

Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Public School presses on with gay biblical satire despite threats of protests



Students at the Pioneer Valley Performing [Arts School](#) rehearse the upcoming play (*Photo by Don Treeger / The Republican*)



By [Stephanie Barry, The Republican](#)

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SOUTH HADLEY — Despite a brewing controversy over an upcoming stage production of a gay-friendly Biblical spoof by [Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School](#), its principal said the show will open as planned.

The school announced the opening of the play "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told," a satire on the Book of Genesis with gay characters, and was bombarded with emails and [phone](#) calls calling the show "blasphemous and hateful," according to Head of School Scott Goldman.

He characterized critics as out-of-towners threatening to protest the production, scheduled to run March 15-17 at the [Academy of Music](#) in Northampton.



Students at the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts School rehearse the upcoming [play](#) "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told." Staff photo by Don Treeger

"While we have no control whether organizations from other states decide to protest the show, it is clear to me that many of the most recent emails are attempts to coerce [PVPA](#) into canceling the play," Goldman said in a statement Thursday. "Allowing this to happen would very much go against the grain of our unique, artistic and intellectually rigorous PVPA community and the larger Pioneer Valley Community."

Goldman said the play is aimed at a high [school](#) and adult audience.

The Paul Rudnick comedy debuted in the Berkshires in 1998 and had a run in New York City and other theaters. The script features as characters Adam and Steve and Jane and Mabel in biblical times and modern day.

"It's not a play that bashes religion but it does make fun of some religious attitudes," director Chris Rohman said earlier this week during a rehearsal, adding: "Although it's full of jokes -- some of them at the expense of religious fundamentalism -- the play, is, at its heart, a thoughtful investigation of the meaning of faith and family."

Undoubtedly the play will draw lots of laughter, but the bishop of the [Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield](#) won't be among those chuckling along in the audience.

Diocesan spokesman Mark Dupont said the local church had fielded a few complaints by parishioners. When asked for comment, the Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell responded through his spokesman: "I didn't know it was the responsibility of charter schools to teach religious bigotry."

McDonnell would not expand on the remark.

William Newman, director of the Western Massachusetts office of the ACLU, said, "The highest function of art is to make people think and talk and consider and be challenged. This play seems to fill the aspirations and goals of art."

Rohman said the students were excited about putting on the play from the beginning.

"They saw it as an opportunity to express some gay-positive messages that they want to share with the community," he said.

Pioneer Valley Performing Arts is a regional charter school serving 400 students, grades 7 through 12.

Pat Cahill contributed to this story