Direction of the Play: Catacombs

Aimee Hostetler  
*Central Washington University*

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Direction of the play: Catacombs

A Project Report
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

by
Aimee Elizabeth Hostetler
Spring, 2004
ABSTRACT

PROJECT REPORT

Direction of the Play:  *Catacombs*

Directed by
Aimee E. Hostetler

April 2004

This project includes the selection, background research and documentation, casting, direction, and post-production analysis of West Side Baptist Church’s production of *Catacombs*. Documentation includes research of the Biblical setting, characters, past productions, and the structure of the play. A discussion as to the directorial vision and an analysis in accordance with the Graduate Theatre Arts Program at Central Washington University is also included.
Final Examination of
Aimee E. Hostetler
B.S., Grace College, 1994
B.S., Central Washington University, 1997
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

Committee in Charge
Professor Derek Lane
Professor George Bellah  Professor Brenda Hubbard

McConnell Hall
Room 117
Tuesday, June 29, 2004
7:30 p.m.
Aimee E. Hostetler

Courses presented for the Master’s Degree

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course No.</th>
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Aimee Elizabeth Hostetler

Undergraduate Study:

Yakima Valley Community College, 1991
Grace College, 1992-1994
Central Washington University, 1996-1997

Graduate Studies:

Central Washington University, 2001-2004

Professional Experience:

Teacher: Junior High/ High School, Highland School District, Cowiche, 1998
Teacher: High School English and Drama, Highland School District, Cowiche, 1999-2004

Certification: Initial Certification, now being converted to a Continuing Certificate.
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GRADUATE COMMITTEE
AND OPTION APPROVAL FORM
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. The form should be submitted in quadruplicate to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
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Check option:
- [ ] Written Exam*
- [ ] NonThesis Project
- [x] Creative Project
- [ ] Studio Project
- [ ] Portfolio Review
- [ ] Thesis

Indicate credits to be received for the thesis or option:

<table>
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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Master's Thesis Project</td>
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</table>

*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-5 below.

1. Proposed Title:
   - Catacombs

2. Purpose of Study:
   - The direction of the production of Catacombs serves as the culminating experience in theatre graduate studies.

3. Scope of Study:
   - Documentation based upon the preparation of pre-production research, post-production documentation, evaluation, direction of production (casting, rehearsal, preparation of director's book, and oral exam) shall benefit actors and community.

4. Procedure to be used:
   - Three phases of study: 1. Pre-production research and thesis documentation; 2. Rehearsal and direction of production; 3. Post-production evaluation and documentation.

5. Does the procedure involve collection of data obtained from:
   - Human Subjects (including use of surveys)? Yes**  No
   - Use of Animals? Yes**  No

** If yes, your procedures must be approved in writing by the Human Subjects Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee before you initiate your research.

Derek Lane
Committee Chair (typed or printed)

George Bellah
Committee Chair (signature)

Brenda Hubbard
Committee Member (typed or printed)

Approved by:
George Bellah
Committee Member (signature)

W. S. Quirk
Associate VP of Graduate Studies

Students will be required to submit two copies of all motion picture film, film strips, sound film strips, slides, tapes, cassettes, pictures, etc. produced as part of the thesis. These are to be submitted at the time the thesis (three copies) is submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

Please note: The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT
PLAYSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM

(PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE READ THE PLAY SELECTION CRITERIA SECTION IN YOUR GRADUATE HANDBOOK)

SCRIPT TITLE: Catacombs

PLAYWRIGHT(S) [If musical, list lyricist/composer]: Paul McCusker

NUMBER OF ACTS: 3
APPROXIMATE TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours 0 minutes

CAST (fill in the appropriate numbers):

MEN: 10   WOMEN: 3   CHILDREN: 1   OVER 40: 4

ROLES REQUIRING PEOPLE OF COLOR: 0
ROLES COULD DOUBLE: 0

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAST: 14

OTHER CASTING CONCERNS:

ARTISTIC STAFF (check those needed for this play or production idea):

MUSICAL DIRECTOR: N/A   DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER: N/A
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER: N/A   DIALECT COACH: N/A
SPECIALTY HIRE: N/A (specify what kind)
ORCHESTRA/BAND (specify what size): N/A

Will you be fulfilling any of the above? If so, which?

Will a guest artist be fulfilling any of the above? If so, which?

SCENERY/PROPS (check those needed for this play or your concept of the play):

UNIT SET: YES   NO (CIRCLE ONE)
NUMBER OF SETTINGS: 3
HISTORICAL PERIOD: 1800s
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: NE mountains, USA

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

ONE BEDROOM SCENE PROBABLY WILL USE A SPOT ON STAGE TO IMPLY A DIFFERENT SPACE FROM MAIN CHURCH SETTING

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROPS: 12
PERIOD: LATE 1800s
CHURCH FURNITURE: FAKE BODY (CHILD SIZE)

DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL PROPS? YES   NO (CIRCLE ONE)

DESCRIBE:

WEAPONS OR FIREARMS? HOW MANY: 5

DESCRIBE:

OLD SHOT GUN
OLD REVOLVER

COSTUMES (CHECK THOSE NEEDED FOR THIS PLAY OR YOUR CONCEPT OF THE PLAY):

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF COSTUMES PER CHARACTER: 1
HISTORICAL PERIOD: 1800s
SEASON: WINTER

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

MILITARY UNIFORMS FOR 3 CHARACTERS
JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF SCRIPT

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS SCRIPT PRODUCED? YES[ ] NO[ ] (CIRCLE ONE)

HAVE YOU DONE THIS PLAY BEFORE? BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION:

No.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION PRODUCE THIS SCRIPT?

- It fulfills both the University's and Church's requirement.
- It has a powerful message.
- It has some wonderfully conflicted characters with gradual character development.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS (IF ANY) TO DOING THIS PRODUCTION AT YOUR SCHOOL?

Many male characters which will exhaust my actor pool.

Synopsis: It is the future and Christians are being arrested and killed. A small group of Christians are hiding in an abandoned church waiting for their contact from the Christian Underground. They find a mysterious stranger who ends up being the famous Elijah of the Underground, but he refuses to help them. The group is discovered, held hostage, turned over to the military, and eventually executed. Each character is forced to face their true beliefs regarding life, death, and the afterlife.

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER AND ATTACH.

PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF THE SCRIPT FOR THE THESIS COMMITTEE TO REVIEW.

SUBMITTED BY: Aimee Hostetler

DATE SUBMITTED: 1/15/04

Please note:
This signature has been redacted due to security reasons.
Suggested Production Dates

Performance dates are April 30\textsuperscript{th}, May 1\textsuperscript{st}, and May 2\textsuperscript{nd}. This contract was established through Lillenas Drama Resources, P.O. Box 419527, Kansas City, Missouri 64141. Curtain times are 7:00 p.m. on April 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2:00 p.m. on May 1\textsuperscript{st}, and 6:00 p.m. on May 2\textsuperscript{nd}. Admission is free with festival seating on a first-come, first-served basis. No childcare will be provided during the shows.
Evaluation of the Play as a Production Vehicle

When evaluating Catacombs, as a potential production vehicle, several concerns stood out. The stage at West Side is small, which allows room for only one set, and in the play there is one scene that is supposed to be staged in a different room. After talking it over with my production team, we agreed that by employing a single spotlight and by removing all other furniture except for the table, which would be transformed into a bed, that the audience would go along with the convention that they were now watching action in a different room.

Another concern was the choppiness of the play. I have both seen and read a couple of Paul McCusker’s plays, and he tends to use short scenes frequently. In this play the short scenes, especially in the beginning half, would have the effect of slowing the play down and might make it feel long to the audience. I hope to combat this by focusing on a clear objective in each miniature scene, thus making every scene important. Also, I plan on using David Ball’s method of connecting action in a linear progression, discussed in his book Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays. Using this method I hope to connect each action to the next subsequent action thus showing a cause-effect relationship, so that there is a feeling of moving forward and progressing, and not of simply treading water for the audience.

Catacombs has a large number of male roles and I had some worries about filling them with talented actors. I quickly came to the realization that I would have to use some inexperienced actors, and so would have to spend extra time discussing how an actor stands onstage in relation to the others, and similar basic acting techniques. I knew the idea of a character’s motivation would also be a foreign idea to most of the actors since it...
is something that our current director does not teach or discuss. I didn’t want to overwhelm anyone with a sudden and large amount of new information, so I decided to schedule the concepts into the rehearsals- a little bit in each one. I also decided to try and team up the more experienced actors with the newcomers. This lack of males is also going to necessitate the casting of Captain Slater with our new Music Minister, who I have only met once. He says he has acting experience, but I will have to see what that means and be prepared to speak up if, as a new minister in the church, he tries to take over the rehearsal or if he won’t listen to my instructions.

A final difficulty is the casting of Timmy, the young boy. I do not have a boy who can play this part, so I plan on casting a young girl named Emilee Heinlein. I have discussed with my production team whether to have Emilee play Timmy, as a boy, or to change the gender to a girl. We have agreed that for realism, it would be best to change the character to a girl and will name her Tami.
Concept Statement

The play *Catacombs*, written by Paul McCusker, is an intense snapshot of an interpretation of what the Bible predicts for the “End Times.” The “End Times” refers to the years prior to the return of Jesus Christ. It is a play with many spiritual messages, portrayed with subtlety and with sudden harshness. The title, *Catacombs*, has many meanings. For instance, it represents the deadness of man’s soul until joined with God or the message that just as Christ conquered death on the cross, so man conquers death through Christ’s victory and power. The character of Luke expresses this when, while quoting scripture, he says, “We are put to death all day long. We are considered as sheep led to the slaughter... But in everything we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loves us” (McCusker, 2.8).

This idea of a tomb is reflected in the setting. The characters often reflect on the coldness, the starkness, the tomb-like atmosphere of the church. To represent this there will be a great deal of dull, grey stone on the stage. Also included will be a long gothic cross as one would see on a tombstone which will be placed in a gothic arch, representing the tombstone slab itself. The stage will be kept purposefully small and crowded, to add to the feeling of confinement and being trapped. Lighting will be mainly blue to add to the stark, cold atmosphere called for in the script. At the play’s onset it is the beginning of winter in the mountains. The blue lighting will also be used to give a subterranean look perfect for catacombs. Stairs will be added to the set to enhance the feeling of being under ground. To keep the set believable, since a sanctuary with a stained glass window would not typically be found in a basement, I will only use a few steps to give a brief impression of this church being buried. Bare trees will be placed on either side of the set,
with their branches leaning in, metaphorically attacking the small group of struggling survivors and perhaps growing over them as vines and weeds do in the cemetery.

Not only do the Christians feel trapped in this church, but they feel imprisoned and buried in their minds. Each is desperate to live either for themselves or for others, perhaps for a nephew or a daughter. They are being surrounded in their minds by fears and doubts. Sam fears that he can lead this group to safety. Mary fears for the safety of her daughter Tami. Amy fears to feel emotion again because of the pain it brings. Sloan fears he will be slaughtered if he sticks with the group and puts the others first. Peter fears he won’t be able to make a difference. There are so many well developed characters that the audience is bound to see themselves represented by someone on the stage.

Of course the church does in fact become the tomb for all of them, as they are killed, one by one, their human bodies forever to remain there. Thus the title acts as a foreshadowing device as well.

But death, again, is not the end in this play but is shown to be transitory, a new beginning and not an end. As more tragedy occurs, more characters die, more possible escapes are cut off, and, as the end draws near, the audience is brought to realize that this is the end of nothing. The stairs with their upward ascension are representative of the characters’ individual ascensions to Heaven. The cross, gleaming at the end, serves as a reminder, not of a gravestone, but of Jesus’ victory over death, with the final scripture in the play as another reminder. It reminds the audience that though death is full of hurt and the unknown, like the dimming blackness on the stage, they have hope and a promise through Christ’s death, that they have something in which to aspire.
There are several themes looked at in this play. The first theme deals with faith and seemingly asks- when do you wait and when do you move? It asks what do you do when God's directions seem unclear or are not what we want to hear? A second theme focuses on how man frequently tries to run from God. This theme is mainly shown in the story of Smith who, like Jonah, tries to escape God's plan and then gives in. The world might see this as tragic, but through God it is divine. Like Jonah in the Bible, man can try to run, but God who has ultimate power will be obeyed. The third main theme spotlights man's commitment to Christ. Christ is always, unfailingly, committed to man, but man's devotion wavers. Throughout the play, each character has moments of doubt, but only Sloan completely balks at God. The others, though they wander from God in trust and at times love, still return to faith and are received by God as his children. Many people feel that if they doubt God they will never be forgiven, but this play expresses just the opposite.

The action of the play takes place in a remote Northeastern United States mountain range, about 30 to 50 years into the future. The characters speak in a vernacular that seems modern and to which the audience will easily relate. The costumes, too, are designed to be timeless, at least for the last 50 years. The characters wear durable boots and basic pants in subdued colors, as one might wear in the mountains if they were wishing to remain unobserved. The only items that hint to a future time period are their jackets. These have been designed in a similar style, an A-line cloak with toggle buttons, but with variations to denote economic status and personality type. The Christians' coats in their length and style become almost security blankets, to protect
them from the dangers of the outside world. Each coat has aspects to them that are reminders of the past, present, and future, all at the same time.

The cloaks represent, too, stereotypical societal types. Mary’s cloak, in the blue print, is more useful and not as decorative, more along the lines of the jacket a “soccer mom” would wear. Ruth, who is upper class, has nothing “serviceable” and so is seen in her cloak with beautiful fur trim—pretty but not very durable. Sloan, who is self-involved and not concerned with outward appearance, is in a heavy, brown cloak. This cloak is not very attractive, but then neither is Sloan as evidenced by his constant cruel-spirited remarks to the others. Young Tami is in a youthful coat of yellow and green checks, recalling the patterns of the 1940’s, an earlier innocent time. Amy wears a velvet trimmed, form fitting cloak that shows off her youthfulness, her beauty, and her femininity. Peter wears a slick, effervescent coat that shows his young man’s build, but also declares him city-bred and born. The mountain boys, Clayton and Bobby, wear coats serviceable to their environment; Bobby’s coat has a camouflaged pattern, and Clayton’s is red with a leather yoke.

When the characters step out of the play during their monologues, they enter into a warm communion with God as they ponder death, the death that is all around them and eminent in the play. To separate these monologues from the action and time of the play, the actors will stand downstage on a stage extension. They will be enveloped in a warm light, to contrast these scenes from the cool colors used in the main stage lighting. Because of their close proximity to the audience, the audience will have an almost intimate look into their minds and souls.
To make the events more real and significant to the audience, I will put things on stage that are familiar to them, items that they might see lying around their church; mismatched chairs, an altar area, some pews. The goal is to remind them that this could happen to them, which will make the play feel more immediate. To enhance this concept, and to keep the play from feeling too disjointed from all the quick blackouts, we will play hymn music between scenes. This music will be familiar yet haunting; symbolizing in some manner what has just taken place in the scene, a shadow of the emotion just emitted.

To maintain the realism of the piece, I plan on using authentic weapons and authentic gun shots (blanks) from the side of the stage where the characters are executed. Anything less than realism in the final scene will make the play a joke and will not leave the audience with the intense effect desired. Wireless microphones will have to be used as the stage is in a large gymnasium. This space eats up the little sound that is emitted from the stage, especially from untrained actors. Fortunately, the sound enhancement system at the church is excellent, and I have enlisted professional board operatives to execute the live mix.
# Catacombs Production Calendar

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<td>17th</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Run Act 1, s.2, 3, 4 (No Smith)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24th</td>
<td>Block Act 3</td>
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<td>Run Act 1, s. 5, 8 and Act 2, s.5 (No Peter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>27th - 29th</td>
<td>Arrange 30 min. time period to work on your monologue</td>
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**Production Meeting**
Belinda, Lettie, Teresa, Jim Ackerman, Jim Fletcher, Rick

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<th>March</th>
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<td>9th</td>
<td>LINES MEMORIZED (No Peter or Tim)</td>
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<td>Run Act 3 (Deborah gone)</td>
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<td>16th</td>
<td>Run entire play</td>
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<td>21st</td>
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**Production Meeting**
Belinda, Lettie, Teresa, Jim Ackerman, Jim Fletcher

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<td>Run Act 2-3</td>
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<td>Work on set</td>
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<td>11th</td>
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**Production Meeting**
Belinda, Lettie, Teresa, Stage Construction Foreman, Jim, Sound

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<td>Work on set</td>
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<tr>
<td>20th</td>
<td>Run play</td>
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<tr>
<td>22nd</td>
<td>Run play</td>
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<td>24th (Sat.)</td>
<td>Run play with set</td>
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<td>26th (Mon.)</td>
<td>Tech rehearsal</td>
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<td>27th (Tues.)</td>
<td>Tech rehearsal w/ makeup</td>
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<td>29th (Thurs.)</td>
<td>Dress rehearsal – Arrive by 5:00</td>
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<tr>
<th>May</th>
<th>30th (Fri.)</th>
<th>1st performance – Arrive by 5:00</th>
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<td>1st (Sat.)</td>
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Given Circumstances

The geographical setting of Catacombs is said to be in the Northeastern mountains of the United States. Because of the tombs references I chose to create an old stone church, and not a more typical wood-framed New England church. The band of Christians is in a deserted part of the mountains, with no one around them except a few impoverished farmers here and there. There is a village located some ways below them on the mountain side. They are close to Canada and hope to escape to that country to get away from some of the worst of the persecution that is concentrated in the United States.

The time of year is stated as being on the verge of winter, making the month around November. This is consistent with the text because it begins to snow not long into the script. It is constantly cold, as shown by the numerous references by the characters of being cold and their desire for the old coal furnace to work better. The characters, who are constantly cold from the inadequate heating system, wear their cloaks throughout the play.

At the time of this play, the world is under a charismatic leader, who has brought about world peace and a one world government. The people are still represented through elections, but the politicians elected act more as a council or a cabinet to the leader. The leader was nominated by the defunct national governments, and then holds onto power.

Christians are decried as opponents to this political system, warmongers and troublemakers who won’t change and abide by the new rules. One such rule is the worldwide ID card. To maintain peace and security, all members of the worldwide community must register for a number, similar to a social security number, to be used on political documents (like taxes, paychecks, retirement funds, etc.). The Christians have
refused, stating that they believe this new number is the “Mark of the Beast” prophesied in the book of Revelations in the Bible. They have not taken the mark, a small computer chip inserted in the back of the right hand and they have encouraged others not to get the chip, thus instigating “rebellion” according to the military police. Local police still handle area crimes, but any attack against the state is handled by the military under the direct council of the worldwide leader and his cabinet.

Except for the Christians, most of the population is happy with this arrangement. It means more economic prosperity for them, greater traveling freedom, open commerce, and more stabilization and peace. The Christians, however, are vilified as historical troublemakers, fighters against the greater good, and narrow-minded, critical, condemned criminals.

A new law, set forth two years prior to the time of the play, says that any known Christian should be reported to the state for a small reward. These Christians, it was reported, would be kept under limited surveillance to make sure that no subversive, anti-government movement was taking place. As Christians began being arrested as “traitors” against the new government, and reports of violent Christian behavior were spread throughout the newscasts, punishment for being a part of the “terrorist” Christian movement became more severe including prison time, work camps, and, in some cases, government sanctioned use of chemicals and torture to obtain information about other Christians in the underground. The Christians, a year prior to our play, had started going underground, running to unpopulated areas, such as the mountains, to escape the arrests. This was corruptly reported to the population at large as the Christians setting up camps for the recruitment and training of militants to act against the government.
Some scripture shows the end times to be a time of violence and persecution.

Matthew 24: 4-25 and 29 says:

Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming ‘I am the Christ.’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken on through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never
to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken’ (The Holy Bible; NIV).

Later in Mark 13: 9-12, the betrayal of man to each other, the idea of handing someone over to the authorities is expressed. Mark says:

You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given to you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved (The Holy Bible: NIV).

The concept that this will happen suddenly and painfully for Christians is expressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3:
Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape (The Holy Bible: NIV).

When it comes to the economic background of the characters, at the time of the play they are all poor, having abandoned most of their worldly goods to run and escape imprisonment and death. However, they each had a different background prior to the persecution.

Sam led a cultured, stately, upper-middle-class life as a University professor. His clothing reflects his previous state as they are tailored, and of good material. Ruth, too, led an upper-class existence. They have taken on the primary leadership roles, having been seen as leaders throughout their lives based on their education and moderate wealth. Peter, being Ruth’s nephew, was raised a city boy, with moderate wealth, but as a young man was just starting out to make his way on his own. He then discovered he had to “make do” when the persecution started. He had been raised in a semi-pampered environment, never having to learn practical things, which puts him a bit at loose ends when it comes to surviving in the mountains.

Howard Sloan is middle-class. He is used to looking out for number one. His survival has always been a priority and something he worked towards even before the persecution of the Christians. Mary and her child Tim are also in the middle to lower class. Mary has spent her married years worried about food and clothing for her husband, herself, and her child. The persecution just made it harder, and made her worry about
their physical survival more. Sloan, Ruth, and Tim’s clothes are all practical and without any adornment.

Clayton and Bobby are farm boys, used to hardship from farming in the mountains. Tired of their limited, poor existence, they want freedom. The freedom, they believe, will come from finally having money.

The other impoverished member of the group is Luke. He has never been rich, surviving prior to the persecution as a traveling preacher, having to live on whatever the churches could afford to give. He was then arrested and tortured, and finally released assumedly because the government decided they had hurt him so much that he wouldn’t be able to survive on his own. Very possibly he wouldn’t have, except that Christians took him in and have daily cared for him.

Amy is from a middle-class family, but since she was her parents’ only child, she has been abundantly cared for and loved, hence the beautiful coat she has to wear in the play. She has never had to worry or deal with money, since she is still young and in her late teens, and has always had an adult in charge.

Jim Smith has long since forgotten what it means to be rich or poor. He is constantly on the run and is provided for by blessings from God, or luck as the non-believers would say, or through timely donations and work. He is educated to a certain extent and would be middle class in a normal functioning world, but in this world he is on a mission that has little to do with money and nothing to do with material goods.

Captain Slater is well-off financially. A high-standing military leader, he has one of the most lucrative and sought after positions in the government. An added plus is that when he arrests Christians, or kills them, he gets first chance at their worldly goods,
which has helped him accumulate a nice sum. He is well-off enough that he can scoff at
the mere pittance that others get for “turning in” Christians. He obviously considers their
rewards as small and unimportant.

Religiously there are two distinct camps in this play, the believers and the non-
believers. Occasionally there are those that waver in their faith, but, ultimately, they fall
into one or the other of the previously mentioned groups. Sloan, for instance, wavers, but
then falls in with the faithless, whereas Mary wavers and falls in with the faithful.
Previous Action

Much of the previous action in *Catacombs* is stated in the first scene. The exception to this concerns the character of Smith, who remains a mystery through much of the play and of whom small bits of information are periodically released to the audience. Another source of previous action information comes from the character’s monologues scattered throughout the play.

In general, Christians are being attacked and killed. All of these characters have seen other believers taken by “authorities” and never return. There is a cessation of all spiritual talk in the world. People are told what to believe and say, and all who have not followed are gone. Everyone around them is an enemy. The characters are constantly fretting about talking to outsiders, whether it is when they first bring in Smith or they fret about the farmer who lives a ways below the church where they are hiding.

These Christians have gotten together the few believers that they know, and are trying to escape before it is too late. Escape means not being around people (enemies) who might turn them in, and so they head to the mountains, the least populated area, in hopes of meeting the underground and escaping to a safer area. They’ve been at the church for three weeks and their provisions are running low.

In regards to the characters individually, we learn several things. Sam was an English professor, and still has a deep love for writing. Tami at this point has lost her dad to persecution and, hence, Mary her husband. Ruth was raised in part by a wise grandfather, who wanted her to be a boy.
Amy's background was more like a Norman Rockwell painting. She remembers mom, dad, chocolate cookie baking, and love. However, now she seems to have lost all of that, and is not sure if she wants to remember if it means constant pain.

Peter has built close ties with many of the people in the group. Tami and Peter have built a special connection, as have Peter and Sam (with Sam being like a father to the young man and Peter reminding Sam of his college students), and Peter and his Aunt Ruth. Peter has a feeling of discontentment- he wants to do more to be part of the resistance. Both of Peter's parents have been killed, and it was apparently pretty brutal since he remembers it being long and drawn out (McCusker, 1.7).

Interestingly, nothing is said about Howard Sloan's existence previous to the play. This serves to reinforce the feeling of separation between him and the other Christians and the feeling that he is self-consumed, to the exclusion of others. He apparently doesn't need others, and he obviously doesn't share.

Jim Smith, the audience discovers, has been working for the Christian Underground as the famous "Elijah." His real name is Smith and he is the son of John and Beverly Smith. For three years, he has helped many Christians escape. He is a legend, with stories circulated on how he and Moses evaded the police under impossible circumstances and even performed miracles, though he implies that the miracle reports are exaggerated. Besides Moses, Elijah is the most wanted man in America. He has fled from his responsibilities (like Jonah), and from the hurt of watching Christians die. He has been arrested before, and by Captain Slater, but God helped him escape. At the beginning of the play he has left this work as he didn't have the nerve to continue in the underground.
Luke was declared insane by the government because he was a preacher and was given shock treatments until his brain was damaged. Prior to this he spent his adult life traveling from church to church as a special speaker. It appears he was never married.

Clayton decided a long time ago that he didn’t want to grow old and poor on a farm, and that he and Bobby wanted off the mountain. They wanted to experience the outside world and were willing to do it at any price. Apparently Clayton has a violent nature, as Bobby warns everyone about getting Clayton mad, because he will do rash things when instigated. This is reiterated by the fact that, previous to their arrival at the church, Bobby made Clayton promise that there would be no violence.

Captain Slater has been hunting Elijah and Moses. He caught Moses helping others cross the border and killed him. He tends to talk rather stilted, like an old-fashioned movie. Williams has been helping Slater with the persecution. This is shown by their easy verbal and non-verbal communication. Williams often knows within a few words from Slater, what Slater wants him to do. Occasionally, Williams knows what to do even without direct instruction from Slater.
Analysis of Dialogue

In general the dialogue of *Catacombs* is modern day and conversational with very few exceptions. However, each character speaks with their own vocabulary which reveals aspects of the character.

Sam, the professor, employs large words in his vocabulary, saying in his monologue that death is a “paradox” (McCusker, 1.1). Amy’s speech is cluttered with stories of her past life and memories. Tami’s vocabulary is limited as a child’s would be and often shows her lack of understanding regarding the events surrounding her. She thinks she can attack the “heathen police” with her Swiss Army Knife, and, as she says in her monologue, she doesn’t even know what death is (McCusker, 1.6).

Clayton and Bobby have horrible grammar. For instance Clayton says, “Bobby and me have been wanting to travel” (McCusker, 2.8). Also, he uses country colloquialisms like, “He owns the farm way down yonder where you been gettin’ food” (McCusker, 2.8).

Peter has a tendency to jump into conversations, like the one he interrupts between Ruth and Sam in Act 1, scene 6. Whereas Ruth tends to talk on at length, something Sam teases her about later in the same scene. Smith is evasive, picking and choosing what pieces of information he wants to tell his audience. This technique is most obvious in his scene with Amy, where he answers her questions with short 2 to 7 word sentences (McCusker, 1.8).

Paul McCusker has drawn out his characters through their chosen dialogue, revealing their backgrounds and personalities subtly and with consistency.
Analysis of Dramatic Action

Act 1: The group discovers a stranger in the woods. They decide to take care of him. They ask the stranger (Smith) to get them out of the church, to safety. He refuses and leaves.

Act 2: The group delays their departure when Tami eats canned food, gets sick, and dies. They are then held hostage by mountain teenage boys. Peter defies them and is killed.

Act 3: Captain Slater arrives and arrests them. He shoots each one to get Smith to change his mind and recant his beliefs.

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<td>Sam, Ruth, Mary</td>
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| 53 Ties that bind | Sam, Ruth, Peter | “I’m sorry, Sam- But…” to “…get back.” |
| 54 Sickness invades | Sam, Ruth, Tim | “Sam…” to “…we’re in trouble.” |
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| 55 Tim’s views | | “How is he?” to “…better see Mary.” |
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| 58 Storm blows in | Peter, Sloan, Amy | “Peter, what’s…” to “…want to survive.” |
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| 61 Testing God | Mary, Ruth | “Mary…” to “…to take him, Mary.” |
| 62 Leading the child to the light | Mary, Ruth | “No! God wouldn’t…” to “You watch.” |
| <strong>A2, s6</strong> | | “My baby, my baby…” to “…take care of him.” |
| 63 Wild denial | Mary, Ruth | “Peter…” |
| 64 Avalanche of grief | (Mary, Ruth, Sam, Peter) Amy | “Peter, let me…” to “Let’s go, Luke.” |
| 65 Stillness/ blanket of snow | Amy, Peter (Tim) | “Sometimes I wish…” to “…look what it’s done.” |
| 66 Life reborn | Amy, Peter, Luke, (Tim) | “Even if only…” to “…love you, Peter.” |
| 67 Blizzard of Why? | Amy, Peter, (Tim) | “I’m going to…” to “…do it alone.” |
| <strong>A2, s7</strong> | | “When I was…” to “…bedroom again.” |
| 69 Lost and alone | Amy, Peter, (Tim) | “When I was…” to “…bedroom again.” |</p>
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### Analysis of the Action through the David Ball Method

According to the Ball method of analyzing action, each action leads to the next having a cause and effect fall out. The following is a list of the action in a cause and effect fashion.

Tami wants to play.

Because Tami wants to play, Sam plays hide and seek with her.

This causes Mary to worry about where Tami was and she goes to look for her.

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<td>Spring begins</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>“O Death, where...” to “...with these words.”</td>
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Sam finds Tami first and Mary takes her to prepare for dinner.

Peter, hunting for dinner, brings home a stranger.

They care for sick stranger.

Since he’s a stranger and may be dangerous, Peter watches him.

Since Peter is staying up all night to watch the stranger, Amy brings him coffee to help him stay up.

Peter falls asleep watching the stranger, and is awaken by Sam.

As they watch the stranger, he wakes up.

They ask him (Smith) for help, but he makes no promises.

Their disappointment leads them to question him again and he is evasive.

Out of desperation, Amy goes to him alone to ask for help.

Her desperation pushes Smith to leave.

Smith is caught leaving by Sam, and he warns Sam.

The warning makes Sam get everyone together to leave.

The pressure of leaving causes a fight between Sloan and Peter, who walk out.

Peter brings back Sloan who has been getting food. They discover Tami dying.

Tami dying keeps them from leaving.

After she is buried by Peter, they prepare to leave but the sons of the man giving Sloan food hold them hostage.

Peter, outside burying the body, slashes the boys’ tires.

Being stranded causes irritation and Clayton shoots Peter.

They are held hostage until Smith shows up and frees them.

Before they can leave, Slater, chasing Smith, captures them.
Slater, having captured Smith, wants to break him, so he kills each Christian, one by one.

Smith doesn’t break, so Slater kills him.

Slater hasn’t won anything, so he gets angry and leaves.
The main characters in *Catacombs* are there to reveal differing types of Christians, though one could debate if the character of Sloan is a Christian. As the characters are developed the audience learns their deepest fears and then has a chance to see that fear contrasted against their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The character of Sam is the type most would want to be. As man of faith, he still has immense feelings of helplessness and feelings of insecurity, but his courage doesn’t falter.

Sam is an English professor. He has a generally upbeat attitude, often making a joke to break up a tense moment. In his monologue about death he finds the irony of it and expresses it when he says, “I can’t exactly pinpoint what I think about it. Which is funny, since we seem surrounded by it lately... It’s a paradox because death is such an important part of living. Don’t ask me to explain that, because I can’t” (McCusker, 1.2).

Sam is the ideal of the play. Even though he is the accepted leader he is patient enough to play with young Tami, but more than play, sends Tami on her way, happy. He’s a bit “Absent-minded”, like when he sends Tami off in Hide-and-Go Seek and then forgets to go looking for her. No harm comes from this momentary lapse and there is a sense of security that when it comes to the larger issues Sam will make careful decisions. The audience sees him as a leader through various actions, like Ruth coming to him about the food situation. He also leads the meetings, when they discuss new and old issues.

Luckily, Sam is not perfect, as an ideal character rarely makes an interesting character. Sam’s “hang-up” is when the group argues. He knows that division can destroy them all in the end. He also tends to get a bit introspective, forgetting Tami when he plays with her, or not expressing his feelings clearly, as in his affection for Ruth.
Sam is not without his struggles. He feels at a loss, incapable to do anything worthwhile, when it comes to their survival and lack of food. Occasionally, too, he will make sarcastic jokes, like when he inadvertently jokes about starving to death in front of Tami.

Tami represents innocence. She is basically unaware of their extreme peril. Her trial is loneliness, which we see right away as she runs to Sam looking for anyone with whom to play. There are no other children, so she makes up friends, like her chipmunk, Joshua. Also, she feels like she can play with Peter. There is a general protectiveness over the innocence and wellbeing of Tami by the rest, which at times is suffocating to her, but most of the group, having lost their naivety in the persecution and death of loved ones, yearn to have Tami preserve that sense that they have lost.

Ruth is the female caretaker of the group, the female version of Sam. She has become in charge of meals, which are low in supply. In general she remains optimistic through it all, often looking for small “miracles”, like the coal furnace working, as signs that God is looking out for them. She is a connecting unit in the group as she is Mary’s friend, Peter’s aunt, and also, seems to have a close bond with Sam. The audience sees this in their good natured teasing of each other, which Peter points out as reminding him of his parents (1.6).

Mary, Tami’s mother, is an extreme worrier. She has lost all of her family and clings fearfully to Tami. She is the female foil to Ruth. Mainly pessimistic, she is sure Tami will get hurt is a myriad of ways. Ruth describes this when she says, “She [Mary] sees a dark cloud behind every silver lining” (1.2).
Amy’s current life is so awful that she spends much of her time remembering her happy childhood. She’s a bit of a people watcher. For instance, she sees that “Mr. Smith” is evading questions and kindly calls him on it (1.8). Possibly this aspect of Amy is enhanced by her lack of connectedness to the group. She has no tight bonds with any of them, with the possible exception of Peter, who seems to have feelings for Amy. This is best seen in the moment following Tami’s death. The whole group at this moment has gathered at the deathbed of Tami, except for Amy who has withdrawn herself to a different room, to deal with her pain apart from the others and to not intrude upon their grief (2.6).

Peter, on the other hand is emotionally available to everyone. He is Tami’s friend, Ruth’s nephew, Sam’s adopted student, Amy’s romantic interest, and Luke’s caretaker. He is not afraid to emote, even with his enemies, as in the cases of Clayton and Sloan.

Peter is energetic and a doer. The first thing said about him is that he is hunting to try and get food for everyone (1.2). In his abundance of emotions, one character trait he is in short supply of is patience, except when it comes to Tami. He always has time for Tami. In place of patience is a call to action which he feels inclines him to want to fight and to right the wrongs. This stubbornness is pointed out by Ruth, when she says he is like his mother, who was “more stubborn then any of us” (2.2).

Sloan is the antithesis of these other characters. Instead of meshing with the group, he is out for himself. He is the only character who does not want to help the mysterious stranger (John Smith) when they first find him. Constantly antagonistic to Peter, he attacks him, mainly since Peter speaks up and points out this self-centered
attitude to the group at large. His greed is brought to light when the audience discovers that he has been making deals for more food, but didn’t share any of the food with the others. Sloan is not only over stuffed with food, but with lies and excuses. He is the main source of conflict and hence of drama in the first half of the play.

The character of Jim Smith remains a mystery for most of the play. He is the most complex character, who also shows the most change. He is human, shown with his fears and frustrations. He is prepared to sneak away and leave the little group on their own, not showing the courage to tell them this face to face, but then he does have the courage to come back and help them out. He is conflicted. Even when he is evading the group’s questions, he is still dynamic, easily being seen as someone people would follow.

He has a metamorphosis throughout the play as his character grows and heals. In Act 1 he is worn out and defensive. But by Act 3, he is willing to stand up and show courage even to the point of violence. Finally, when the fight is over, he shows acceptance and love for Christ.

Peter and Sloan have opposite polar attitudes. Sloan’s focus is to not do anything that gets in the way of his survival. Peter is more interested in stopping the persecution and doing something about their fate. This often puts them at odds. Peter sees Sloan as a coward and Sloan sees Peter as reckless.

Mary and Ruth, too, are polar opposites. Mary gets wrapped up in worry and the details. Ruth is methodical, taking one step at a time, not worrying about the distant future, but taking care of today.
The many lesser characters of Catacombs have varied importance to the play. Luke provides both the comedy, through his madness and his belief in his power through God to heal, and the moral messages of the play through his vague sermons. Clayton, as the angry, violence prone leader of the two kidnapping teenagers, provides an instability to the actions, and adds to the dramatic conflict. Where as Bobby, a less evil, less serious, and a less violent version of Clayton, simmers down the scenes and gives hope of release to the captives. These characters are included in the play to give a non-Christian view of the end times and an idea of the worlds' look at the Christians and their problems.

Bobby and Clayton are a lesser version of the evil to come, embodied in Captain Slater. He’s a frustrated and empty man, because no matter what he has tried he can’t stop Christianity. He shows that there is something that these people have that he doesn’t, and that is creating a deep hate within him. The evil that Christians are set up against throughout their lives, as well as is predicted in the Bible for the end times, is shown in Slater. As the characters go up against this evil and threat of death, their various reactions represent the many reactions modern Christians have. Most are accepting, as are Sam and Ruth, some are simply so devastated that any end seems a good thing, as in the character of Mary, some are above the persecution having suffered so much already, like Luke, and some give in to their fear and try any means to escape the pain, as in the turning of Sloan. In this end scene the audience is subtly posed the question of who are they most like on the stage? At the end they are left with this to ponder; who are they and who do they want to be?
In the end it is all in God’s hands. This point is made twice at the end. Smith shows his ultimate courage and acceptance of this at the end when he says:

Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong. (3.2)

And finally, in the voiceover the main motivation of most of the characters’ is expressed as the voice says:

...thanks be to God who gives us victory over death through Jesus Christ...And so we will always be with the Lord. And He will wipe away all tears and there will be no more death. Or sorrow. Or crying. Or pain.

Therefore comfort one another with these words. (3.2)

If, in the end it is all in God’s hands, then the message of the play is to remain faithful to God, in both times of joy and also, importantly, in times of suffering. For the play and the characters say to the audience, the times of suffering will indeed come as prophesized, but that man, through God’s strength, can be victorious.
Ideas of the Play

Paul McCusker wrote a cautionary tale to Christians about the persecution to come and their way of dealing with current hardship as well. This play is about a group of people who are running from death, but then embrace it as being loyal to Christ and the next step to Him.

There are many moral messages scattered throughout the play. In Act 1, scene 1, Sam says, “I like to think I’m prepared for death now. I’m not. I don’t think anyone can be.” This plays on the idea that only God can prepare us for death. He follows up this idea of death, this thing that man runs from when he says in the same monologue, “It’s a paradox because death is such an important part of living.”

There are many expressions throughout the play describing death, not as an end, but as a transition, and more explicitly a transition to God and lost loved ones. Amy says in Act 2, scene 1, “I’ve been thinking about my family and- I know this sounds strange- but death is my only way to see them again.”

Ruth describes death as a “doorway” in her monologue, another form of admittance and transition. She says, “That’s what death is to me. A locked door. But one day I’ll get through, and it’ll be just like playing in my grandfather’s bed room again” (2.7).

Even early on, Sam shows that death is not something to be feared. He says, “In death there is peace” (1.4).

Slater, eventually arrives with the large threat, “Keep your faith, and you lose your lives” (3.2). But even that fails to move most of the survivors, who by this time have come to terms with what death truly means to them. Even Mary, one of the largest
worriers of the bunch, says when faced with the threat of execution, “I’m afraid now, too, but it isn’t the same... I have a husband and [daughter] waiting for me” (3.2).

Throughout the play, there is not an immediate acceptance of death. The play is made up of a constant struggle, a struggle against God and a struggle to fulfill one’s own desires. There are several allusions made to the story of Jonah, a man who, in the Bible, was commanded by God to do one thing, but didn’t want to do it and so he ran unsuccessfully from God’s will. God eventually pulled him back in line and Jonah, to his own thankfulness, was obedient.

This is mainly embodied in Smith when he admits he was... “just trying to escape” (1.8). The comparison is made complete when Sam replies, “So was Jonah. I just hope this mountain doesn’t become the belly of a whale” (1.8).

At the end of the play, Luke repeats this theme when he says, “We can’t run and hide from God” (3.2). Again, this emphasizes to the audience that there will be a choice to be made by them and they, too, will eventually face trials. Sam, in Act 1, in fact has already told them that and explained the importance and rewards of these trials in their lives when he says, “Consider it all joy when you suffer trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (1.4).

Sam finally expands the Jonah symbolism to a greater theme- Christ’s greatest trial was dying for man on the cross. He, in essence, poses the question of will we bear the pain and stand with Christ, or abandon Him on the cross. When the question is put to Sam by Slater in the final scene he says, “I feel a very quiet peace.... We can all run like Jonah, but we have to face our Golgothas just like Jesus” (3.2), and then he chooses to stand firm in his beliefs.
Not only does Paul McCusker hit the ideas of the meaning of death and the choices and results from persecution, he also stresses the idea that not all trials are understandable. We, as humans, may not understand God’s plan or why he is choosing to do something in a certain way. Sam expresses his frustration at this lack of knowing when he says, “But everything we’ve been through defies all knowledge and reason” (2.4).

Ruth, too, tries to explain why humans have a lack of understanding towards God’s greater plan. She says, “God sees and does things so much differently than we do” (2.5).

McCusker purports that for non-believers there will be suspiciousness towards the beliefs of the Christians, stemming from a lack of understanding. When Slater becomes frustrated at the Christians for not giving into his threats, Smith retorts:

...we have something you don’t. And it’s gnawing at your insides because you can’t touch it or take it away from us. You’re warped and you’re frustrated because no matter how hard you try, you can’t smother it or stop it. You may know human nature, but you don’t know anything about the Spirit. (3.2)

Sam, too, remarks on this lack of perception when he says in Act 1, “When you let godless men lead a country, they’ll do godless things to the God-fearing” (2). McCusker stresses how this lack of understanding, and the inability for a similar relationship with God, is what pushes non-believers to hurt and belittle Christians.

Another minor message is that Christians must be a family to each other, helping and sacrificing for each other as Christ did for them. Ruth touches on this moral
responsibility Christ has given Christians, to care for each other, when she says, “... we have a responsibility to help others” (1.2). Sam echoes this when he says, in regards to Sloan’s dismissive statement about the uselessness of crazy Luke, “Another human being is not ‘baggage’ regardless of his state of mind” (1.2).

One of the final and great messages of the play is that victory is ultimately Christ’s and the Christian’s through Christ. Of course, this would not be a victory as typically thought, but a victory from standing fast in their faith and joining their God in Heaven. This need for faith is expressed by Smith at the end of the play when he chastises the others saying, “If you people had put your faith in God and not in imaginary heroes, you wouldn’t be so disappointed” (3.2).

Luke, in a mini-sermon, hit upon this theme when he states:

God did not call us to fear or panic but through victory through Jesus Christ... Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine? It is written: ‘For thy sake we are put to death all day long. We are considered as sheep led to the slaughter.’

...But in everything we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loves us. I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any created thing can be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ (2.8).

This victory is expressed repeatedly. Luke says, at the end of the play, “Do not grieve as those who have no hope. Our victory is in Jesus Christ and eternal life. We will die, yet we shall live again” (3.2).
It is also the last thing said to the audience, when in the final moments of the performance they hear a voice say:

O Death where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?...but thanks be to God who gives us the victory over death through Jesus Christ. For we do not wish for you to be misled, brothers and sisters, about those who have died-so you won’t grieve as those who have no hope. For if we believe that Christ died and rose again, even so, these who died in Jesus will be brought by God. For this we say by the Word of the Lord- that the Lord himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. And he will wipe away all tears and there will be no more death. Or sorrow. Or crying. Or pain.

Therefore comfort one another with these words (3.2).

This main idea that death is in fact the victory for the Christian is emphasized again and again. Peter in his final moments says to the barrel end of Clayton’s gun, “It really bugs you that I’m not afraid, doesn’t it?” (2.8). Smith, too, in his final moments expresses his faith in Jesus’ ultimate power and victory when he quotes the song:

Jesus loves me! This I know,

For the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong;

They are weak, but He is strong. (3.2)
For the ultimate idea in Paul McCusker's play is that, through Christ, man has ultimate victory through the action of death, since in fact, through Christ, man doesn't die but beats death and moves on to eternal life in Christ.
Past Productions

There were very few reviews of *Catacombs* to be found. Several churches and Universities had performed it, but few had had reviews written about it. One of the Universities to perform it was South Baptist University in April of 2003. It was met with mixed results.

The director employed a realistic portrayal with a wooden set and furniture one would see circa 1970's. Characters were dressed in camping attire, in modern woolen plaid shirts. The major complaint of the review was the poor quality of acting from some of the students and the drag in the action in Act One (Hobbler, 1).

My challenge as a director is to take McCusker’s play, with its short scenes and at times preachy style, speed it up, and give it a feeling of immediacy to the audience. I will need to find solutions to conquer the slowness in Act 1, and make the characters real and relatable.
About the Author

Paul McCusker has been writing fiction, non-fiction and drama since 1979. His work includes over 40 published novels, full-length plays, skit collections, screenplays and lyrics (Hobbler 1).

Paul McCusker was born in 1958 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, but spent his adolescent years outside of Washington D. C. in Bowie, Maryland. He received a college degree in journalism, but started writing sketches and plays for Grace Baptist Church. From those efforts came his earliest published drama collections for the prestigious Baker's Plays, including Sketches of Harvest, Souvenirs and Batteries Not Included. His earliest dramatic works were published by Lillenas Publishing Co., Contemporary Drama Services, Group Books, and Monarch/ Gazelle Books in England (Hobbler 1).

In 1985 he moved to California and worked with Continental Ministries. This led to his work as a freelance writer for the Focus on the Family radio drama called Family Portraits, which later became Adventures in Odyssey. He was the Producer for the series from 1992-1996 and has been the Executive Producer since 2000. Paul is now also Vice President of the Focus Resource Group, which includes overseeing periodicals, books, films and audio drama. He also wrote and directed the Peabody Award-winning Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Freedom and created the highly acclaimed Father Gilbert Mysteries (Focus 1).

Paul's dramatic writing has also extended to musicals. He was nominated for a Dove Award for the play portion of A Time for Christmas, with music and lyrics by David Clydesdale, Steve Amerson, and Lowell Alexander (Hobbler 1).
Paul McCusker has written stage presentations for the drama troupes Jeremiah People and Custer & Hoose, which tour across the nation. There have been six video releases of his productions (Focus 1). Furthermore, he has released several books; including turning his play Catacombs into a book form. His novel, Epiphany, was nominated for the ECPA Gold Medallion Award. His non-fiction includes Playwriting: A Study In Choices & Challenges (Hobbler 1). Cumulative sales on his books have reached over 800,000 copies (Focus 1).

McCusker is a well respected and often performed author in the Christian theatre world. Just this past spring, his popular play Pap’s Place, was performed at the Lillenas Publishing Company’s Music and Drama National Convention. Characteristic of many McCusker’s plays, it had short scenes and loveable, but conflicting characters.
Sketch Written to Promote Play in Church

The following was written by the director to advertise the play and was performed Sunday, April 25, 2004, at West Side Baptist Church.

Sketch:

(Sam enters and sits at desk. As he writes in his journal a voice is heard, expressing the thoughts being written in the journal.)

Sam: Day 21...21...Lord, what are you doing? My apologies Lord, I know exactly what you are doing... you're making us wait. The irony of life: you hurry to get somewhere only to stand in line or twiddle your thumbs, "sound and fury signifying nothing."

Our supplies are less than yesterday. But what is faith if not belief in the midst of unwieldy circumstances. Maybe young Peter will get something hunting... or maybe he'll stumble on some manna. I wonder what manna looks like... or if it tastes like chicken. Howard would probably grumble, and yet eat most of it. Howard... Give me love Lord... and patience.

Our provider, give me a scripture for today, through your Holy Spirit... ah...

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Thank you, Jesus. We certainly are building a lot of character. Mary tries to deal with her fear and worry over Tami. Amy continues to deal with her loneliness. I don't
know why you put me, an inept professor, in charge of this exodus, but thought I am
tempted I will not flee from the task set before me.

“Character brings hope.”

Send us our contact, Lord. Send the contact to us... (Voice over finished)

Tami: (Running onto the stage) Sam! Sam!

Sam: Yes, Tami?

Tami: Joshua has gone away, and I can't find him.

Sam: Joshua? Your chipmunk?

Tami: And now I don't have anyone to play with.

Sam: Where's Peter?

Tami: He went hunting.

Sam: Oh. (Returns to his writing)

Tami: Will you play with me?

Sam: OK. Let's play hide-and-seek. You hide and I'll try to find you.

Tami: OK!

Sam: Go! One... two... three... four... five... (Sam runs off stage to find Tami)
Song Addition to the End of the Play

Feeling that the play need to be summed and leave the audience not only thinking, but with a modicum of hope, I added the following hymn, the copyright of which is public domain. It encapsulated the main ideas of the play: death, persecution, and victory in Christ.

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”, written by Isaac Watts in 1707 goes:

When I survey the wondrous cross/ On which the Prince of Glory died,/ My richest gain I count but loss/ And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it Lord that I should boast./ Save in the death of Christ my God./ All the vain things that charm me most/ I sacrificed them to His blood.

Were the whole realm of nature mine-/ that were a present far too small./ Love so amazing so divine/ Demands my soul my life my all.
Set Design

Original Set Design

Revised Set Design
Hostetler 52

Production Journal

February 3rd - Casting has been a nightmare. Many people have dropped out last minute for various, yet legitimate reasons (family, jobs, a wedding…). Tonight, a half an hour before the read through, I recast the role of Clayton. Andy has never acted before, but he read with me creditably well, and he is very intelligent so I am hoping for the best.

Here is my current and hopefully final cast list:

Sam ........................................ Daryl Schilperoot
Tim (Tammy) ......................... Emilee Heinlein
Ruth ........................................ Deborah Brown
Mary ....................................... Belinda Caldwell
Amy ........................................ Gina Cole
Peter ....................................... Brandon Lamb
Howard Sloan ......................... Rob Caldwell
Jim Smith ............................... Bill Preston
Luke ....................................... Mike Foisey
Clayton ................................... Andy Harpel
Bobby ................................. Greg Harpel
Captain Slater ......................... Josh Cavallo
Williams .............................. Roger Kinder
Officer ................................. William Schmidt

I held the read-through and tape-recorded it to help the actors who like to memorize that way. The read-through was horrible. Many characters read their parts in a
depressed or depressing manner. I held a discussion at the end, as to how these characters are fighters, survivors, and we didn’t want the audience knowing that they were doomed until the very end, and even then they go out strong. I especially emphasized this with Bill, Daryl, and Deborah whose characters are the leaders of the group. I said, “You have to be hopeful, or these people would have quit following you. Think of it as if it was to end like The Sound of Music, with the whole bunch escaping over the mountains to freedom.”

Rob was out of town, so I read Sloan. Belinda was sick, so I read Mary. Also, Mike had a death in the family, so I read Luke. Josh (Capt. Slater) hadn’t moved to Yakima yet, so I read Slater. Like I said, it was pretty horrible.

10th - I had actors introduce themselves, again, and then had them introduce themselves in character. We blocked all of Act 1. I used the gym floor since we can’t utilize the stage area. I measured it out so it would be close to accurate in spacing. I used yarn to delineate where the platform was. I also showed the cast the model, which seemed very helpful in allowing them to picture the play. I was quite pleased since this is half of the play.

Again, I emphasized to Daryl that he was not angry, but humorous. I have realized that he is playing Sam just like he played Albert in the Christmas play, his last role. I encouraged Bill to be charismatic, not sad, and mysterious.

17th - We started with a warm up with the actors (physical), mainly stretching and movement to get people awake after their long days at work. In past shows (the 7 years I have done shows as an actor at West Side) we have never done any type of warm
up. I was nervous about introducing this to them, but they were all game. They have a lot of trust in me.

We blocked Act 2, and had time to run all of Act 1 as a review. Josh, our new music minister and the character of Slater, still hasn’t moved here and so he wasn’t at the rehearsal. I worked with the new actors on how to stand in relation to other characters, what levels were and why we use them, and how to cross. I led a brief lesson on focus.

24th- I blocked Act 3, so I had told Brandon and Emilee before that they didn’t have to be there. We started with a warm up. The actors are consistently 5 minutes to 10 minutes late. I expressed to them the need to have full rehearsals and let them know (kindly) that I will hold them after my agreed ending time when we start late.

We finally had a chance to see Josh act. He over does it and doesn’t always take direction well. He has his own image of how it should go, but he is new and insecure, so I think he will listen to me. It was a bit hard to relate to Josh. He’s an unknown and trying to learn the ropes in his new job as music minister. At the end, there was time to run through the second half of Act 2.

27th- I met with most of my production team: Lettie Schmidt (props and details), Teresa Fletcher (costuming), Jim Ackerman (set construction), Rick Doehle (sound), and Jim Fletcher (lighting). I started by showing them my set model that was to scale. They really liked this, especially Jim A. Then I showed them pictures of churches that I was envisioning as examples for our church. We discussed the set and how various things would affect lighting. We talked about what the flats would look like and how much they might cost. Jim A. agreed to price it out for us and get back to me.
We discussed sound: how many speaking actors, who was on stage when, sound effects, fights and hugs, etc. We looked at some pictures that I had drawn and some pictures that I had found in books that resembled some of the costumes that I had designed. We talked through potential costuming issues.

Then we adjourned to the church's stage and actually measured out the set.

March 2nd - We ran Act 1-2. Rob was out of town for work related reasons, so I played Sloan. I had the actors get with another character and discuss, in character, something that had happened to them before the time of the play. I talked to them about the importance of realizing a past for their character and an understanding of their relationships with the other actors in the ensemble outside of the reality/time period of the play. I occasionally stopped them to ask for details about past memories that they were discussing (i.e. Amy's memory of her mother's baking, Ruth's memory of her grandfather's knick knacks, etc.) I had them look for clues as to what these relationships with each other may be like.

Daryl was still so angry and not getting the humor of Sam, so I had him do all of Act 1, Scene 2 as a comedy. I told him to never stop smiling and to find every line funny. It was an effective exercise. Though it was over the top, I told him that I liked that much more than the mopey, angry way he had been delivering his lines.

9th - Brandon and Emilee didn't have to come to rehearsal since we had scheduled the whole time for working on the end of Act 2 and all of Act 3. Deborah was out of town for work related reasons.

To warm up the actors, I had them get with a character that they had a relationship with in the play, and improvise a discussion about a (made up) shared memory between
their characters. I wanted to release them from their scripts and make them think beyond the moment of the play. This also gave them a chance to start dissecting their characters. They seemed to really enjoy and relate to this exercise.

Bill is starting to put more energy into the role of Elijah. He is looking for why this man was such an accepted leader.

They were supposed to have lines memorize, and only the kids did: Andy, Greg, Gina, and Emilee. I purposefully made the final deadline earlier than I wanted, so that they would actually have them learned by next week. Andy has done an interesting thing, he has memorized his lines and sub-consciously corrected all of the bad grammar in them. This, of course, changes the character of Clayton. I pointed it out to him and we all had a good chuckle.

10th - I went material shopping with Teresa at JoAnn Fabrics. It took 3 hours, but it felt like forever! This is not a part of directing that I enjoy. Especially hard was finding the material for Peter’s coat. I wanted something a bit muted, but young and hip feeling, since he was a city kid. I saw Peter and his Aunt Ruth as a bit upper class. Also difficult was figuring out how to do the toggles, since they were very expensive. Then I thought of cutting up dowels and painting them, which worked very well. The cost of the material was approximately $200.

16th - Brandon couldn’t come to rehearsal because of previous commitments. We worked the scenes that he (Peter) wasn’t in. I have found that the scene between Gina and Bill (Amy and Elijah) is very weak. The actors don’t know why their characters are having this scene, so we had a huge discussion on motivation. What does each actor want in the scene and how are they going about getting it? I assigned as
homework that each actor had to figure out what his/her motivation (goal) was in each scene and their overriding goal of the play.

23rd- Brandon didn’t come to rehearsal. Turned out that he was in the hospital for severe eye problems. We again, mainly did scenes he was not in. We discussed motivation and staying in the scene mentally. I would occasionally stop the scene to ask an actor, “What are you thinking right now?” Sometimes they had an “in-character” thought, but often it was a revelation to them that they weren’t thinking about the scene at all. I encouraged them to mix it up and try different approaches, to play with their phrasing and emotion a bit.

I still had to work with Daryl to not be angry. Rob’s Howard Sloan comes in mad and right away Daryl, too, reverts to angry and pessimistic, which in no way is supported by his lines as Sam. He said he could now hear it and was going to work on lightening his voice.

25th- I met with Jim A., and Bill and Lettie Schmidt to discuss the set. We decided walls would be too costly and time consuming for our amount of manpower. Then we went to our storage units and looked at materials we already had (i.e. the Styrofoam rocks and the pew benches). We hauled the stuff we would need back to the church and stored it. This simple process took a great deal of time, since the others, especially Lettie, like to reminisce about past shows, looking at past prop pieces. I tried to move us along, but sometimes I just sat back and went with the flow.

30th- Emilee wasn’t at rehearsal since it was spring break, so I played Tammy. The Harpel boys weren’t there either for the same reason, but I knew in advance and decided to run Act 1 and 3, especially since we hadn’t had Brandon for a while. We hit
all of Brandon’s scenes hard. His monologue intrigued me since it mentions his parents died slowly and painfully. I asked him what had happened to them, and he said he didn’t know. I asked him to figure it out by next week.

Josh is doing well, but he continues to overact. He thinks out every little movement, instead of just being in the moment. He is also beginning to argue about the direction given, though in the end he does what I tell him to do.

April 6th- Everyone was at Rehearsal! We ran the play clear through for the first time and we ran it on the stage with representational stage pieces. Our weak scenes are still the same: Bill and Gina’s, and Josh in the final scene. They are starting to act tougher, more like survivalists, though.

10th- We worked on set. Lettie and I spent around 6 hours on the cross piece, making the stain glass cross. The guys built the steps for the stage left exit. Also, we cut a new table top (longer) for the front table, so Emilee will fit on it.

13th- Rob wasn’t at rehearsal because of work commitments. I played Sloan. I discussed my idea for an ending song, and started formulating ideas of what could be sung and how to arrange it with Lettie. A couple of days later I picked “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and had the idea of a women’s group and candles in the darkness.

I worked with Emilee to get her more energetic (running on stage or skipping, etc.) I sent her and Daryl to work on her faint. She remembers her blocking well, but it makes her rigid. She also has some odd delivery of lines that I talked to with her about. I tried to use examples of kid things (i.e. “It’s exciting, like waiting to open presents on Christmas day.”) I also talked with her mom about these things, and asked her to work with Emilee over the next week.
20th- Rob didn’t make the rehearsal since his flight to Yakima was cancelled. I played Sloan, again. Belinda came with a hurt foot and crutches. She thought she should step out of the play. I told her to try it with the crutches and see what happened. Afterward, after a brief discussion, the production team unanimously agreed that she should still be in the show.

We used all the props for the first time and I, the production team, and the actors talked through the props (we had an organized prop table for the first time) and how they were getting on and off the stage. Rehearsal went long.

22nd- We ran the play except for the Mary/Ruth scenes, since Deborah was out of town and Belinda didn’t come because her foot hurt badly. We used the guns for the first time. Some of the actors brought the shirts, pants, and boots they were going to wear, to have them approved. We added a few of the leftover props that we hadn’t gotten yet or that we were replacing because the old prop idea hadn’t worked in the last rehearsal.

Rob was yelling his lines too much and I discussed this with him. He, also, had difficulty remembering his lines, mainly since he’s missed two consecutive rehearsals. I again talked with Bill and Gina about the lack of energy in their scene.

24th- Had rehearsal at 7 A.M. Many of the actors had late morning, and afternoon commitments. I played Slater since he was out of town. Belinda was no longer on crutches and only has to hobble. We ran the whole play with all the props and with microphones for the second half.

I had written that week a monologue to be used as a sketch in church for advertising. So after rehearsal we taped Daryl’s scripture reading for the end of the play and transferred it to CD. Then we taped Daryl’s inner monologue for the advertising
sketch in church the next day. When the monologue was taped and transferred to a CD, I called Emilee back to the church to rehearse the sketch.

25th - In the morning I went to church early to put microphones on Daryl and Emilee for the ad/sketch, and helped them through the sound check. Both performances (first and second service) went well. I talked with Steve Wolcott, Neil Lentsch, and Brad Gravesen about video taping the performances.

I went to church and at 6 p.m. worked on the set. We stained and built the railing for the platform. Jim F. and I figured out the lighting of the cross and started focusing lights. We worked approximately 4 hours.

26th - We ran the play with lights for the first time. Overall the timing went well. We also used the gunshots for the first time. The military shots were at first too quiet and we experimented afterward to get a better effect.

Actors were very "off". They were fooling around backstage. Afterwards, we went through 4 pages of notes, mostly negative. We had many late entrances, mangled lines, and messed up props. Costumes looked good, but actors had to start figuring out how to use them and incorporate them into their character.

I worked with Bill and Gina on their scene for an hour afterward, to work on the tension and purpose of the scene. We worked for 2 hours after this refocusing lights. The production team discussed the monologue spot at some length. The goal was to make it warm, whereas the church scene is cool. The contrast was to set the two apart, and make the monologue seem out of the time of the play, more ethereal and inner- psychological. We came up with an idea for moonlight streaming in at the Stage left exit, but decided to table it until the next day.
27th- We ran the play with sound the whole way through (no stopping) and with music transitions. All went well except for the helicopter sound effect which was ill timed and too short. The gunshots (firing blanks) sounded much better nearer the door, so they could echo through the auditorium. I gave 4 pages of notes to the actors again, but this time most were positive. The set was primarily finished except the fancy railing posts on the platform that are to be added in front of the serviceable posts for decoration. After rehearsal, I reminded actors to start arriving Thursday at 5:00. I also told them to reset their props for Scene 1 (which they didn’t do). I talked with Bill about a new motivation in going to his bag and rifling through it before he leaves, thus getting caught leaving by Sam. Now he will go to his bag to get his gloves out since he is leaving.

After the actors left, I answered sound questions. Jim F. and I worked through all the lighting cues (timing the fade ups and downs), adjusted the levels of the lights (the ambers were too bright in the day scenes), and created a new lighting environment (early morning) for the scene where Peter takes the body out to be buried. It was essentially night, but without the moonlight streaming in the window in the front door.

We worked on attaching the Special (the moonlight) for an hour. We had difficulty securing it to the wall, so Jim ended up attaching plywood to the wall and then the light to the plywood. Meanwhile, we also put more glow tape on the stage, so actors could find the steps and not run into furniture. After attaching the Special, we realized it would be too low for lighting the actors’ faces when they go up the stairs at night, hitting them on the chest instead, so we intend to raise it before opening night. At 12:30 a.m., I went to my parent’s house to download final cast headshots for the programs. I got home at 2:00 a.m.
29th – Dress Rehearsal. I worked with the singers for the first time, since not all could come on another rehearsal night. We didn’t like Brooke, the lead singer, lighting her candle up front, like we had planned, so I had her light her candle in back and walk up. It was much better.

The helicopter sound effect didn’t work; it wasn’t timed right. So we decided to rehearse this again to get it right, on Friday afternoon, just Rick and me. The actors did okay, but we had quite a bit of messed up lines, and talking over each other. More glow tape helped and they weren’t fumbling about on stage as much. The moonlight looked too yellow, so we decided to remove the gel and go with a white light (other option was blue, but the whole stage was blue for cold feeling, so it would have blended right in).

I gave some notes at the end, but basically encouraged them to review their scripts, again and again, and quite "acting" or thinking about acting and to just "be" up there. It was an exciting rehearsal, too, because Belinda and Rob brought their newly adopted son, Joseph. Their heads are spinning.

30th. First performance. I got out the portable chalkboard and covered it for the actors’ entrance to the hallway. I moved chairs so that there weren’t any audience seats with bad sight-lines that could see backstage. I made sure the monitor was hooked up backstage and got programs for my ushers. I got a headset for myself so I could talk with the sound booth.

I was very annoyed that the picture taking for the church directory was going to be during my show, so I made lots of “Be Quiet” posters and hung them about as reminders. Pastor Steve promised to keep them quiet.
I encouraged my actors to stay on task with their makeup and costumes and gave them a pep talk, about not “acting” and just “being”. Josh and Deborah in particular tend to do this. They tend to be too busy or use “indicating” gestures. Before the show I prayed with the cast. Then I went backstage with Pastor Rick and got the whole thing underway. Afterward, we met with Derek. The cast was very excited to meet a “real professor” in drama. At the meeting we all had a good time “discussing” me.

Turn out was quite good at around 350 people.

May 1st- I arrived at church for the 2nd show. Pastor Rick was talking to Lettie about the possibility of doing the show one last time, Sunday night. I agreed to discuss it with the cast and crew and see if they would agree. Everyone ended up agreeing, and we decided to have it at 6:00.

Picture people were more obnoxious today, and louder. My mother, two of the “soldiers”, and I ended up asking and then insisting that they be quiet. Luckily our crowd was smaller (approx. 150) and sitting in the first half of the auditorium, so I don’t think they realized or heard the noise.

This was our best performance. There was very little overt “acting” in this one. They finally stopped talking over each other and the emotion was real and powerful. I was so proud of them. Belinda slayed me. The power of her silences, let alone her sobs, was vibrant. We decided to have the cast party that night anyways, so we went to El Sombrero, and then I handed out awards, with gifts.

May 2nd- Our “Encore” Performance was a hit, with approximately 150 more people. The actors did well, but I could tell it was our third night. They were starting to reach a comfort level that I don’t think is actually good for the play. Bill
Preston’s final scene was powerful. He was very proud of the fact that he actually cried using a “sense memory”. We took cast pictures and then took down the set until 12:00.

There was a lot of laughter and a lot of fun.
Written Evaluation of the Project Committee
Self Evaluation

When I first began to think about the choice of play for my thesis at Central Washington University, I had planned on doing it at Highland High School, and I had a large range of options before me. However, during the years that I took my master’s courses, Highland had a “renovation”, which effectively took the meager stage I had and turned it into a gigantic band/choir room, and left me with virtually nothing. I was at a loss.

Luckily, my church had been asking me for several years to direct something. West Side Baptist Church’s stage is adequate, as is the lighting and sound, but it too had limitations. There was no wing space or fly space and no curtain to mention a few, but if I have learned anything at Highland, it is theatre, even “good theatre”, can be done virtually anywhere and with bare bones staging.

The benefits of working with West Side were that I would have a budget, something non-existent at Highland, and I would have some choices in casting. At Highland, the plays are done by the drama class, so I search for a play that has enough parts for everyone. Anyone who auditions, regardless of talent or responsibility, ends up with a part at Highland. Now my only difficulty would be to find a play that both Central Washington University and the church would approve of, and fulfill both of their agendas. After an exhaustive and exhausting search with many hopeful and then discarded scripts, both parties agreed that “Catacombs” would fit the bill.

There were several challenges that I faced. I knew that the huge Christmas production that West Side does each year, would exhaust many of the “regular” actors that are used. Because of this, I began attempting to line up my cast in the fall, before
they were tired out. The church usually does a realistic set (walls, windows, doors, etc.) and I wanted to be a bit more abstract and atmospheric, which I knew might take some persuading. Also, looking at the script, I saw potential problems in the choppy scenes (which we tried to fix by adding music between scenes and keeping the scene changes brief) and in the ending, which to be powerful, would require the actors to totally be in the moment—no “cheesiness” to their acting.

By the time January came around, I was content that I had a strong cast. I tend to enjoy casting against type, it is probably a residual of being an actress that never gets certain roles because I don’t “look the type”, and in this case I had everyone in place that were my number one choices, and then disaster began. People began dropping out for numerous reasons: one gal bought a house and would be moving in the middle of the production process, one gentleman’s daughter was a senior in high school and he realized he needed to spend the months with her, one was swamped at work following his hours in the Christmas show, one young woman decided she needed to focus on her student teaching, and a teenager who was cast discovered his brother was getting married the weekend of the show. These were all very legitimate reasons, of course, but this fact did not relieve the annoyance, frustration, and panic that I felt with each phone call. Three of the parts had to be cast one week before the read-through, and the role of Clayton was re-cast the night of the read-through. I was running out of men by the end, and I ended up casting our new music minister in the role of Captain Slater without ever seeing him act. I could only pray and proceed with the intention that I would probably have to start from scratch with many of my actors.
Bill Preston, who did a phenomenal job as the mysterious and conflicted James Smith, had never had a serious role before, only having played a few bit, comedic parts in past church shows. Gina Cole, a shy young student from Highland, was brought in, not having met any of the other actors, and with only a couple smaller parts in past school shows on her resume. Little Emilee Heinlein, playing Tami, had never been in a play, neither had Andy Harpel, who played Clayton. I knew this would be an adventure, and a steep learning curve for many of them.

The first read through was dismal. For the actors that were there, it was apparently a depressing drama, with no hope, no energy. At the end I gave them the first pep talk of many, to focus on the hope, the determination to make it, to project for the audience a feeling that the end of this play would be like *The Sound of Music* and all the survivors would be marching over the mountains to freedom. Basically they were not to let the audience know in the first scene that they were all destined to die!

Working with the new actors was exciting. We had some veterans in the group. Belinda and Rob Caldwell had as young adults spent several years as part of a traveling theatre evangelism group, and Daryl Schilperoot had done theatre in college and at various times through his adult life. Brandon Lamb had been in theatre virtually his whole life and was in the process of taking classes towards his Masters in Theatre Production at Central Washington University. One of my strategies was to team these veterans up with the newbies, and enable them to help each other. It was a bit of a risk to try new acting exercises. For one, the past director, Belinda, who was in the play, had never done them and I didn’t want her to feel put down, and also I didn’t want the actors to think I was half-cocked, or far out there and not to be trusted.
I began slow with easy things like how to stand onstage and in relation to other characters, but quickly moved into character development by having them introduce themselves in character, and then by having the actors hold an active conversation with another character about shared (made up) memories that they had. Later in the rehearsal process, I introduced the idea of motivation, and called on them to figure out their character’s main desire (objective) in the play, and then to break it down to what does your character want in this scene. I then required them to dig deeper and tell me the various ways they were going to go after it. I introduced the internal monologue to them, and would randomly stop the rehearsal and ask the current speaker, or sometimes just someone on stage, what they were thinking of in that moment. Everyone got the hang of this quickly and few road blocks were hit, with the exception of Brandon. In his monologue his character says he wants to die quick, not dragged out like his parents. I stopped him and asked him how his parents died, and he was without an answer. This one line ended up taking us three weeks to sort out. In the end, I was very pleased with the progress they all made. Each had a deep understanding of their character and their relationships with each other. In the end, this made the play move faster and gave each moment purpose.

The only exception to this was the scene between the characters of Amy and Smith. This scene constantly dragged and seemed purposeless. The actors, Gina and Bill, figured out what they wanted; Amy wanted Smith to help them, and Smith wanted out, an escape. Amy spent the scene trying various ways to get Smith to agree and Smith tried various ways to remain evasive. We ended up doing several exercises, the most effective being Gina saying her line as she headed for Bill, and Bill physically pushing
her away when he said his. In the end the scene was better, but I never felt that Gina was going for it, and Bill was trying to force enough energy for the both of them. I would have liked to work on this scene more.

The potential problem of the set was much easier to overcome. I mulled the set over in my mind for months before I started drafting it out. With a main idea drawn, I built a model to scale. When I took my model to the production team and to my construction head, they were thrilled to have the opportunity to see what I wanted and they were excited about the possibilities. We spent many months adapting the original design based on funds, manpower, lighting, and time, but the end result was the same conceptually and we all were very proud of it.

In the future I would like to take more time to do decorations in the foyer, but I ran out of time, and there were too many things happening in the church. On performance nights, for example, they were taking pictures for the phone directory. Throughout the process I learned to be more forceful and speak up for the good of the play, to demand the space, and to ask for the help I needed to make the experience memorable from the moment an audience member stepped through the door. These little tasks, outside of the actual directing and producing of the play, are my biggest challenges, and are the things that I have to take responsibility for if they are going to get done.

I was very pleased with the blocking, when it was done correctly on stage. Rob Caldwell, who played Sloan, was the biggest blocking violator, probably because he missed the most rehearsals. It was fortunate that he worked mainly with Brandon who had the experience to adapt when needed. Pastor Cavallo, a.k.a. Captain Slater, tried to
argue with me about the blocking, but after I explained why his character would move on a given line and the dramatic impact it caused, he would “submit” to my directing.

I loved the use of the levels we created by using the tables, stairs, and platform, and I enjoyed creating focus moments. These new concepts, taught to me through my master’s classes, have refined my directing making it more powerful and subtle. I enjoyed, too, using Hodge’s concept of making various seating areas or relationship areas on the stage. I endeavored to use the furniture to clog the stage a bit, creating obstacles, and giving that space a more trapped, closed in feeling. This echoed what the characters were feeling, while still creating various aisles for easy crosses.

The idea of the costumes flowed out of the colors and feeling spawned by the scenic model. I wanted muted colors that would in some ways “blend in.” These people were on the run and would be wearing their durable winter wear, but they would be picking colors that would not make them stand out in a crowd or in a forest. I also tried to create a look that would be futuristic and unlike any other time period past, but would have elements of today in them. Once I came up with the concept of the cloaked coat with toggle buttons, I worked to vary it for each character based on his/her background. However, I tried to maintain some subtle characteristics, to give it a distinct and harmonious time period feel. I was very proud and excited by both the set and the costume designs. It was very liberating to be able to be creative and not worry about budget or limitations in building skills, but to let my imagination go and just create a vision.

I had an immediate vision in terms of lighting. I wanted the set to be cold, winter cold, and to use a lot of blues and violets to create a cavernous mood with shadows. The
trick with our lighting potential, based on number of lights available and placement, was
to create shadows in the corners and on the black curtain backdrop and not on the actors’
faces. I have mixed feelings about our success in this area. One problem was because I
made an erroneous assumption. I discovered two days before the show that the church
needed to buy more gels, as we didn’t end up having the right color for the moonlight
coming in the door and down the steps. If I do a project there again, I will buy the gels
right away that I will need on hand when the lighting plot is put into place. I was excited
about our handcrafted gobo that we made from a tin pie pan for the window, which I
learned to do in my lighting class.

Not only, did I find I could apply much of Hodge’s instruction into my directing,
but I found I could easily apply Aristotle’s paradigm as well. The plot has strong
elements of Aristotle’s definition of tragedy, being based on an event of certain
magnitude, the life and death struggle of eight individuals. The plot does not contain
unity of time as it is stretched over one week, but there is a unity of place and action.
There even is a recognition and reversal in the part of James Smith. He is seeking his
own survival, hence his desertion of the others, but he has the recognition that it is not in
him to abandon them. With his return to help he experiences a reversal, which leads to
their and his ultimate doom, as Captain Slater finds them.

With the characters, there is consistency. Each character struggles with the same
weakness or fear throughout the play. Even the hero, James Smith, is flawed. He is
defensive and refuses to continue to take on the responsibility of others.

Of course, too, in the play there is music and spectacle. The music is in the script
with Smith saying the lines to “Jesus Loves Me” and Luke singing “Amazing Grace”. In
addition to this I added music between scenes to enhance the mood of the immediate moment preceding or following. The song added at the end was as much spectacle as music.

Unfortunately, in Catacombs, most of the spectacle occurs at the end of the play. These moments, however, are big. Every time a gun blast went off the audience would jump and then lean in, intrigued regarding what would happen next. The helicopter sound effect had a similar effect. My favorite moment of spectacle occurred at the end, when the lights would fade and the hymn began with the singer walking down the darkened aisle with a single candle. At this moment, center stage, the stained glass cross, began a very slow fade up, until it was beaming in the darkness. It was hard to convince the production team to not light up the cross at various times in the course of the play, but in the end they all agreed it was worth keeping the moment for the end.

I know that I have much room for growth. I need to pay more attention to advertising and paperwork, and with each show I improve in these areas. All in all, it was a wonderful experience to put into place all the elements I had learned through my master classes. I hope to continue to build on these principles and create wonderful moments on the stage.
Works Cited


apels and they open all doorways, so that at all.

With the west front, is an austere enough that of a pierced wall. The piers are rectangular sides only. emulates an expanse church would have Roman. At the top is a west window and the nave ceiling was of vaults over the choir,arkable features of outer roof over the al; they are made of painted, over which accordance with the kept to a minimum,metrical patterns in divides the churchival.

ulbronn during the (identifiable by such s and the 'fish-bone' t to have come from paradise') was added to both Fontenay and be bays with simple s of French Gothic but all the arches are the 'e height the lower than those

The nave of the monks' church. To imagine it as it was in the 12th century one must discount the vault and tracery windows, which date from the 15th century. The vault of the choir how-
date from this period, although most early examples living today date from after the reign of Charles I. earliest are generally known as 'Laudian' (Winter Cathedral Lady-chapel), after Archbishop Laud. erally these early rails were placed across the chancel north to south (Piddinghoe, Sussex), but examples tree-sided rails have survived (Poynings, Sussex). installed after the restoration of episcopal rule in generally had spiral balusters (Thurne, Norfolk; ham, Devon), those at Lewknor, Oxfordshire, g dated 1699.

as usual to provide behind the altar some special ground to enhance its visual impact. This took the form of hangings, paintings or a masonry pane earliest were undoubtedly painted murals (St Abbey, Hertfordshire), although the stone carv Chichester Cathedral, Sussex, belong to the san (c. 1200). In the cathedrals and great monastic o giate establishments the reredos was usually freest and constructed of masonry (Christchurch, Ham Southwark, London). These screens, dating frc second half of the fourteenth century, compris walls usually of tabernacle-enriched masonry, t Christchurch incorporating a representation c tree of Jesse and that at Milton in Hampshire b the date of its erection, AD 1492. Whereas most exten to the full height of the east wall, low standing examples are common (Westminster A Great Malvern Priory, Worcestershire). At Be
Above, the lower piazza, where pilgrims gather and still gather. In the centre can just be seen entrance to the lower church. From the flight of steps leads up to the façade of the church with its rose window and gable.

Left, the crossing of the lower church, looking north, with frescoes by the school of Giotto in the vault. It was here, in 1230, that the body of St Francis was brought and buried in circumstances of such mystery.

Above left, a view from the door of the Church, looking north. The chapel at the far end is later than the central bay, which was originally much darker; the frescoes are also 14th-century. The main body of the lower church is to the right.
San Francesco is of course most famous for its frescoes. A tantalising scarcity of documents makes them a subject of extraordinary complication, but during the years 1280-1320 the church at Assisi, again under the active stimulus of the popes, was the focus of some of the most talented artists of Rome, Umbria and Tuscany—perhaps Cavallini, perhaps Giotto, almost certainly Cimabue and certainly Simone Martini and the Lorenzetti brothers.

Cimabue of Florence probably came about 1280. To him are attributed the Virgin and Child with St Francis in the lower church (the figure of St Francis has been repainted several times) and a whole cycle of frescoes in the upper church transepts and crossing; they include Apocalyptic scenes, scenes from the Passion and the lives of the Virgin, St Peter and St Paul, but are all now in a bad state of preservation. Next came the upper parts of the nave walls. Those on one side tell the story of the Creation, Adam and Eve,
Pictures of Scale Set Model
(Original Design)
Post Production Cast Photos
Sloan and Luke's Final Moments: Roger, Mike, Rob, Josh, and Bill

Josh, Bill, and Roger
Bobby and Clayton’s surprise arrival: Deborah, Belinda, Daryl, and Greg

Captain Slater tasks over: Josh, Bill, and Roger
Brandon, Daryl, and Bill

Deborah and Brandon direct focus to Daryl and Bill
Daryl and Emilee, Act 2, Scene 2

Daryl and Deborah, Act 1, Scene 2
Daryl Schilperoot (Sam)  
Daryl is a long time member of West Side's theatrical productions, playing various roles from the uptight Maxwell Seldon in The Christmas Post to the sensitive Albert in this year's O Little Town of Bagels, Teacakes, and Hamburger Buns. When he isn't acting, he can be found hard at work out at Hanford or hanging out with the church youth group.

Emilee Heinlein (Tammy)  
Emilee, at only 9 years old, is a newcomer to theater. She wet her feet playing "Spud" this past summer in Acorns to Oaks, a musical produced in only one week at West Side's Music & Drama camp.

Deborah Brown (Ruth)  
Starting out as a cashier in The Christmas Post, Deborah was immediately bitten by the acting bug. She has gone on to play various size roles, including the lead in Grounded For Christmas. She currently works as a Physician's Assistant in Family Practice at Cornerstone Medical Clinic.

Belinda Caldwell (Mary)  
Belinda is best known at West Side for directing, having directed the last nine Evening in December musicals. But she is an accomplished actress as well, touring with Covenant Players for over six years, throughout the U.S. and Africa.

Brandon Lamb (Peter)  
No novice to the theatre, Brandon has been performing somewhere most of his life, from Yakima's Warehouse Theatre to summerstock at Yellowstone National Park's Playmill Theater. Currently, he is working on his Master's in Theatrical Production at Central Washington University.

Gina Cole (Amy)  
Gina began acting at Highland High School two years ago, singing and dancing as an elf in The Shoemaker and the Elves. She has gone on to starring roles including Eleanor in Edelweiss. Now a senior, Gina can be seen this spring playing Harlequin in Harlequin Holds the Bag or running track after school. She plans to attend Ecola College in the fall.

Rob Caldwell (Howard Sloan)  
The other half of Belinda Caldwell, Rob has been involved in theater since high school and has embraced various dramatic and comedic roles here at West Side over the past decade. He, too, was part of the Covenant Players, touring North America and Africa, through which he was blessed to meet his wife. He is employed in sales at Shields.

Bill Preston (Jim Smith)  
Usually in comedic character roles, like his part in The Old Faith, Hope & Charity or impersonating Michael Flattery, Bill is excited to stretch his acting abilities with a dramatic role in Catacombs. Bill spends his days as a civil engineer for the Dept. of Transportation and with his wife Kim and three daughters: Jordan, Kendyl, and Sydney.

Mike Foisy (Luke)  
Foisy is new to the acting world, but greatly beloved already for his newfound comedic ability. He has been ministering for the past fifteen years with the West Side Praise Band on Bass Guitar. His day job is as a computer specialist for the Department of Transportation.

Andy Harpel (Clayton)  
Andy, a senior at West Valley High School, has had limited acting experience, but has been soaking it all in and grabbing attention with his role of Clayton. Next year, he will be attending Digipen Institute of Technology, studying computer science for a degree in Real Time Interactive Simulation.

Greg Harpel (Bobby)  
Greg is surprisingly an old face in West Side's shows for one so young. He played young Marcus in last Spring's Easter play and has been in a variety of Sunday morning sketches. Greg attends West Valley Junior High School and enjoys playing his guitar in his free time.

Josh Cavallo (Captain Slater)  
A new face at West Side, we are thrilled to have Pastor Josh, our new music minister, jump in and be a part of our drama ministry. When he's not at the church, he can be found at home enjoying the company of his wife Julie, and twin daughters, Amaryllis and Jubilee.
ATTENTION

Please Be Quiet

There is a DRAMATIC PRESENTATION in the auditorium.

Thank you for your cooperation.
West Side Baptist presents
A Call To The Cross 2004

Catacombs

A Story of Persecution, Faith, and Survival in Three Acts

by PAUL McCUSKER

West Side Baptist Church
6901 Summitview Ave • Yakima, WA 98908
(509) 965-2800 • www.wsbcyakima.org
Andy = Clayton
- brown
- jeans
- Dark brown & black
- Dark brown pants
- Brown boots

Rob = Sloan
Bill = Smith

- Silver/Grey
- Blackpants
- Boots
Tobacco smoke levels:
- Casual smokers
- Brown hair

Velvet trim same color

Name: Amy
Brandon = Peter

- Bright green
- Dark green
- Brown

Blue jeans

Black or brown boots
Hello Aimee,
Thank you for the fun time and turning what I felt was a dark play, into a great show! You knew what you wanted but you also let each of us be the character that we saw. It was a great mix of directing, redirecting and then letting it flow, to see what worked. You were stern when you needed to be but left it open for us to interpret our characters traits. You did a great job of putting it all together, to make people think. Everyone has to make a decision in life and you never know how long you have to make it! You even make the prop building a good time!!!
Roger W. Kinder

"Belinda Caldwell"  
05/12/2004 02:38 PM

To: "Greg Harpel (E-mail)" "Deborah Brown (E-mail)" "Mike Foisy (E-mail)" Roger W Kinder/Field/WH/AEFA@AMEX, Lettie Schmidt (E-mail)" "Daryl Schilperoort (E-mail)" "Jim and Teresa Fletcher (E-mail)" "Jim and Teresa Fletcher (E-mail 2)"

cc: 

Subject: FW: Pass it on

-----Original Message-----
From: Aimee Hostetler [mailto:J.1111111111111111111111111111111
Sent: Monday, May 03, 2004 3:44 PM
To: Belinda Caldwell
Subject: Pass it on

Can you pass this on by email to:
Daryl Schilperoort
Andy and Greg Harpel
Deborah Brown
You and Rob
ike Foisy
Roger Kinder
Lettie and Bill Schmidt
Jim Ackerman
Live Performance Paper

“Catacombs”

Jessica Chartrand
Drama
Period 4
June 9, 2004
Catacombs

As time passes people's beliefs and feelings for certain things change. For example people use to have to all be the same religion until someone broke out of that and followed their own beliefs instead of what others wanted them to believe. *Catacombs* was a play that is about keeping your faith in God and never denying him. That was the theme of this particular play. It involved eight people hiding in an old beaten up church to stay away from the people trying to persecute them for their Christian beliefs. As the story was told through their acting each person's character developed more and more as they got into their character. From their performance I have learned many different qualities that a good actor possesses, as well as some of the bad ones.

For the best actor/actress I would have to choose Rob Caldwell. His part was Howard Sloan in the play. Howard Sloan had a very interesting part in *Catacombs*. His role was the one who had trouble believing in God and he always wanted to do what was easiest or what was going to be the best for him at the time. He never thought about what would happen to the
others or if there would be consequences after he made his decision. He played this part very well. His emotions were strong and his character was perfect for the role he played. Having a loud voice and very stern was exactly what I would picture this character to have. Throughout the play his character developed into a very rounded character.

Gina Cole played a role in the play that seemed not so much what she was used to playing. Because of this, I would have to say she was the worst actor. She did not do a bad job it just seemed as tough she was the least inexperienced of all the actors in the play.

One thing I liked about the play was the character’s costumes! They were not distracting from what was going on and each one was different. In addition, when the characters had on heavy jackets it made the scene seem very real, like it was cold in the church. All of the costumes fit the characters part very well.

An affective part of the play was when the characters would come forward, by themselves and talk about death. Since the lighting was right on the one person it drew all the attention towards them and the audience was able to focus on that person. While they were speaking there were no distractions because the rest of the room was completely dark and their voice was the only one making noise.
Each character had a microphone on to make their volume/voices project very loud. Without them the audience would have had a hard time hearing what they were saying and the play would not of been as good. The projection that each character had was a very good trait for any actor to have.

My general experience of this play was very good. I learned a lot as an actress and as a person in general. As an actress I learned that good projection is key and never turning you back to the audience is very important. As a person, I learned that no matter how much grief someone is giving you about your belief in God, you never deny him. I enjoyed this play very much. It was interesting and action filled near the end. The only thing I would have changed was the first part of the play before the intermission was longer than the second was and it was not filled with as much action. Although I feel as if the way it was acted out it could not of been changed and how it was performed was the best it could have been.
Recently I had the opportunity to be "Amy" in a play called Catacombs. It was about a group of Christians hiding out in an abandoned church during the end times. Every scene took place in the sanctuary of a church with old pews, a desk, a table and chairs, stairs, and a balcony. Each actor had a thin coat made with a material and in a style that fit his or her personality. The lighting was always just dim and churchy looking. During the monologues there was only a spotlight on the front of the stage. During one scene there was only a spotlight on two ladies and a dying child in order to give the allusion that they were in a different room of the church. Between scenes there was a quiet peaceful kind of music to tie scenes together. Each actor had a microphone pinned inside his coat or around his ear.

The theme would probably be, "what do you think about death?" All of the monologues answered that question for each character. The plot was good because it really left the audience with a lot to think about. Some of those who watched it said that it was bad because Christians in a desperate situation would probably spend more time praying then bickering about little unimportant issues. It was also difficult as an actress because my character's personality didn't seem very developed in the script, and the areas that did let me see what Amy was like also seemed to contradict each other.

There were a variety of excellent actors, but I think the best would have to be Daryl. He was supposed to be the backbone of our group and
the spiritual leader. For me, the less eccentric a character is, the harder it is to portray. His character was very calm and had a great deal of lines to memorize. When I was on stage with him he always engaged me and drew me into the scene because he interacted so much with me.

Though all the actors seemed very experienced and out of my field, the newest actor was probably the worst. He barked out all of his lines in a similar manner and his intonation didn't change. He was still pretty good for his first time though.

I do not know what I would have changed if I were the director. It was all very well done and I hardly knew how to act myself, let alone how I'd direct. I may have had someone speak shortly at the end to allow people to not just go away thoughtful, but to show them how to go away and change. I'm not sure though... The director did an excellent job and it's difficult to see the play's faults when you yourself are probably the weakest link.

I learned more in this play than any I had been in prior to that. I learned that eye contact is necessary unless there's a very good reason to avoid it. I also learned that it's very difficult to act like someone who already acts like me. I also became more aware of how good actors are ones that can enhance other actor's lines and pull them in.

My friends said that their theatre experience was pretty good. There was one person in the audience coughing the whole time, but that couldn't have been helped. Other then that, their only comments were that it was very serious and it made them think a lot. So it accomplished its purpose.
Live Performance Paper

"Catacombs"

Erica Capalungan
Drama
Period 4
June 9, 2004
“Catacombs” was an intriguing theatrical performance by the West Side Baptist Dramatic Theater. This tale unraveled the mysteries of God in a whole new way. It brought happiness, faith, love, devotion, sorrow, and death into a whole new perspective. “Catacombs” was able to vividly show what believing in God really means; keeping your faith is eternal and never deny your trust in God no matter the cost.

It started out inside of a church deep in the mountains during winter. Believers in Christ were hiding in this forsaken church just outside of a tiny town. They were expecting a contact to arrive from the underground church organization. During their waiting, a young guy is found half dead in the cold outside. When he is revived they request of him to take them along—there is no way they could survive a harsh winter on the little provisions they had. He declines and goes on ahead by himself. Due to starvation a member of the group is driven into finding his own food. He makes an acquaintance with a farmer nearby and obtains rations from him. Because of the stupidity of this group member the whole group winds up captured. The man that they saved earlier and that had gone on alone returns to the church. This man, Elijah, turns out to be the head of the underground church organization. The law threatens to kill every member of the group if he doesn’t deny God. Elijah refuses and every single person dies.

Daryl Schilperoot plays as Sam in “Catacombs.” Sam is the leader of the group and is relied upon to bring reason into arguments and patience. He wore a blue jacket and jeans. Emilee Heinlein plays the role of Tammy, daughter of Mary. Tammy is the only child in the group. Her costume was made of a yellow and green jacket and pigtails. Deborah Brown performed as Ruth, wife of Sam. Sturdy and strong she played as the back bone of the group and was attired in a purple jacket and outfit. Belinda Caldwell
acted as Mary; her daughter is Tammy, whom she adores. Mary was
attired in a blue jacket and jeans. Brandon Lamb performed as Peter, the
young, vivacious man in the church group. Peter had a small crush on Amy
and wore brown painting overalls and a multi-colored shirt. Gina Cole acted
as the role of Amy a very quiet and tentative young lady; she was able to
keep the place peaceful and happy. Amy wore a red robe/jacket outfit. Rob
Caldwell played Howard Sloan, the loud and opinionated member of the
group. Howard performed in a brown jacket and pants. Bill Preston
received the character of Jim Smith—the stranger whose devotion to God
is never ending. He was equipped with a grey cover jacket and grey pants.
Mike Foisy performed the role of Luke, the crazy man. Luke believed that
God had given him healing powers but has lost most of his memory; he is
attired in snow boots and a tan outfit. Andy Harpel acts as Clayton, son of
the farmer; he seeks the reward of turning in the group. Clayton was
equipped with a rifle and wore jeans with a flannel shirt. Greg Harpel
performed the role of Bobby in “Catacombs.” Bobby is the friend to Clayton
and also seeks the reward; he wore jeans and a flannel shirt too and had a
rifle. Josh Cavallo acted as Captain Slater, the uptight officer that threatens
all of the members. He was attired in a military jacket with black cargo
pants and black boots.

The use of sound was exceptional. They used a real gun with blanks
for the sound of gun fire and I am assuming a recording of a helicopter for
the arrival of the officers at the church. Most of the members in the play
could be heard because they all had microphones. The different lighting
uses were good. To end each scene they faded the lights to off. There
were also many parts where only one person would approach the audience
and speak their thoughts on death. In that instant the spotlight was only on
them which helped to emphasize the importance of their lines. They placed a light behind a stain glass configuration which I thought was beautiful.

The best thing about the plot was that it was a true story. The performance was so real and heart felt that it reached everyone at a personal level. The actors really performed like they were the character. Certain characters had extraordinary roles, roles that in real life exist; it helped to bring out the genuineness of the play. The worst thing about the play was the ending, it was way too sad. I believe I didn’t like it because it’s an unusual ending, an ending that isn’t seen much, everyone dies. I just thought that it wasn’t the best way to portray eternal happiness.

I think that the best actor was Rob Caldwell as Howard Sloan. His character was very well accentuated and you can really tell what his role in the group was. He put emphasis in everything he did; kind of like over acting. I think that the worst actress was Gina Cole playing Amy. The role didn’t seem to fit her; she looked almost uncomfortable on stage. Now, because I know Gina I would say that she was an excellent actor but this performance just wasn’t her best. She seemed the least experienced.

If I were the director I wouldn’t change much. One thing that I would change is to make the back bench on stage left higher by a couple of inches. It would help in seeing who was on them and when because it made me wonder whether those characters were important in the scene or not. Also I would add so that every character in the play got to speak about death. I don’t think it seemed complete when only half did it.

I really learned the importance of speaking loudly and clearly. Most of the actors spoke loud enough with the help of the microphone and I think all of them spoke clear enough. In doing so it helped the audience so that we didn’t have to think about what was being said. Also I learned that it is
best to over act rather than under act. The emphasizing really helps the character achieve its role in the performance.

I really do like to watch theater because it's a lot more real and has actors with extreme amounts of talent. Now that I have taken a drama class I have learned that acting is a lot harder than it looks. I have really grown to respect actors and actresses for what they do.
West Side Baptist presents
A Call To The Cross 2004

WestSide
Baptist Church
6901 Summitview Ave • Yakima, WA 98908
(509) 965-2800 • www.wsbcyakima.org

Catacombs
A Story of Persecution, Faith, and Survival in Three Acts
by PAUL McCUSKER
CATACOMBS
by Paul McCusker

Winter is approaching in the mountains. Most leaves have fallen, leaving skeleton trees. Lost and forgotten sits an ancient, abandoned church which, because of changes in law and society, has been left to decay. Yet, for eight people, this church has become a place to hide, to wait. It is the “end times.” A time when all elements will join in an attempt to turn the remaining whispers of personal faith and Christianity into silence. It is a time of great tribulation, when all opposition disappears. It is a time when faith and survival must work hand in hand.

ACT ONE
Scene 1 ......................................................... Sam
Scene 2 ............................................................ Late afternoon in the abandoned church
Scene 3 ............................................................ Later that night
Scene 4 ............................................................ Next morning
Scene 5 ........................................................... Moments later
Scene 6 ............................................................ That afternoon
Scene 7 ............................................................ Peter
Scene 8 ............................................................ That night

ACT TWO
Scene 1 ............................................................ Amy
Scene 2 ........................................................... Morning, the next day

10 Minute Intermission

Scene 3 ............................................................ Tammy
Scene 4 ............................................................ That afternoon, main church
Scene 5 ............................................................ Tammy’s room
Scene 6 ............................................................ That afternoon, main church
Scene 7 ............................................................ Ruth
Scene 8 ............................................................ Late afternoon

ACT THREE
Scene 1 ............................................................ Mary
Scene 2 ........................................................... Two days later

**Due to the realistic depiction of persecution, some of the dramatic elements may be disturbing and startling.**

CAST
(in order of appearance)
Sam ............................................................. Daryl Schilperoort
Tammy .......................................................... Emilee Heinlein
Ruth .............................................................. Deborah Brown
Mary ............................................................ Belinda Caldwell
Amy .............................................................. Gina Cole
Peter ............................................................. Brandon Lamb
Howard Sloan .............................................. Rob Caldwell
Jim Smith ...................................................... Bill Preston
Luke ........................................................... Mike Foisy
Clayton ........................................................ Andy Harpel
Bobby ........................................................ Greg Harpel
Captain Slater ............................................. Josh Cavallo
Williams .................................................... Roger Kinder
Officer ......................................................... Bill Schmidt
Singers ........................................................ Brooke Maloney, Sara Lyon, Maureen Arnett
Donna Smart, Debbie Fisher, Dorothy Hostetler

CREW
Director ......................................................... Aimee Hostetler
Producer ....................................................... Lettie Schmidt
Costuming .................................................. Teresa Fletcher
Head of set construction ................................ Jim Ackerman
Lighting ...................................................... Jim Fletcher
Sound ........................................................ Rick Doehle
Set construction ........................................... Bill Schmidt, Larry Adams, Bill Preston
Advertising .................................................... Belinda Caldwell

“...You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time, many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved...and then the end will come...flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house...Pray that your flight will not take place in winter...For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”

Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 24
Daryl Schilperoot (Sam)
Daryl is a long time member of West Side's theatrical productions, playing various roles from the upright Maxwell Seldon in *The Christmas Post* to the sensitive Albert in this year's *O Little Town of Bagels, Teacakes, and Hamburger Buns*. When he isn't acting, he can be found hard at work out at Hanford or hanging out with the church youth group.

Emilee Heinlein (Tammy)
Emilee, at only 9 years old, is a newcomer to theater. She wet her feet playing “Spud” this past summer in *Acorns to Oaks*, a musical produced in only one week at West Side’s Music & Drama camp.

Deborah Brown (Ruth)
Starting out as a cashier in *The Christmas Post*, Deborah was immediately bitten by the acting bug. She has gone on to play various size roles, including the lead in *Grounded For Christmas*. She currently works as a Physician’s Assistant in Family Practice at Cornerstone Medical Clinic.

Belinda Caldwell (Mary)
Belinda is best known at West Side for directing, having directed the last nine Evening in December musicals. But she is an accomplished actress as well, touring with Covenant Players for over six years, throughout the U.S. and Africa.

Brandon Lamb (Peter)
No novice to the theatre, Brandon has been performing somewhere most of his life, from Yakima’s Warehouse Theatre to summerstock at Yellowstone National Park’s Playmill Theater. Currently, he is working on his Master’s in Theatrical Production at Central Washington University.

Gina Cole (Amy)
Gina began acting at Highland High School two years ago, singing and dancing as an elf in *The Shoemaker and the Elves*. She has gone on to starring roles including Eleanore in *Edelweiss*. Now a senior, Gina can be seen this spring playing Harlequin in *Harlequin Holds the Bag* or running track after school. She plans to attend Ecola College in the fall.

Rob Caldwell (Howard Sloan)
The other half of Belinda Caldwell, Rob has been involved in theater since high school and has embraced various dramatic and comedic roles here at West Side over the past decade. He, too, was part of the Covenant Players, touring North America and Africa, through which he was blessed to meet his wife. He is employed in sales at Shields.

Bill Preston (Jim Smith)
Usually in comedic character roles, like his part in *The Old Faith, Hope & Charity* or impersonating Michael Flattery, Bill is excited to stretch his acting abilities with a dramatic role in *Catacombs*. Bill spends his days as a civil engineer for the Dept. of Transportation and with his wife Kim and three daughters: Jordan, Kendyl, and Sydney.

Mike Foisy (Luke)
Foisy is new to the acting world, but greatly beloved already for his newfound comedic ability. He has been ministering for the past fifteen years with the West Side Praise Band on Bass Guitar. His day job is as a computer specialist for the Department of Transportation.

Andy Harpel (Clayton)
Andy, a senior at West Valley High School, has had limited acting experience, but has been soaking it all in and grabbing attention with his role of Clayton. Next year, he will be attending Digipen Institute of Technology, studying computer science for a degree in Real Time Interactive Simulation.

Greg Harpel (Bobby)
Greg is surprisingly an old face in West Side’s shows for one so young. He played young Marcus in last Spring’s Easter play and has been in a variety of Sunday morning sketches. Greg attends West Valley Junior High School and enjoys playing his guitar in his free time.

Josh Cavallo (Captain Slater)
A new face at West Side, we are thrilled to have Pastor Josh, our new music minister, jump in and be a part of our drama ministry. When he’s not at the church, he can be found at home enjoying the company of his wife Julie, and twin daughters, Amaryllis and Jubilee.
Aimee Hostetler (Director)
Stepping off the stage, Aimee is directing this spring. She is currently getting her Master's in Theater Production from Central Washington University and is happy for the opportunity to direct at West Side and fulfill her graduation thesis requirements. She would like to thank the “cast, building crew and production team” for making this possible.

Lettie Schmidt (Producer)
Every production, Lettie works wonders and this is no exception. She does miracles in the details and keeps everyone on their toes to “be authentic.” No production would be complete without her.

Teresa Fletcher (Costumes)
Thrown eleven outfits that had to be sewn without a legitimate pattern proved no difficulty for Teresa. She did wonders with the designs and the final results show it.

Jim Ackerman (Head of Set Construction)
Jim not only took a design and made it workable, but he kept us to code. Thank you, Jim, for the countless hours and days you spent perfecting this set.

Many thanks to the following...

- Grumpy's, who loaned the military jackets
- All who put in hours to build, shop, discuss and enhance this production
- Steve Wolcott for help and assistance in scheduling and with videotaping
- The professors at CWU for their instruction and to Derek Lane, Ms. Hostetler's Thesis Chairman, for his guidance.

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