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## The waiting game

*Medical drama opens in Jersey City*

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*PLAYING GOD – Jersey City theater company J CITY Theater’s new production “The God Committee” runs Wednesday through Saturday from March 25 to April 4 at the Underground Theater at St. Michael’s Church in Jersey City. For more information, please visit [www.jcity.org](http://www.jcity.org).*



*J CITY THEATER – Written by Mark St. Germain, J CITY Theater’s new production “The God Committee” tackles issues of race, gender and money.*



*THE GOD COMMITTEE – Time is of the essence in J CITY’s newest production “The God Committee” as a board of medical professionals votes on which patient will receive a heart transplant.*



If transplant patients received organs on a first-come first-serve basis, J CITY Theater’s newest production, *The God Committee*, would be dead on arrival. Written by Mark St. Germain, the play tackles issues of race, gender and money as a committee of medical professionals determine which of four patients will receive a newly harvested heart.

Time is of the essence in this philosophical foray – the heart is being rushed to the hospital as the play opens – while the board argues, accuses, deliberates and ultimately votes.

“The production reminds me of the [TV show] *West Wing* or really great hospital dramas like *E.R.* or *Grey’s Anatomy*,” said J CITY executive producer Clay Cockrell. “There’s a lot of tension in the script and it’s very fast paced.”

Running from March 25 through April 4 in the company’s brand new theater space in St. Michael’s Church, 252 Ninth St. in Jersey City, the play is full of medical drama, crackling humor and high-wire tension.

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“Choosing who gets the organs is far from black and white.” – Sandy Cockrell

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“To make matters more complicated,” Cockrell said, “a father of one of the patients is trying to bribe the committee with money – a lot of money.” The father offers a \$50 million donation to the hospital.



“I think it’s a really pertinent issue right now,” said artistic director of J CITY Sandy Cockrell, who opened the company with Clay back in 2006. “We all need to be aware of one another and to give and share with each other,” Mrs. Cockrell said.

“I mean, think about what you would be able to do with \$50 million. I don’t know how many people are willing donors, but it’s a very complicated issue. Choosing who gets the organs is far from black and white.”

Tickets are \$20, \$15 for organ donors with proof of registration. Shows run Wednesday through Saturday from March 25 through April 4 at 8 p.m.

### **The J CITY ensemble**

In addition to directing the play, Mrs. Cockrell also stars in the production. According to her, the ensemble challenges the entire cast to perform night in and night out.

“There are no leads in the play,” Mrs. Cockrell said. “Everyone has to be ready every night. It’s kind of like playing doubles in tennis. Everybody carries the weight of the play.”

Mrs. Cockrell plays a surgeon on the committee who will actually be performing the surgery. Other board members are nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, and other doctors.

“The production is a great ensemble piece,” Mrs. Cockrell said. “To find actors who can collaborate as well as this cast is really difficult.”

Brendan Wahlers is a Hudson County resident and has been working with J City Theater for the past two years.

“Sandy is a very specific director,” Wahlers said. “At times she can be tough, but she has a vision for the play and gives great direction.”

Wahlers plays the head of the department Jack Klee who is also a doctor at the hospital.

“He’s a leader and a no non-sense kind of guy,” Wahlers said about his character. “But he’s very benevolent.”

According to Wahlers, the play is about real-life situations and difficult questions.

“The play really gives you a lot to think about,” Wahlers said. “It’s important to remember that the play is about real situations that happen everyday. People rarely think about transplants and what is fair and who deserves them, but the operations are so important.”

## **A new home**

*The God Committee* is the second production J CITY held at the Underground Theater at St. Michael's Church. And according to Cockrell, the church is a welcoming home.

The intimate space can accommodate up to 80 people in a thrust formation, seating guests on three sides of the stage, which is a perfect setup for the theater's "theater in the raw" philosophy. According to Cockrell, the design allows the audience to sit as close as possible to the actors.

The play runs Wednesday through Saturday from March 25 to April 4. For more information, please visit [www.jcity.org](http://www.jcity.org).

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