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Decoding *Translations*

I truly enjoyed this production of *Translations* by Longwood University Theatre. I was able to put aside any preconceived notions of the show to truly live it for myself and believe the events occurring in the fictional town of Baile Beag due to the believability of the actors portraying Brian Friel's characters.

As a whole, the ensemble worked effortlessly together to tell their story. Each actor convinced me through their physicality - living up to the phrase, "actions speak louder than words." For example, after Yolland went missing, the cast created a feeling of tension and heaviness that radiated throughout the theater. In the same vein, the scene where Captain Lancey (Don Blaheta) informs the students of their fate if Yolland is not found, Jordan Stroud (Doalty) was noticeably breathing heavily, physically sinking down and losing stature - I could see his believable growing anger, grief, and frustration. The actors constantly reacted to the words and actions of others - eye contact (and sometimes, a lack of), had the power to change the tone of an entire scene; in Act II, there was a distinct avoidance of eye contact among the actors, which created a realistic environment of grief and anxiety. This contrasts drastically to the dance scene in Act I, where the characters joviously interact with one another and maintain playful eye contact as they dance, creating a lighthearted energy amongst the ensemble and the audience.

As an individual, Mary Jo Corley portrayed the role of Maire exquisitely. Her entrance in the first scene brought a different air to the entire production. Out of all of the actors, Corley

maintained the strongest, most convincing accent for the entirety of the play. Not once did her diction or pronunciation waiver, while other actors had their weaker moments. Corley did an effective job of revealing the contrasting layers of her character through her pace, pitch, and body language. In the beginning of Act I when all of the students gather at the hedge school, Maire is portrayed by Corley as strong, outspoken, and lively. Corley maintained a playful, headstrong characterization of Maire, as she joked with others and as she stood up for herself in expressing her objective to learn English and move to America. Corley did a phenomenal job of showing the change in Maire from Act I to Act II. When Maire mistakenly brings an empty jug of milk to the school, it was noticeable that she was frantically nervous and hysterical due to Corley's commitment to her character's thoughts and emotions.

Overall, *Translations* was a unique choice for Longwood Theatre; but not a bad one. From the standpoint of a prospective educator, the opportunities to learn from this show and the challenges it brought to the actors seemed, in my opinion, very useful as it developed new and difficult skills. I would recommend this play to other students at Longwood - there are so many messages and lessons to be learned from it, such as culture and the power of words. I can explain my interpretation of this show as a raw, organic representation of language, and almost heart-wrenching as it left me hanging with questions unanswered, and heartbroken for Maire and Yolland.

P.S. During the final speech of the play, Hugh is standing at the top of the staircase.

This paper was proofread and I made the necessary corrections before turning it in.