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Bradbury Center hosts one hell of a show

October 1, 2023 | Reviews, Stage | Adversary, Bill Oberst Jr., District Theatre, faith, Festival 451 Indy, historical, John, one-person show, Ray Bradbury Center, review, Satan

By John Lyle Belden

Emmy winner and Ray Bradbury superfan Bill Oberst Jr. has portrayed many characters who reflect the darkness within mankind; in his new one-person show, “Adversary,” he takes on the Devil himself.

Presented as part of the IU Indianapolis Ray Bradbury Center “Festival 451 Indy,” Oberst’s performance in the District Theater, Sept. 30-Oct. 1 is the world premiere. (If you are seeing this as it is posted, you may be able to make the 2 p.m. Sunday show.)

Satan, who enjoys toying with the words of others, regards himself through sources ranging from ancient scripture to Mark Twain. Oberst contributes one piece, “Your 3 A.M. Therapist.” Mr. Bradbury is not quoted, though this suits the literary mission of the festival, and Oberst said in a follow-up Q&A that Bradbury’s character of Mr. Dark in “Something Wicked This Way Comes” was an inspiration – one of the better depictions of the Devil in fiction.

“Here we hear lies; here we hear truth,” the entity before us declares. “The devil is in the distinction.”

He focuses on three principal “true lies” that sound good and right but are bendable to darker purposes. Passages such as Fyodor Dostoevsky’s “The Grand Inquisitor,” from “The Brothers Karamazov,” show their application.

It is sometimes said that a work of theatre challenges you in the audience. This one literally does. Old Scratch knows you are watching and speaks to you through the ephemeral fourth wall. Do you answer? Regardless, there is plenty of food for thought here – dine with care.

“Adversary” is a unique, engaging, and in its own dark way enlightening theatre experience. For more information on Oberst and his projects, visit billoberst.com; click [here](#) for the Ray Bradbury Center in Indianapolis.

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Adam Shoemaker ashoemaker@ststephenschs.com Wed, May 1, 2024

To: "Bill Oberst Jr." <billoberstjr@gmail.com>

Bill Oberst Jr.'s performance of "Adversary" is a thought provoking offering that stirs the mind as well as the soul. I found it a compelling formation opportunity for interested members of my congregation and would recommend it to other parishes.

Bill is a wonderfully talented actor and man of faith. This is revealed not only in his dramatic performance but in the heart he shows when offering a discussion with his audience after the performance.

I would be happy to chat with any clergy person considering bringing Bill to their parish!

The Rev. Dr. Adam J. Shoemaker, Rector

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Marshall Sanderson <fatherdow@hotmail.com> Wed, Apr 24, 2024

To: "Bill Oberst Jr." <billoberstjr@gmail.com>

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The Church of the Good Shepherd in Summerville, South Carolina was grateful for the opportunity to welcome the dramatic production of Adversary by Bill Oberst Jr. on the evening of the first Sunday in Lent of this year. The play is masterfully crafted, and the performance was passionate and artful. We were all on the edge of our seats. Members were still sharing their reactions and thoughts with me weeks afterward.

I would heartily recommend this work to any other churches and organizations. We were very blessed and would be eager to see and hear more from Bill in the future!

Blessings,

The Rev. Dow Sanderson, Priest-in-Charge
The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd
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Summerville, SC 29483
(843) 225-7590



Fr. Joseph Smith <frjosephhome@gmail.com> Mon, Apr 22, 2024

To: "Bill Oberst Jr." billoberstjr@gmail.com

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend Bill Oberst Jr.'s powerful dramatic presentation entitled, "Adversary." As an Emmy Award-winning actor, Bill brings exceptional talent and depth to his performance. One parishioner said with amazement after his performance, "I felt as though Bill's character was talking directly to me the entire time."

"Adversary" delves into the figure of Satan as the personification of this force, drawing inspiration from literary works such as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Robert Louis Stevenson, John Milton's "Paradise Lost," Mark Twain, and the New Testament. In my evaluation of this performance to determine if it was suitable for my congregation, I relied heavily on the facts that Bill is a nationally known actor as well as a recommendation from his rector and seminary colleague, the Very Rev. Wil Keith. I would like to add my name to the list of those who commend this work.

During Bill's performance, he invites us to grapple with profound questions about human nature, morality, and as we say in our baptismal liturgy, the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God. Taking this to heart, one of my parishioners was moved to tears during his presentation for the Episcopal Church on Edisto this Lent. For her, this exploration of Satan, the Adversary, was the perfect way to launch her into Holy Week.

It is with great pleasure that I recommend "Adversary" for your consideration. The gift that Bill is offering of himself in the form of his God-given craft is a wonderful example of discerning spiritual gifts. Bill is using his talent of acting for the spread of the Good News.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Joseph K. Smith, Rector
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