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Winter One-derland

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Last weekend, Ram's Head presented "The Original Winter One Acts," three student-penned plays performed back-to-back in one engaging, moving and always unpredictable production.

Audiences packed the small and intimate Nitery Theater Thursday through Saturday. Those fortunate enough to secure a ticket were treated to a varied sequence of pieces: a botched drug heist, a folktale of healing and tragedy and a hilarious look into the problems of a theater stage crew. The selection of acts, each markedly different from the other, ensured that audience members with diverse tastes left the theater entertained.

"Play 2," written by Harley Adams, explores an outrageous situation in which two drug dealers contemplate cutting open a live baby that may or may not contain crack-cocaine. It is no surprise that this act generated the most excited buzz during intermission. With its dark humor and grim subject matter, "Play 2" provided an unnerving experience that left audiences unsure of whether to gasp in horror or laugh uncomfortably. As director Ashley Chang '13 succinctly expressed, "It was completely bad-ass and very Quentin Tarantino." Like many Tarantino movies, the graphic violence and pervasive, strong language left audiences divided.

While some felt that the profanity (all 15 c-words from the original script were cut) was excessive and crude, others, like Sakshi Agarwal '12, felt that the language was well suited to the play.

"This is real life and you can't mask it with niceties," Agarwal said. "The language grabs you and forces you to pay attention."

"The Fisherman" tells the tale of a small-town fisherman who, despite his powers of healing, fails to repair his broken relationship with his daughter and escape his haunted past. Writer Kerry Mahuron '10 and director Alex Holtzman '12 craft a mystical world, in which a mysterious fox-woman comes to unravel a family's secrets.

Mahuron was influenced by Chinese and Scandinavian mythology. "I was also reading a lot of Freud and contemplating patterns of repression and expression in my own life and in 21st American society in general," she said. The act was rife with suspense and drama, with an ending that played with themes of atonement and redemption.



After the heavy drama of "The Fisherman," "Top of the Show," written by Jean Ansolabehere '11 and directed by Brendon Martin '13, was a cathartic and fun romp into the lives of those who work behind the scenes of the theater. The under-appreciated stage crew bravely navigated their way through relationships, theatrical personalities and the task of keeping a production of "Romeo and Juliet" afloat. All of the actors

had wonderful comedic timing and the play within a play concept was reworked in a fresh and modern way. Theater is always enjoyable when it doesn't take itself too seriously and the self-referential humor was particularly appreciated at the last Saturday show, in which other show casts crept into the audience to watch the final one act.

During one of the "Top of the Show" runs, was an instance of art imitating life, or rather, life imitating art. Holly Rogers '10, who played the diva actress of the show, ran into a few backstage troubles of her own on the last night of the show. "My costume actually broke the last night of the show. Which is funny, because one of my first lines is "Mandy, my costume broke,"" she said.

"Winter One Acts" is a wonderful creative outlet and showcase for the student population. At the beginning of the school year, a number of student scripts are submitted. The producers then narrow them down to 10 and work with the directors in final decisions. Cast, design and tech are all students from the Stanford community.

"Playwrights have the amazing chance to see their play live and in front of them and in front of an audience," wrote lead producer Paul Brownlee '12. He added that the directors get to take part in the shaping of a new show, a completely fresh piece. "Directing the first production of 'The Fisherman' is a whole different experience than directing the 450th production of 'The Glass Menagerie.' You create the original."

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