

Theater review: 'Idyllsburg' and 'Plumbing'

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Western State College theater students have outdone themselves.

The talent available in the theater department at Western is incredible. Two Western students wrote their own plays, two other students cast and directed the shows, 12 more students acted in them and another dozen worked on the technical aspects of the plays.

And what a night of entertainment.

The first offering was "Idyllsburg," written by August Mergelman and directed by Talley Henning. The Peak Productions program introduced this play as "a conversation at a bus stop veiled in smoke." Offensive cigarette smoke permeated the small theater as soon as the action started.

But smoke was soon forgotten as the two characters, Luanne, played by Allison Moore, and Jake,

played by Cooper Partin, wove their magic. Both actors developed believable and riveting characters, playing off each other with excellent timing.

The author used many references to "fags," "gays," "homos" and "straight guys," so this was not a theater experience appropriate for the whole family.

This play's interesting twists and turns kept the audience laughing and engaged throughout the show. The length was perfect, and the actors used the full area of the stage and seemed comfortable with the audience on all four sides around them.

Suddenly loud, thumping music filled the small theater, and lights began to pulse on and off in a simulation of strobe lights.

This section was titled "Trans-Fabulous Spec-Testicle," directed by Nathaniel Liederbach, with sound by Greg Bernstein. Four college men, dressed as drag queens, proceeded to lip-sync "Vogue" by Madonna, "These Boots Were Made for Walkin'" by Nancy Sinatra, "Eternal Flame" by Bangles and "Supermodel" by Jill Sobule.

Jeremy Fluhrer as Madonna took the audience by surprise with his exceptional jazz dancing, dressed in skimpy shorts and halter top.

Mark Wade followed Fluhrer's performance as Nancy Sinatra, wearing tall black suede boots as he strutted around the stage holding a microphone to his painted lips.

Then Nate Liederbach came on as "The Premenstrual Princess," dancing to "Eternal Flame." He made a fetching beauty, dressed in a long goldilocks wig, bright red lipstick and flowing gown. He got the best of the hysterical audience when he sat down and "delivered" a rubber chicken from beneath his skirts.

Finally Reidar Keating stormed onstage as Daphne, a wanna-be

supermodel. Wearing a long black wig drawn forward into two pig tails and skin tight short black skirt, Keating teased every man he could physically reach in the audience with a "come hither" offer.

But there was more.

"Plumbing," written by Nathaniel Liederbach and directed by Ethan Pearsons, engaged nine actors onstage. Every one of them did a fine job of staying in character and keeping the timing popping. Pearsons' exceptional talent in directing was evident.

Narrator Paul Viotti introduced the audience to the main characters, Kim and Irving Foster, "a lost couple." He imitated Rod Serling's quiet, slow movement and deep, mesmerizing voice throughout his explanations.

This play fused a cappella singing with lines spoken in rhyme, which put forth the notion that God is a woman and presented an immortal Elvis, doomed to spend his days hiding out in toilets.

The central focus onstage was a toilet on a raised platform.

When Irving Foster, played by Jeremy Fluhrer; visited the toilet/throne, he was confronted by Elvis speaking to him from inside the toilet. Nate Liederbach played Elvis, complete with shellacked black hair and white jump suit (which the audience got to see after Elvis was rescued from the toilet).

Christina Gravis appeared as the very suburban housewife Kim Foster, Irving's wife. Her hairdo alone was enough to establish her identity.

Amy Wright as Jessica per-

formed beautifully. It was regrettable that she didn't enter the action until near the show's end.

Matt Kearney played a wonderfully stupid Henry, who later turned out to be God himself.

Jon Klinowski as Mr. Pointer, the dead plumber returned to free Elvis, Shelley Grimes as Martha, and Mark Wade as Noah (the

impostor) rounded out this busy cast.

As an overview, the play was well-written, well-directed and well-performed, but it needed trimming. Liederbach might use his delete key to pare it down to a more manageable length before its next production.



Author of 'Plumbing,' Nathaniel Liederbach, appears as Elvis. With him are Shelley Grimes, playing Martha, and Matt Kearney, playing Henry.

Photo by Jan Badgley



Nate Liederbach lip-syncs 'Eternal Flame' in 15 minutes of silliness between the two student-written and -directed plays put on in WSC's Hatcher Theater last Thursday through Saturday nights.

Photo by Jan Badgley