

## **Reuniting Voices, Honoring a Navy Hero: Local Composer's Rock Opera Celebrates 30 Years for Scholarship Tribute**

On Saturday, October 4, 2025, at 2:00 PM, the stage at Archbishop Wood High School will come alive with the spirit, energy, and heart of a home grown musical that has touched thousands: *The Word: A Gospel Opera*. This special 30th Anniversary Concert is more than just a musical celebration—it's a harmonic homecoming cast reunion of the beloved rock opera that, over three decades, has touched thousands of lives and involved over 200 young adults, many of whom credit the experience with shaping their faith, friendships, and futures.

Written by Bucks County composer Bill Monaghan, *The Word* premiered in 1995 with a genre-defying score of rock, gospel, reggae, funk, and folk, and vibrant storytelling centered on the life and teachings of Jesus.

For one day only, cast members spanning the show's 30-year history will return to perform a concert version of the beloved songs, including "Blessed and Happy," "Taste and See," "Lullaby: Close Your Eyes," in two acts of music with an intermission.

More than a musical milestone and reunion, the event is a heartfelt tribute to Michael Shamus Monaghan, an original cast member who tragically died while serving in the U.S. Navy on February 18, 1998 in a Search and Rescue accident. Proceeds from the concert will benefit the scholarship fund in his memory, supporting students and continuing the cycle of inspiration and opportunity that *The Word* has long embodied.

Monaghan's musical has been called "timeless and refreshingly modern" and even compared to The Who's *Tommy* as well as *Godspell* (*Catholic Standard & Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*). Audiences have described it as "electric," "moving," and "surprisingly powerful," with one viewer remarking, "I didn't expect to need tissues at a rock opera — but I did."

"In the beginning," several cast members were NOT enthusiastic to be in a church play, but somehow the music and message captured them enough to perform more than 70 shows and return as veterans 30 years later. That is the transformative effect of the music of Monaghan's *The Word: A Gospel Opera*.

A former cast member commented, "I find it striking how resonant the music and experience of *The Word* is. I remember hearing the music for the first time when I was in elementary school and immediately being captivated. Now, this year experiencing the music in concert with my own kids, I marveled that they came away from it already singing the music. It speaks to something inside you - you can hear the music for the first time, but it carries such a familiarity."

Another summarized, "The harmonies are full, the guitar riffs are electric, the drums thunder, and singers croon, belt, and sweetly resonate the treasured messages of Jesus' love and salvation."

From a three decade vantage point, "I remember loving *The Word* as a kid; my sister was in it when it first debuted. I was engaged because the songs were full of a variety of musical styles, at times fun and at other times emotional and touching. Seeing it again as an adult hit differently, maybe partly because of nostalgia, but also because as an adult, I truly understood how powerful this musical is to attracting the younger generation to God's Word, since that's what it did for me so many years ago. Besides that, I just LOVE the music and songs from *The Word*. It really is one of a kind."

Monaghan's musical rises beyond the walls of church and stage, serving as a springboard for young talent, a tool for ministry, and a shared experience that continues to unite generations. With timeless messages of love, peace, compassion, and justice, the songs remain as relevant today as ever.

If you've ever experienced *The Word*, you know the joy and impact it brings. If you haven't, you are invited to see, share, taste, and be the light of *The Word: A Gospel Opera*.

Admission is General Seating, and all ages are welcome.

Suggested Donation of \$15 is accepted at the door.

More information available at [www.monaghanmusic.com](http://www.monaghanmusic.com) and [www.thewordagospelopera.com](http://www.thewordagospelopera.com)

Contact [Willie.Monaghan@gmail.com](mailto:Willie.Monaghan@gmail.com).

#### EVENT DETAILS

Saturday, October 4, 2025 at 2pm (approximately 2 hours, with intermission)

Archbishop Wood High School Auditorium

655 York Road, Warminster PA 18974

Suggested Donation \$15

All proceeds to benefit the Michael S. Monaghan Scholarship Fund

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