Trenton Taylor

THEA 101-05

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Truly a Masterpiece

I greatly enjoyed the play. The dialogue was incredibly funny and easy to follow along with, packing in a large variety and quantity of jokes. The cast was clearly very talented and worked incredibly well together. Knowing that this was supposed to be an outlandish comedy, I was able to suspend my disbelief for all aspects of the play. I enjoyed the more mature approach the play took with the subject matter of its jokes instead of trying to fixate on a comedy made for everyone of all ages.

In my opinion the cast for the play was chosen excellently. All of the actors fit incredibly well into their roles. Based on the descriptions of the character given, all four actors nailed the look, sound, and overall personality of their own characters, almost as if they had become the characters themselves. The actors were clearly listening to one another during the play, as any slip ups that had occurred during the performance, they were able to work together as a team to ensure the show continued uninterrupted and with the mistake going unnoticed. I could tell from the performance that the actors had a notable sense of connection among them. When they spoke to each other on stage, the dialogue felt lively, fresh, and very natural. Taking into account the unusual circumstances regarding the lines themselves, the dialogue between the actors felt very natural and sounded like a normal conversation, which makes it clear that the actors felt a connection between the four of them. Their skills were more than adequate for the play. Seeing their movements and listening to how natural they spoke their lines indicates that despite the cast only being students, that these students are both very passionate, and very practiced in their craft. Overall, I think that the actors told the story of the play very well. As an example of the story telling done well, I would like to discuss the scene between Jerry Cobb and Charlie Bascher. Cobb is explaining to Bascher (Cobb’s assistant), how important it is that Danny is in prime writing condition because of how much is riding on it. However, they present what is supposed to be a serious moment in a very comedic way, with over the top movement, dialogue written to exaggerate the situation, and a very loud diction on Cobb’s part. This one scene manages to further the plot of the play while remaining unwavering in the plays primary purpose, being funny. Being able to stay funny while furthering the plot of your play is an important part of a comedy.

I’d like to hone in on one particular actor, their name being Erica Johnson, who played the role of Nola Hart. Johnson performed the responsibility of being heard very well. She spoke loudly and in a very clear tone that made it very obvious what exactly she was saying to the audience. During most of her performance, Johnson spoke in a very flirtatious tone of voice, along with constantly moving in a very slow and suggestive matter around the stage. However, during parts in the play where her character was acting, Johnson spoke in a clearly overly emotional, over the top style, in order to get across how her character is an actress. Her character, Nola Hart, is someone who would act this way, given her backstory and the information given about her from the play. Johnson’s movements and flirtatious tone of speaking caused me to become invested in her role. There are two scenes in particular that I would like to discuss. In act one, Johnson’s first and only appearance is her entrance on stage right before the act ends. Her character Nola has just arrived expecting an audition for the main role in a very large play. Her entrance is large and directs all of the attention from the current events directly onto her. This cements Nola as a character who not only commands, but expects attention to her. She sees herself as the center in everyone’s world and expects first rate treatment. The way Johnson enters on stage immediately sets this tone for the character and lets us know straight away who we are dealing with, a stuck up actress who demands attention, and this entrance fits very well within the behavior of Johnson’s character. In act two, Charlie and Nola are acting out the opening scene from the rough draft of a play Danny has wrote while they are all trying to revise it. Midway through revision, Danny begins to tell Nola to shatter the fourth wall. Johnson then proceeds to run offstage, shouting the line “Your death shall not be in vain!” in my own face and then curls up into the fetal position by my feet. Johnson’s character is shown to be an accomplished actress who can take any role and instruction given to her, and this over the top display of fourth wall shattering very clearly displays that. She follows Danny’s instructions to the letter and without hesitation. This, along with the clearly over the top performance of the scene depicts a very realistic performance within the current context of the play.

Considering the fact that all of the actors are in training, along with how this play was student produced, this performance was very well done. This play was a good choice for the theatre department due to how comedic the play is and how it presents itself in a non serious way. I would absolutely recommend this play to my friends due to how hilarious the play was. I would describe the play as self-aware and over-the-top, but in a very good way.