

New Voices showcases student one-act plays

The annual production features three original student-written plays

by **Steven Neuman**
Freelance Reporter

Seeing a play at the University Theatre's Pocket Playhouse is sort of

THEATER REVIEW

can unearth either a gem of delight or a total disaster.

New Voices, an annual theater production comprised of student's original one-act plays, displays the full spectrum of student-playwright potential — the good, the bad, and the sublime. All three productions utilize the same seven performers in different roles. While they sometimes fail in one piece, on the whole, they eventually prove themselves as excellent talents in at least one of the others.

The first play, "Need" by L. Maximilian McCall, is by far the weakest entrant of the bunch. It centers around the ambiguous relationship between roommates Cole, (played smartly by Andrew Hill, and Michelle (in a weaker performance by Margie Kment. McCall's writing thrusts the audience into a vaguely apocalyptic world where the two experience a sense of sexual urgency that forces the characters to take their relationship to the

next obvious step.

The two spend the remainder of the play prodding insecurities while circling each other emotionally like boxers in the ring. Kment does an admirable job but her anger feels forced and her movements feel overtly staged. Furthermore, the sexual tensions brought on by disaster come across as intensely cliché.

"Between the Lines" by Dinae E. Home rings truer. It explores the notion that the most interesting aspect of passing conversation is not what is said, but what is thought. Although the play is focused around the chance meeting of two nameless college students, the comic timing of their respective alter-egos, played by Teresa Koberstein and Eric Dodson is where the characters really interact. Both sound off on their neurotic foibles and bring sparkle to what could easily be an intriguing or otherwise dry, dramatic experience.

The third play, "Talking to Strangers," by Matt Chorpenning is a real treat. If Woody Allen was in college today, he would be writing material like this. The piece scrutinizes the intense process of asking a stranger out on a date, or as a stumbling "Mark" and "Emily" deem it — "a conversation." The two become familiar with each other through hilariously awkward silences.

Koberstein and Dodson exude real chemistry as the pair of reluctant lovers, and Chorpenning's self-effacing dialogue (one quickly gets the sense that "Mark" is a thinly



Courtesy

The cast of New Voices performs three student-written plays today and Saturday at 5 p.m. in the Pocket Playhouse.

veiled version of the author) is a perfect fit for the two. Natalie Jansson and Michael Koopman turn in a sharp renditions of the cynical best friends, and their timing meshes beautifully with the overall light-

hearted tone. Kment redeems herself from "Need" as the brilliantly obnoxious barista that will be eerily familiar to any cafe patron.

New Voices runs tonight and Saturday night, starting at 5 p.m. There is

no late seating. Tickets are \$3 at the door at the Pocket Playhouse, located 102 Villard Hall.

Steven Neuman is a Freelance Reporter for the Emerald.

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