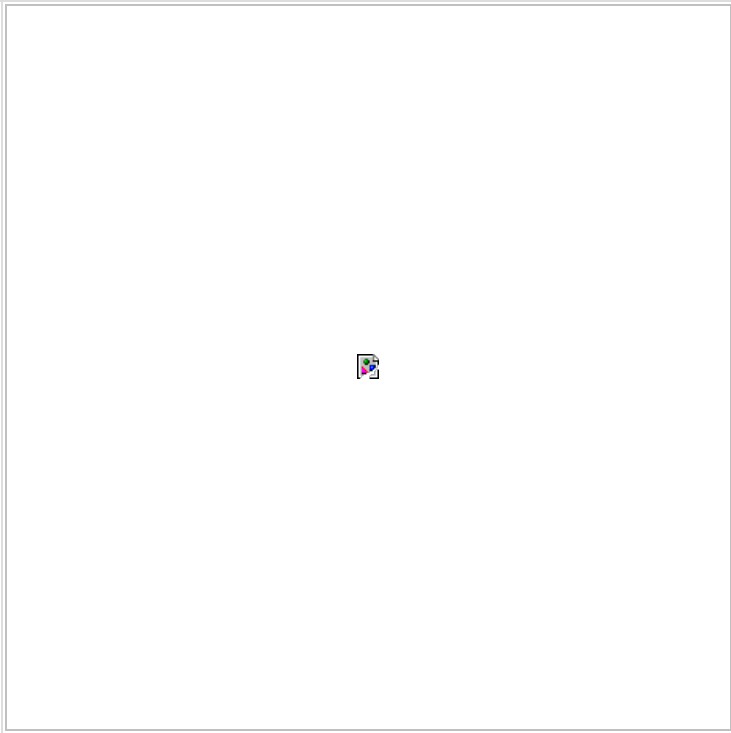


Gaieties undergoes changes, nudity remains

By [Sasha Arijanto](#)



Amidst the celebration of Stanford’s spot near the top of the BCS rankings, the anticipation of our upcoming game with Oregon and impending foray with those foes across the Bay, few students have stopped to consider that all of the Farm’s gloriousness is owed to the death of one beloved son. The 26 cast members and 27 staff of Ram’s Head’s annual production of “**Gaieties**” have been doing just that.

This past Tuesday evening in the rehearsal space of Roble Gym, a buoyant cast and buzzing staff met for a final rehearsal of this year’s production of the 100-year-strong show, “**Gaieties 2011: Leland Junior Must Die.**” Students bedecked in lamé and animal prints rehearsed sashays while others turned back handsprings.

“You guys, you’re gonna rock this shit,” exclaimed director Brendon Martin ‘13, more in awe than in direction as he stood amongst a huddled company of seasoned returners and “Gaieties” newcomers.



The 100th-anniversary rendition of one of Stanford’s longest-standing traditions trails the controversial showing of “Gaieties 2010: The Last Temptation of Cal.” The biblically themed production was anything but heavenly, and its over-the-top lampooning of sensitive groups and topics incited much criticism including a walkout of 36 Ujamaa residents frustrated by the disturbing and divisive stereotype-driven humor.

In an attempt to accommodate the various sub-groups alienated by last year’s performance, Ram’s Head created an advisory board with the hope to represent those communities during the editing process, an effort co-head writer Harry Spitzer ‘12 thinks makes for a better script.

“We established this because there was so much negative feedback over some of the content of the show,” Spitzer said.

“[The “Gaieties” advisory board] throughout the process would give us feedback, tell us what kind of jokes they thought would be offensive and it kind of forced us to veer away from crude and potentially offensive and stereotype-based humor to more character-based, situational-based humor,” Spitzer continued. “I actually think it ultimately benefited the script a lot, because we were forced to be more clever in order to be funny.”

The script, helmed by Spitzer and Sara Grossman ‘12 along with eight other writers, certainly delivers. The historically driven plot spans three epochs and involves members of the original Stanford family, the 1911 creation of “Gaieties” and the present day. Martin laces the intricate script over dynamic blocking, lending a cinematic quality to interwoven scenes that jump-cut and converge in a cohesive story. At times an action-thriller, at others a biting satire of the life and times on the Farm, “Leland Junior Must Die” incorporates strictly Stanford humor that sets out to entertain all from the freshest of ‘15s to the

wizeden alums of yesteryear.



“People are going to be very surprised at the changes that we’ve made,” promises “Gaieties” producer Nora Martin ‘12. “Since it’s our 100th anniversary...we really wanted to make sure we brought the tradition back to what it’s meant to be, which is supposed to be: a huge rally event before Big Game. It’s what unites the whole campus.”

Those changes have done wonders to rid the once-shamed play of its cheap thrills. They have completely excised the insensitive shock-based jokes and replaced them with the kinds we like: Stanford-specific quips, sexual insinuations, freshman roasts and combinations of all of the above.



And with a cast as creative and talented as this year’s, it may be hard for the audience to exit without charging directly to Stanford Stadium to cheer on the Card. The jubilant ensemble dazzles in six original numbers, giving way to stellar solo performances of the motley gang of Stanford frosh, most notably Alex Walker ‘13’s crisp portrayal of an overzealous upperclassman whose hilarious hash-tags provide updates on the status of the play. Also of note are Tim Borgerson ‘14 and newcomer James Seifert ‘15, whose respective dialects and impressive vocals will hopefully make returning appearances in Stanford’s theaters.

But it is the performance of veteran Ram’s Header Mary Beth Corbett ‘12 as the head Cal villain that steals the show. A regular installment on the Stanford playbill, Corbett’s interpretations have not grown stale and with this wicked script she hits a high note—even as a Cal student.

“Get ready for a ton of jazz hands!” offers Monica Vu ‘14, speaking to the flashy visuals that zest the musical compositions of Jacob Boehm ‘12. The script, the cast, the music and the esprit de corps of this Big Game-week starter are not to be missed.

And for any ambivalent freshmen, Vu offers more prudent advice—“Don’t worry about the nudity, you’ll get used to it!”

“Gaieties” runs Nov. 16-18 at 8 p.m. in Memorial Auditorium. Tickets are \$10 for students, \$15 for faculty and \$20 for general admission.

Like 5 people liked this.

Add New Comment

Login

Showing 2 comments

Sort by popular now

George

I like the part in the review where "Gaieties" is referred to in quotes.

6 months ago 1 Like

Like Reply

Jen

LOL my thoughts exactly

6 months ago in reply to George

Like Reply

[Subscribe by email](#) [RSS](#)