

Multimedia 'Project' is a hit with all age groups

Performer's work dedicated to life of Apostle Paul

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Jonathan Roberts performs "Project Paul," which combines music, lights, video and drama. Photos special to the Press-Gazette

By Jean Peerenboom _jpeerenb@greenbaypressgazette.com

Jonathan Roberts of Sturgeon Bay has felt drawn to the Apostle Paul for as long as he can remember.

"He's very earthy. Everybody can relate to him," Roberts said. "He had a regrettable past and he changed. This is a powerful image."

During his years at Lawrence University in Appleton, Roberts, now 25, set the writings of Paul to music and with his brother and sister developed the theatrical production "Project Paul."

"You could call it a collage of his teachings and the events of his life," Roberts said. The multimedia performance explores Paul's writings through music, live drama, projected video art and light, he said. "The music is the most prominent."

Paul, with his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, "is very theatrical. And, he never forgot his past. He always had a lot of conflict. This lends itself to a theater piece."

Roberts has been playing piano since he was 5 and writing "music nearly that long, too." He went to Lutheran elementary and high schools, so he has studied Scripture. At Lawrence, he earned a bachelor's of music in composition and a bachelor's of arts in theater, graduating last year.

He took "Project Paul" on the road from June 2005 until this past spring, performing in California and the Southwest to Tennessee.

After some time at home in Sturgeon Bay, he will move to New York City in September to continue this project and develop more projects. He will be with three other musicians who have formed a band.

"I've always loved the arts and I really love performing — playing piano and singing. It's a good way to communicate," he said.

Sometimes in an academic setting, there are a lot of people who try to write music and they are very artistic, but people don't understand what they're trying to say, he said. "I'm into creating artistic things, but I want to really connect with people. 'Project Paul' has allowed me to do that."

The reaction to the show has been positive and he said he's surprised at the ages in the audience. He's performed it for people in from grade schools to senior citizens in churches. "The reaction is very good. It's great. When I created it, I thought with all the multimedia it would be for college audiences only."

Audiences have been both secular and religious. "People with religious groups know Paul's story and see the story another way. Secular audiences like the music and theatrical aspects," he said.

"This has allowed me to go to all different places I didn't think I'd go. Next, I hope to organize some appearances in prisons," he said.

Helping with the project were his brother, Scott Baye, and sister, Christy Bagasao.

Bagasao, 33, lives in Nevada with her husband, Stephen, and their five children. They operate a home business. She is active in her church as director of the Children's Choir and leader of the Mom's Club. A writer, she is working on her first nonfiction book. She earned a bachelor's degree in English, communicative arts and communication from Wisconsin Lutheran College.

Baye, 32, lives in Green Bay with his wife, Karen, and their three children. He works at Appleton Coated in Combined Locks as a senior software engineer specializing in e-commerce and Web development. He received his bachelor's degree in computer science and information science from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. He has done freelance videography for local churches, the state of Wisconsin and family.

For information on "Project Paul," go to www.projectpaul.com.