Witness brings theater to life in 24 hours

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Published: Friday, April 6, 2007
Updated: Sunday, February 14, 2010 21:02

This past Friday night, March 27, at 10 p.m., a group of seven writers came together to compose four original short plays. The twist? In less than 24 hours these four short plays would be performed in front of a packed audience in the Arellano Theater. The 24-Hour Theater Experiment was created two years ago by Jim Graziano for his Homewood Arts Certificate Final Project, and Witness Theater has appropriated this model for its own experiment. The writers stayed up the following night writing their respective pieces. For junior Adar Eisenbruch, who has worked alongside co-writer junior Sal Gentile for the previous two years, the decision to participate was based upon the positive experiences he had during his past involvement with the Experiment. "The 24-Hour Theater Experiment allowed us to do what we wanted to do, without the pressure," Eisenbruch explained.

The writers spent the whole night hashing away at their respective scripts, which were due the next morning at 8 o'clock. After the due date, the material was out of the writers' hands and it was not until the final dress rehearsal that they would be allowed to view their creation. The rest of the 24 hours was spent memorizing lines and rehearsing the scenes. Saturday night at 9 o'clock, the curtain went up and the previous day's work was presented.

The show opened with Eisenbruch and Gentile's one-act entitled "The Barrier." Directed by sophomore Ryan Harrison, the "plot" (a term that I will use loosely for the rest of the article) centered around a couple's conversation while milking cows together. Susan (freshman Luska Khalapan) is angry at her boyfriend, Greg (sophomore Rajiv Mallipudi) for doing "it" in her bathroom. The conversation implies masturbation, but the audience is aware that such ambiguity must necessarily mean something else. It is not long before we learn that the titled "barrier" refers to none other than the "poop barrier." Greg, is his bafflement, exclaims, "you know, everybody does it," to which Susan matter-of-factly replies, "I don't." The play also features the boss, Josiah (sophomore Kevin Uy) who periodically comes storming in, each time proclaiming a random comment or idea: "You know what soap I like? That Irish Spring." Josiah's randomness produced some laughs from the audience, yet it seemed that he was incorporated into the script because they were given three characters to work with rather than two. This along with awkward dialogue reminded us that this play was performed in just one day, yet the audience's enthusiasm and willingness to laugh salvaged the piece.

The second piece was no so fortunate. Written by sophomore Andy Tannouri and directed by sophomore Charlotte Chen, the piece was entitled "Kingdom of the Sea." The plot concerns a young artist, Annabelle (freshman Rose Xie), who has spent the last three years working on a piece composed of three fire cones. While, this part is certainly meant to be humorously ironic, the rest of the show is confused as to whether it is a comedy or a drama. The play's confusion left the audience lost, unable to appreciate it for either its humor or its sincerity.

The third play was the highlight of the evening. Written by freshman Eric Levitz and senior Zach Goodman, and directed by Rachel Pierson, "The Stuffings of the Mind" seemed far too good to have been written and produced in a mere day. When a young couple, Dave and Suzanne (freshman David Santare and sophomore Zoe Bell) go to see a marriage therapist, Dr. Kolarov, a bizarre new treatment has disastrous results. Dr. Kolarov suggests that they channel their emotions into their stuffed animals, Mister Sniffles for Dave, and a pink pony named Lady Honeybottom for Suzanne. The antics that ensue from this are hilarious, and each actor delivered his or her performance effortlessly with great comedic timing. The final play, entitled "The Killer of Coosa County", was written by sophomore Raphael Krut-Landau and senior Sasha Rousseau. A serial-boyfriend-killer named Judith (sophomore Esther Bell) kills her current partner, Bruce (senior Dave Haldane) and decides to run away with the ghost of a woman (Ashley Watson) she had previously murdered. After this, the ghost of Bruce, sings a country song about being dead. However short and perplexing, its absurdity roused some laughs. Collectively, the 24-Hour Theater Experiment delivered an evening of fun, quirky entertainment.