the character loves every person and how his goal is to save every last one of God's children. During the rehearsal process I was able to understand how Jesus may have felt after his ascension to Heaven, observing the fate of Judas. Seeing his best friend distraught would have had some effect on him; therefore, I have to consider how every moment in the dance might have shaped this character.



Trinitee Pearson  
Satan

**Q:** Judas is often thought of in popular Christian belief as residing in Hell (though this has never been confirmed by the Church). Would you say that Judas and Satan are more alike or different?

**A:** Judas and Satan, though seem like two completely different characters are not at all that different. One day Drewe asked us in rehearsal to figure out whether our characters are similar to Judas or different than him. Upon further thought, I realized that Judas was Jesus' right hand man just as Satan was God's right hand man. However, both of them 'betray' their best friends for their own selfish desires. In the bar scene with Satan and Judas

it is evident that they both rely on the company of others; Satan needs to steal more human souls, and Judas needs a friend after he has just betrayed his.

**Q:** Satan has been depicted in many different ways throughout history and even in pop culture today. What do you think is the importance or significance of your portrayal of Satan as a woman of color?

**A:** It is very interesting that Satan is being played by a black woman in this play because, if we turn to mainstream media, the depictions of Satan have mostly been male figures. I think that is so intriguing for me to be playing this particular character because of society's view of black women as being at the bottom of the food chain. I think I am the opposite of what people expect to see; I think they would expect to see a white male, not a woman - and certainly not a woman of color. However, I think it is necessary that in this play Satan is played by a black woman because we are often underestimated just as Satan often is in this play. There are certain characters in the play who doubt Satan's villainous power, but she is there to remind them just who she is.



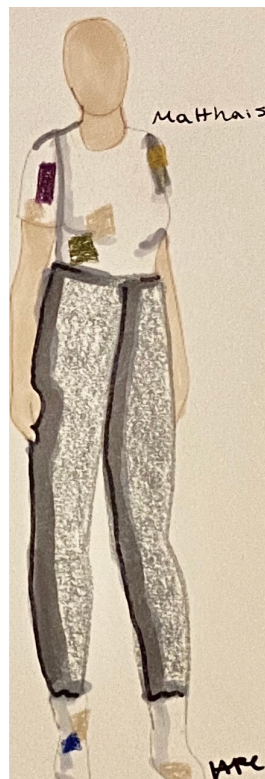
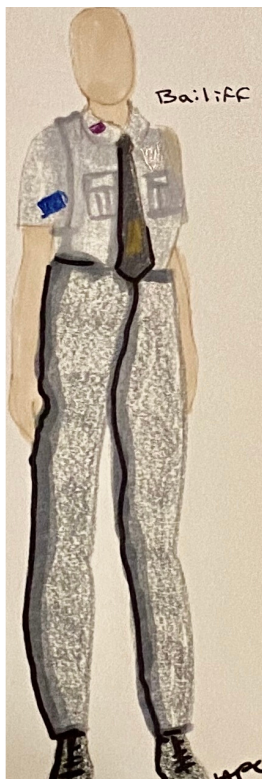
# BEHIND THE SCENES



## ORIGINAL MUSIC : Richie Follin & Dillon Douglasson

"We focused on a few key ideas while composing this score - we wanted the music to synthesize the biblical content of the script and contemporary feeling of the story. We knew that the instrumentation needed to highlight the relevance of the events taking place while setting the mood for the action. Our unique combination of experiences from church choirs, live bands, and theatre allowed the music to really write itself once the artistic vision was established across departments. One great example of this synthesis is the opening ballet; the music works with the choreography to follow the 14 stations of the cross that the dance illustrates in a modern, relatable way. Enjoy."

"The costumes for Judas took some time to conceptualize. They needed to be contemporary, monochromatic, and easily identifiable. An all-black costume base is used so the actors who play multiple characters can add or remove pieces to signify they're someone else. The patches are a way to add another dimension of color and texture to the overall production value of the costumes. Judas is in all maroon while everyone else, except Satan, fits into the monochromatic theme of the show to pull focus to him. All in all, creating and designing the costumes and accessories for The Last Days of Judas Iscariot was a blast!"



COSTUME DESIGN : Hailey Parker-Combes

# READING LIST

## Other plays by Stephen Adly Guirgis

*Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train*

*Our Lady of 121st Street*

*In Arabia We'd All Be Kings*

*The Little Flower of East Orange*

*Den of Thieves*

*Race Religion Politics*

*The Motherfucker with the Hat*

*Between Riverside and Crazy*

## Related Reading

*A Jesuit Off-Broadway: Behind the Scenes with Faith, Doubt, Forgiveness, and More* by James Martin, SJ, Loyola Press, 2011

*A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* by John Meier, Yale University Press, 1991

*Jesus and the Rise of Nationalism: A New Quest for the Nineteenth-Century Historical Jesus* by Halvor Moxnes, Bloomsbury, 2012

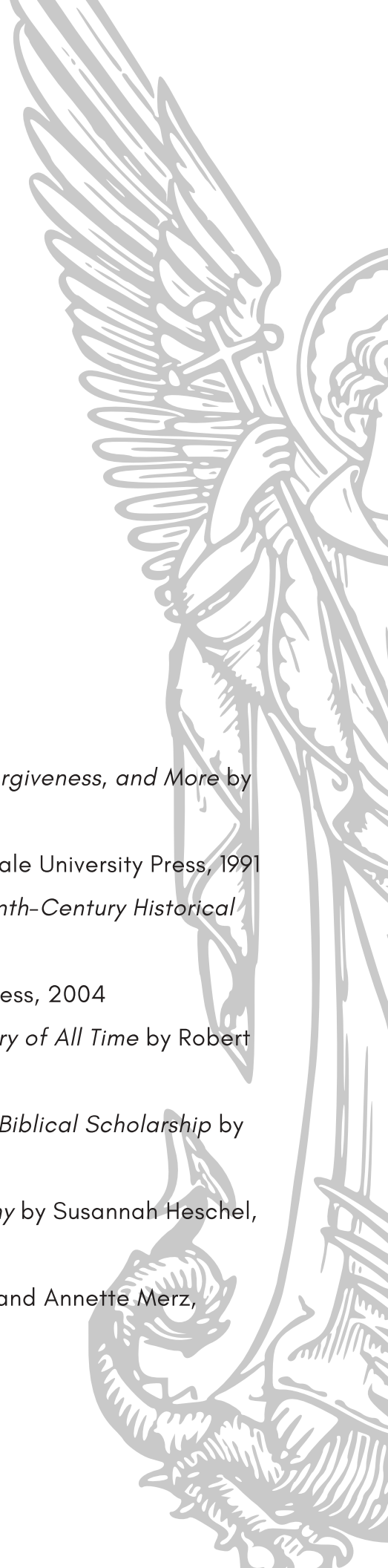
*Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus* by William Klassen, Fortress Press, 2004

*Misreading Judas: How Biblical Scholars Missed the Biggest Story of All Time* by Robert Wahler, Xlibris, 2012

*Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* by Shawn Kelley, Routledge, 2002

*The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians the Bible in Nazi Germany* by Susannah Heschel, Princeton University Press, 2010

*The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* by Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, Fortress Press, 1998





## ABOUT THE AUDIENCE GUIDE

This guide has been created to provide our audiences an inside look into our production process and to delve more deeply into some of the major themes. *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* explores a wide array of religious, social, and historical ideas that may not be common knowledge for all members of our audiences. We hope that this guide provides context for some of Guirgis' ideas and highlights the importance of maintaining a thoughtful dialogue about these topics, which can sometimes be difficult to discuss.

## CONTENT WARNINGS

Use of theatrical haze and fog

Flickering lights

Discussion of suicide

Discussion of abortion

Discussion of sexual assault

Strong language

Use of slurs

Racial and religious conflict

**Compiled by:**

**Emma Bilski (Dramaturg)**

**Garrett Rinker (Assistant Director)**