



# End Days Audience Guide

*“Nobody is as interested in harmony as they are in conflict, I’m afraid.”*

-Francis Collins

*“I pick things that worry me or that I don’t understand, really.*

*Most of my plays are about things that confuse me or intrigue me.”*

-Deborah Zoe Laufer

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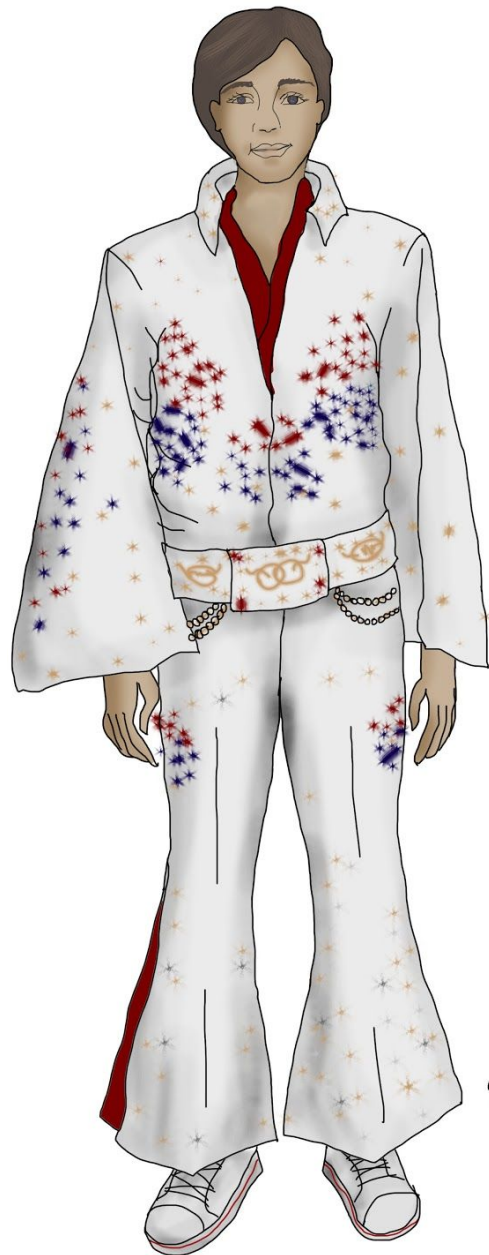
## Visions From the Designers

Take a look at the art our designers created as part of the process of creating the set and costumes for *End Days*! Set design by Merve Caydere, costume design by Julie Park.





SYLVIA-1  
Richardson, Jen



NELSON-1  
Avery, Matt

# Play Asks: Can Science And Religion Get Along?

*April 17, 2009*

Heard on Talk of the Nation

In *End Days*, playwright Deborah Zoe Laufer takes on science, religion and Elvis. Laufer explains how she uses scientific theories to explore human nature in her writing and why she wanted the same actor to play Jesus Christ and Stephen Hawking. (Some of the interview has been omitted. Please visit NPR at <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=103210930> for the full interview.)

...

FLATOW, host:

And at one point, you know, and she, the mother who is the born again Christian, is waiting for the end of days to happen there, right?

Ms. LAUFER: Right.

FLATOW: And she's told by - she thinks she's told by Jesus that it's on a Wednesday.

Ms. LAUFER: Right.

FLATOW: So she's trying to get everybody ready for that day to happen.

Ms. LAUFER: Right.

FLATOW: And they're not very cooperative.

Ms. LAUFER: No. No. And I've taken a lot of really broad scientific ideas and sort of made a metaphor. And one of the big ideas of the play that I - I'm just thrilled about the Large Hadron Collider. And so...

(Laughter)

Ms. LAUFER: ...you know, if you slam together particles with enough speed, you'll break them apart and see what's inside. And so I've sort of brought together four vastly different points of view, and

they're forced together for this 24-hour period. And they sort of crash into each other and you see what they're made of. I mean I don't know if that's a metaphor...

FLATOW: No, I like that.

(Laughter)

FLATOW: No, I like that. Yeah.

Ms. LAUFER: But it spurs me on when I'm writing.

FLATOW: But you also brought on Stephen Hawking as a character, in the chair and driving around and even in the voice that he - that artificial voice he uses.

Ms. LAUFER: Right. I have - Stephen Hawking and Christ are played by the same actor. And the mother, she's - well, Christ just comes to live with them. I mean, she really does walk with Jesus, and he's really saved her and given her hope and a reason to get up in the morning.

And her daughter reads "Brief History of Time" and, sort of, has the same conversion to science. And so Stephen Hawking visits her when she's been using chemical substances, and gives her the same, sort of, hope and feeling, life is worth living...

FLATOW: Mm-hmm.

Ms. LAUFER: Yeah.

FLATOW: And they coexist, religion and science in this, in the same play?

Ms. LAUFER: In the same play, yeah. And that was another metaphor. I think it's dangerous to have playwrights near science because the metaphors are almost irresistible, but, so I have a quantum field theory, where, you know, like could be there are particle or wave.

You know, if you ask a particle-like question, you get a particle-like answer; and if you ask a wave-like question, you get a wave-like answer. You can't just ask them at the same time. And I feel like religion and science - that there are some great scientists who are deeply religious.

And I, sort of, have posed that you could believe in both things at the same time. You just can't ask those questions in the same way at the same time. So that's, sort of, where I've, you know, what I've posed.

FLATOW: When did you - you were a graduate student at Juilliard. You were resident playwright at Juilliard. You have this strong arts background.

Ms. LAUFER: Yeah.

FLATOW: Did you discover someday on, like, gee, I like science too.

Ms. LAUFER: It had happened almost like...

FLATOW: Yeah?

Ms. LAUFER: ...it happened to Rachel. I guess, little by little, I was interested, and then I read "Brief History of Time" and it was, sort of, fabulous for me. I just fell in love with it.

FLATOW: Did you have any scientist that you would throw ideas at? Gee, is - am I phrasing this incorrectly, you know, during the writing of the play.

Ms. LAUFER: I didn't. I have friends who are physicists.

FLATOW: Uh-oh.

(Laughter)

Ms. LAUFER: So, I gave it to them to make sure I wasn't way off track, and they said it was okay. And then, you get assigned a scientist through the Sloan Foundation when you get a grant, which is really great to have your own physicist. So I had - Gabriel Cwilich was my physicist. And we just, you know, he really - we just sat and talked mostly. He told me it was okay, what I had written, which was really what I wanted to hear.

FLATOW: How did you discover the Large Hadron Collider as a topic that interested you?

Ms. LAUFER: I just read a lot of science now. I read whatever I can find. I read - I get a lot of magazines that my father sends to me, and I read the Science Times, and I listen constantly. And so I've been excited about it for years. And then, you know, the day they were finally launching it, I had probably 50 calls and emails. Everybody was so excited.

FLATOW: Wow.

Ms. LAUFER: We were really disappointed that it didn't go.

FLATOW: Yeah. That's still getting its repair work done.

Ms. LAUFER: I know. I have faith.

FLATOW: Yeah. Is there another science play in you?

Ms. LAUFER: Oh, yeah. My next play, I want to write about the human genome. They've - there's a new book out, I can't remember...

FLATOW: You pick such uncontroversial...

(Laughter)

Ms. LAUFER: I pick things that worry me or that I don't understand, really. Most of my plays are about things that confuse me or intrigue me, I guess. But there's the new theory that the genome, you could trace not only propensity toward diseases, but personality traits. And I just think it's going to make us really reassess what it is to be human and what personality is.

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## An interview with Director, Beth Lopes

**Q: How do you see the issue of a conflict between science and religion being borne out in our world today?**

A: Unfortunately, this is a war that is still raging in our world today and, frankly, I don't understand why these two things have to be mutually exclusive. We spent some time chatting about this in our rehearsals and I brought up childbirth as a clear nexus of these two ideas for me. We can know the science behind how a human being is created and birthed into the world but does that make it any less miraculous? In fact, I would argue that knowing the science makes it even more miraculous because it's almost unbelievable what our bodies can do! That being said, I think, for some, religion is less about spirituality and more about rules. And when those rules aren't followed, or when parables are interpreted literally, is where people can get into more black and white territory about religion and science.

**Q: Who needs to see this show?**

A: I would say that someone who *needs* to see this show is someone stuck in a rut in their life; someone who is clinging so hard to the wall they've built to protect them, that they can't see the wall is the very thing barring them from the rest of the world. These characters have gone through so much pain that they've created coping mechanisms to get them through the day. But there comes a point when you need to stop coping and start living again, which is exactly the point in time we get to see in *End Days*.

**Q: What is unique to this production of *End Days*?**

A: Something unique to every production is the specific acting company involved in bringing the characters to life and that's particularly true with *End Days*. This play is very character driven and the actors you have playing the roles can greatly alter the core of the play. We have a spectacular

group of artists inhabiting these characters and I think they're weaving a relationship world that will be very rich and singular.

**Q: How has your relationship to the text changed during the course of this process?**

**What has surprised you?**

A: New discoveries surprise me every day with this play! Our company can attest to my consistent uttering of "I wonder if..." or "I'm curious about..." in rehearsal. I am in a state of constant wonder and curiosity with *End Days*. There's so much to unpack in these relationships that every rehearsal seems to lead to new revelations. On the surface there's a seeming simplicity about the play that, as we've now discovered, covers a much more nuanced and delightful web of intricacies. It's been a real pleasure to explore!

**Q: Anything else you would like to add?**

A: It's been wonderful working with all of the fabulous artists at CSULB. I'm very honored to be a guest here!

## Why It's So Hard for Scientists to Believe in God?

Francis Collins discusses the types of questions science answers vs the types of questions religion answers. Please watch his video, and discuss in groups. What strikes you? What do you have to add to the conversation?

(It's about four minutes long).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pINptKOYviQ>

## List of Dates Predicted for Apocalyptic Events

Below is a link to wikipedia where all historical predictions are listed (It was too long to include in this guide).

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_dates\\_predicted\\_for\\_apocalyptic\\_events](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_dates_predicted_for_apocalyptic_events)

## Rapture Ready

Below here is a link to a religious group site which does not list any specific dates of the rapture, due to the psychological distress it has caused some of its members in the past. It has an extensive FAQ section where it answers rapture-related questions.

<http://www.raptureready.com/>

# Discussion Questions

## **Before the show:**

1. What kinds of questions does science answer?
2. What kinds of questions does faith answer?
3. What kinds of questions does theater answer?

## **After the show:**

4. What is one moment or image that is fresh in your mind? How does that moment relate to the play as a whole?
5. If you were a character in this play, who would you be, and why?
6. If the world was going to end tomorrow, what would you do today?