

## Show Choir

By Jenni Caruso and Nick Caruso.  
Dir. Robert Bouwman. With ensemble cast. Cornservatory (see Fringe & storefront).

Cramming as many '80s touchstones into one show as possible, *Choir* stages a *Big Chill*-esque reunion of former high-school choir members (*The Breakfast Club*) as they reunite 20 years later to raise funds for their ailing former teacher/nun (I dunno... maybe *Blues Brothers*?). Along the way, they flash back to high school, dredge up decades-old dramas and belt out '80s standards rewritten as Christian anthems.

There's major potential here, but as in all parody, execution is key. Indeed, one could argue that the easier the target, the more precise the execution must be—and skewering show choir is the theatrical equivalent to shooting beluga in a barrel. Maybe that's why the authors included unsavory subplots involving date rape, divorce, alcoholism and AIDS. It's hard to imagine how the mix of heavy themes and jaunty pop tunes could ever blend; in this ham-fisted handling, it starts to feel like a clip

show of "very special episodes." And why are the painfully generic original songs so similar in style to the show-choir performances? Are they meant to redeem the genre? If so, they need better voices (with the exception of Mike Arthur, who blows off the roof with a nearly unsingable ballad), better staging, and frankly, better tunes and lyrics. The parody performances hold more promise—especially Jesus' rendition of "Walking on Sunshine" ("I'm walking on water, Whoa!/I'm raising a dead guy, Whoa!")—but this bit of comic sparkle seems like a sequin snagged on a bolt of sackcloth.—*Kay Daly*



**CHEESE AND CRACKERS** The Cornservatory juices up for that '80s show.