

■ THEATER REVIEW/SOUTHAMPTON

'The Word' celebrates first anniversary

By Sandi Mayor

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A cast of nearly 30 actors brought abundant enthusiasm to Our Lady of Good Counsel in Southampton Saturday evening for "The Word," a Gospel opera. The original musical by Archbishop Wood alum Bill Monaghan celebrated its one-year anniversary last weekend. Last year, the musical gained exposure at Father Judge and Archbishop Wood high schools.

The musical begins with a young woman's strong voice singing, "In the beginning? there was the word." A fun number, "The Washing Up/Baptism Rite" with a tropical beat, details the journey of a man wanting to come clean and begin a new life. John the Baptizer is played by Carl Lichtner.

Satan, played by Anthony DiFulvio, tries to scare those who want to wash themselves in "Devil in the Desert."

One of the audience favorites, "Blessed and Happy," is sung and performed in sign language with lyrics such as "you are not forgotten, be glad and rejoice." A recorder solo by Monaghan, who plays Jesus, makes the number especially unusual.

"I Raise My Eyes," a slow song with the message of finding the face of God, was favored by

the audience Saturday.

Other lively gospel numbers include "Hoe-down" and "Taste and See."

"The Last Dinner" scene is followed by a climactic portrayal of Jesus on the cross. Mary Bontempo sings "Lullaby, Close Your Eyes," followed by the full cast.

"The Word" will be performed next at Father Judge High School, beginning June 18. For more information on "The Word," call 357-1300, ext. 132.

Here's what the audience said:

"The kids in the play are full of high energy, and the music is very good."

—Peggy Welser of Langhorne, who brought her 5-year-old son.

"The voices of the performers are great. The directing is really good also."

—Danielle Ambrosini of Huntingdon Valley.

"The performance and actors are really professional on stage."

—Shirley Batula of Lower Moreland.

"This is the third time I've seen the play since it opened last year. 'I Raise My Eyes' and 'Lullaby' are two of my favorite numbers."

—John McCabe, a sophomore at Archbishop Wood, who is active in his high school's theatrical group.