

2-22-2002

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Recommended Citation

University of Dayton, "After 30-Year Wait, UD's Linda Dunlevy Finally Directing Show that Moved Her Theatrically and, More So, Spiritually" (2002). *News Releases*. Paper 10116.
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Feb. 22, 2002
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NEWS RELEASE

AFTER 30-YEAR WAIT, UD'S LINDA DUNLEVY FINALLY DIRECTING SHOW THAT MOVED HER THEATRICALY AND, MORE SO, SPIRITUALLY

DAYTON, Ohio — Linda Dunlevy has wanted to direct *Jesus Christ Superstar* since she saw the show 30 years ago. There are the obvious reasons — the Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice musical is a visually and vocally exciting and challenging piece of theater that has drawn a large and loyal following — and more than a little controversy — since its debut on Broadway in 1971.

But for Dunlevy, who was raised in the Mother of God parish in Covington, Ky., the reasons are far more personal. "This show is so very important to me in terms of my relationship with God," she said. "Growing up Catholic, I knew my catechism. But I didn't appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus until I saw this show.

"Part of the reason people have been disturbed by this play is the way in which it depicts Christ's humanity, but it was his humanity that I always overlooked," she said. "I guess I assumed that, because Jesus was God, he felt no pain. But the play shows just how human he was. We see his fear of death, we see his pain at the crucifixion, and it really made me appreciate just how significant it all was in terms of the sacrifice he made for us."

Dunlevy said she gives her theater students a sort of "spiritual homework" by asking them to read the gospels at home, then share messages from them they feel are pertinent to life today with other students in class. The assignment is one way of bringing a sense of love and joy to the theater, especially appropriate with *Jesus Christ Superstar*, she said.

"This play also taught me one thing that none of my religious education had up to that point. It taught me that I still hadn't really learned to appreciate just what God means when he tells us to love. When we read 'God is love' in the Bible, we're reading about the kind of love that caused him to give up his only son for our sake. There is no greater love."

As Dunlevy endured some personal hardships in recent years, the show and its messages became even more important, she said. "It wasn't just a matter of wanting to do it, I had to do it."

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For media interviews, call Linda Dunlevy at 229-4119.

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