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A threesome that you can watch!

[Caley Anderson](#)



January 27th, 2006 by Caley Anderson

Most festivals — music, theater, dance — can often be rollercoasters of disjunction. Some acts will be engaging and inspiring while others fall flat. Individual participants will leave an impression on the departing audience, but on the whole the festival will not have achieved a unifying theme or purpose.

Last year's Original Winter One-Acts fell into the rollercoaster category. The three one-acts had no common threads, and while it would be boring if each play were the same, the lack of cohesiveness left us wanting, and expecting, more out of the production.

Fortunately, experiencing this year's one-acts was a smooth ride. The three selections complemented each other, finding common ground in comedy. Each play was student written, directed, produced, designed and acted in, and each used different aspects of the comedy genre to create insightful characters and jokes that had the audience in Pigott Theater giggling at times, snickering at others and thoroughly enjoying themselves this past weekend.

“The Calling of St. Matthew,” written by sophomore Andrew Burmon and directed by junior Hollis Moore, explored the relationship between a father and son during their trip to Rome. Freshman Yoni Teitelbaum shone as the father; his “old man” shuffle was effective and he handled the one-liners with aplomb. He conveyed the father's struggles with his newly adult son with maturity far beyond the typical college student. Unfortunately John Gustafson (an undergraduate who is not on Facebook and therefore we don't know his grade) seemed less comfortable with the dialogue, and his performance came across as awkward and forced, losing much of the emotional punch along the way.

Junior Ashley Brewer stole the show in “The Waiting Room” (written by senior Chris Ryan and directed by sophomore Aaron Berg). She effectively portrayed Sunny Rose, a woman stuck in a doctor's waiting room that quickly evolves into a scene from “The Twilight Zone.” The comedy came in the unexpected quirks each of the periphery characters displayed: the nurse walking in the background while wearing a space helmet; her husband robotically reading an invisible magazine; a fellow patient who won't stop staring at her. Brewer's shift from anger to confusion to righteousness was effortless, and her performance made up for the moments when the writing tried too hard to be off-the-wall and vague.

“Devils in a Blue Dress,” written by graduate student Dan Bentley and directed by sophomore Paz Hilfinger-Pardo, ended the show. The idea behind the one-act was creative — that different actresses portray the different sides of the girl, literally slipping in and out of character by putting on a blue dress — but the dialogue tried too hard in places to be “deep.” The myriad actresses handled their respective roles well, but the show belonged to junior Gabe Bombara. His portrayal of a guy attempting to navigate the shifting moods of his girlfriend was eerily real. Many of the scenes were uncomfortable to watch because they could just as easily have happened to you or me.

For all the criticism I gave the dialogue, “Devils” receives the Funniest Line Award. After showing up at his dorm room drunk and sopping wet, “Girl” hugs “Guy” (neither has a name), and then quickly retreats, sobbing, “I forgot — you’re a computer person! You don’t like water!” “Guy” quickly responds, “It’s the computer that doesn’t like water. We don’t like sunlight.”

Even though all three one-acts ended on serious notes, the humor found in lines like that was more characteristic of the evening and hopefully the future direction of Original Winter One-Acts.



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Short but Sweet

[Jessamyn Edra](#)

 January 20th, 2006 by Jessamyn Edra

From the deep conversations of “The Calling of St. Matthew” to the tensions created in “The Waiting Room” to the witty humor of “Devils in a Blue Dress,” the Ram’s Head production of the Original One Acts (OWOA) has all the elements to satisfy any theatrical palette. The series will run from Thursday, Jan. 19 to Saturday, Jan. 21 in Pigott Theater.

“‘The Calling of St. Matthew’ is naturalistic theater, almost Arthur Miller, while ‘The Waiting Room’ is absurdist, and ‘Devils in a Blue Dress’ is really relevant to life at Stanford — slightly absurdist but more accessible,” says sophomore Amin El Gamal, this year’s producer of OWOA.

The result is something for everyone. Out of the 30 one-act plays that students submitted, a panel chose the above three acts to be performed together, according to El Gamal.

The panel considered each work’s craft, technological feasibility and potential popularity, among other factors.

“The chosen acts performed together cover a good spectrum of straight theater that leaves the audience a little off-kilter. This is a combo plate of what theater can do,” El Gamal says.

“Off-kilter” describes the one-acts quite accurately, as they flow into each other and draw on each other’s styles and atmospheres. There is no way OWOA will fail to move its audience, even if it primarily leaves them unbalanced.

“All three shows will have you at the edge of your seat,” says sophomore Jackie Pham, the assistant producer. “Each one beckons you to inhabit its space and make it your own. They are by turns funny, poignant and scathingly real.”

Yet the roller coaster of emotions is only one of the reasons to see OWOA. In essence, the performance is the world premiere of plays that are written, produced and performed solely by Stanford students.

“A large part of the appeal of a place like Stanford is that people have so many different creative outlets. It would be a loss for all of us if students ceased to remember that expression does not exist in a vacuum,” says sophomore Andrew Burmon, playwright of “The Calling of St. Matthew.”

Sophomore Aaron Berg, director of “The Waiting Room,” says he agrees that the production is truly original.

“There are numerous opportunities to see live theater, but the One Acts are special on campus because they

represent living theater — theater that has just been developed.”

The plays may be brand new, but the crew has worked hard to polish them over the last few weeks.

And the process of bringing these works to life is also unique.

“It’s my first time working with a new script — my first time where the playwright was part of the process,” says sophomore Paz Hilfinger-Pardo, director of “Devils in a Blue Dress.” “It’s a fun process and I hope the audience cheers it on because this is our school — this is what we produce.”

Junior Hollis Moore also says she had fun directing.

“I really enjoyed getting to know the actors,” Moore explains. “They are all very experienced and so had a lot of input. They even laughed at my jokes, although I’m still not quite sure whether they felt like they had to.”

According to El Gamal, OWOA is a worthwhile and fun project because live theater is in danger.

“There is almost no other opportunity to see student-written work performed on campus,” he explains. “It’s amazing what your peers can do.”

Tickets for OWOA are available online at <http://www.winteroneacts.com>, in White Plaza from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. or at the door. Ticket prices are \$9 for Stanford students (\$6 for the matinee), \$15 for faculty, staff and alumni and \$18 for the general public. All shows are at 8 p.m. There is also a matinee



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