



## Production Preview Guide

# PRAY THE GAY AWAY®

**a serious musical comedy**

“Pray the Gay Away”® is a full-length stage musical that takes place in Minnetonka, Minnesota 1982. The story follows two boys as they go through gay conversion therapy. The musical depicts a congregation that is a member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, an LGBTQ support group and a conversion therapist, who are all trying to reach out and help their local community from opposing viewpoints. The show depicts the cultural, political and religious beliefs that form different opinions toward “praying the gay away”, conversion therapy and LGBTQ rights.

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### THE PURPOSE OF A PRODUCTION PREVIEW GUIDE

Many people have different ideas about what material is appropriate, both for themselves and their families. We have provided this guide to help determine whether the content of our production is suitable for your situation. **Please be aware that this information is provided with the intent of disclosure and therefore contains plot spoilers.**

The show content is a mixture of humor, parody, and serious content. The show has often been described as “pulling up the carpet” to see what lies behind certain cultural, political and religious beliefs toward homosexuality in the United States. In that sense, much of the content is “politically incorrect”. The show relies on a discerning audience to make their own decisions on the beliefs presented.

# **SCRIPT CONTENT DETAILS:**

## **MATURE THEMES**

Some may consider homosexuality, in and of itself, to be a mature theme. The scenes of gay conversion therapy itself may be disturbing, or an overwhelming emotional trigger point, for many people.

The play presents the religious beliefs of one religious denomination, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Other religious organizations and Christian denominations are referenced in humorous derogatory fashion, including the Catholic, Episcopalian, and Unitarian churches. Some may find the discussion of religion, in and of itself, to be a mature theme.

An overview of the history of conversion therapy is presented which includes descriptions of lobotomy, chemical castration and invasive surgeries.

In Act II there is a parody song that focuses on many tropes (clichés) of homosexuality, Broadway and musical theatre. There is an interpretative dance between two men who are partially clothed and make skin-to-skin contact in the context of artistic dance. A conversion therapy session uses electro-shock with projected images. This scene has been extremely emotional and disturbing for participants of readings and workshops for its particular mixture of imagery, dialogue and music.

## **LANGUAGE**

There is one instance of the word “fucked” used in a context of parody, and two instances of the word “fag” which in context is used by characters to show a cultural negative view of the LGBTQ community. At the end of Act One, the word “fag” is in full view of the audience throughout the scene. In Act Two the term “crock of shit” is used in response to a particular interpretation of Biblical scripture.

## **VIOLENCE**

In Act I there is a fight between members of opposing groups. A therapy session includes hitting a pillow with a tennis racquet, where the pillow represents a person. In Act Two, a character commits suicide with a gun. The gunshot sound effect for this scene is loud and intentionally jarring for the audience. The suicide is meant for emotional effect and does not contain blood or gore. In Act Two there is a therapy session which includes electro-shock and projected images. This scene may be emotionally disturbing for many audience members.

## **SEXUAL CONTENT**

There are not any overt, or realistic, depictions of sexual intercourse in this production. However, there are moments where both heterosexual and homosexual sex is implied, usually as parody in humorous fashion. A parody song focuses on the topic of female breasts, without

nudity, but includes parody balloon props. Act Two has two male dancers, partially clothed, who make physical contact in the context of lyrical interpretative dance. Some may perceive this contact as having sexual, or sensual, overtones. A therapy session includes projected imagery of heterosexual and homosexual relationships. The images may show nude forms in embrace, but do not show any genitalia or female breasts.

## **DRUGS/ALCOHOL**

Drug use is mentioned in the context of parody, specifically heroin and cocaine, as something to be avoided. There is no stage depiction of actual drug use.

## **EMOTIONAL TRIGGER POINTS**

The musical “Pray the Gay Away”® contains content that may be emotional “trigger points” to some audience members. These trigger points include depictions of gay conversion therapy (reparative therapy), viewpoints expressed that are both supportive and antagonistic to the LGBTQ community, religious beliefs and biblical scripture interpretations, varying cultural attitudes towards religion, varying cultural attitudes toward LGBTQ rights and related topics. This show makes heavy use of parody, humor and also serious content, and relies on the audience to discern and evaluate their individual interpretations on the validity of the viewpoints being presented.

In readings and workshops of the musical “Pray the Gay Away”, it has been common for listeners to have very strong emotional reactions to the material presented, particularly in the scenes that show gay conversion therapy and the scenes that show the changing relationships in the community.

## **RATING**

This show is self-rated at PG-13 for mature themes, language and emotional content.