

"Shorts 12" provides entertainment, teaches important messages, lessons to audience

MARY EARP

Evoking tears, happiness and providing impacting performances, this year's "Shorts 12" plays offered every component of the emotional spectrum along with entertainment for all.

The first play, "Blind," written and directed by Megan Kays, senior, conveyed a deep message, though it also featured a bit of comedy to lighten the mood. Emily Axelrod, junior, took over the stage as a 10-year-old girl. Though it may seem hard for a junior to play such a younger role, Axelrod did well, displaying the components that make up pre-teens well and playing the role effectively.

At first, I was afraid the play would be too sad, being about a family going through separation of parents. As the play progressed, the jokes told by Axelrod's character lessened the blow of the seriousness of the play.

The only part I found disappointing about the play was the abrupt end. The parents, Sophia Starks-Madsen, senior, and James Topping, freshman, seemed to resolve their troubles too quickly and too easily. But overall, I found the play to be worthwhile and all of the



Photo courtesy of Lisa Wang
Michael Skoczylas and Thomas Olson, juniors, bully Morgan Winnick, junior, and Joshua Daniel, sophomore, in the play "The Wrestling Season." This year's "Shorts 12" plays provided entertainment, comedy and tragedy.

actors played their parts well.

After this melancholy play, "Six at Six," written by Samantha Forsey, senior, provided effective and hilarious comic relief. I was wary at first when I heard about the play based around a news show called the "Six at Six," but within the first minute I was cracking up, along with the other audience members.

Trevor Benya, senior,

and Caroline Hitesman, junior, played two quirky newscasters whose watchers, Nolan Butuso and Keslea Pinkston, juniors, believe everything they say. Butuso and Pinkston provided a highly comedic performance that, through all of the jokes about Hot Pockets, sexually transmitted diseases, tyrannical partners and more, rang true about our society today.

Shorts ended on a serious note with "The Wrestling Season," written by Laurie Brooks and directed by Michael Johnson, senior. This play dealt with the pressures of high school and the problems that teenagers have with others being different.

Morgan Winnick, junior, played a wrestler who was questioning his sexuality. In this heartwrenching play, Winnick faced the difficulties

of being bullied, and played a highly believable role. Joshua Daniel, sophomore, was good as well. This was the first role in a high school production for both Daniel and Winnick.

Though the acting in "The Wrestling Season" was impressive, I found the dynamic of the play to be a bit confusing. Throughout the entire play, all of the actors remained on the stage in the back, sitting in chairs. While a scene was about one of them, they would step up to the front of the stage and talk. It was hard to distinguish where they were, and some of the lines were a bit confusing.

Also on the stage was a referee. During the entire play, he would make calls based on the conversations the other actors were having. The referee made the play more confusing, and he seemed like an unnecessary distraction.

Overall, the play had a strong message and mature themes. The entire production provided great entertainment for the audience, and I was left satisfied. With the melancholy yet comical "Blind," the hilariously entertaining "Six at Six" and the highly emotional "Wrestling Season," Shorts 12 did not disappoint.

"Water for Elephants" proves to be most spectacular show on earth

CAROLYN CRUZE

From the extravagant decade costumes to the fantastic performances, "Water for Elephants" presented on the big screen proved to be more stunning than I ever imagined. Directed by Francis Lawrence and adapted by Richard LaGravenese, I expected the production of Sara Gruen's beloved novel to be disappointing in comparison. But to my surprise, the film created the perfect balance between the dreamy allusions of life within the circus while still highlighting the harsh realities of 1931.

After failing to complete his final exams, the story follows Jacob Jankowski (played by Robert Pattinson) as he jumps aboard the Benzini Brothers, "most spectacular show on Earth." While in the circus, he discovers the realities of allusion, money and love through his experiences with an elephant named Rosie.

Played by Tai, the performing elephant in this movie literally stole the show, with extraordinary tricks including tackling brutally abusive moments. He won the hearts of

the audience members. When the menacing ringleader August (played by Christoph Waltz) attempts to force Rosie into compliance beating the bull hook into the poor animal, the expression on Tai's face has unforgettable. Although this scene did not literally show the beating, the visual fear in Rosie's eyes not only solidified the theme of abuse and animal cruelty, but increased the empathy the audience shared with the characters.

Besides highlighting Tai's abilities, the film provided the perfect role for Christoph Waltz in his portrayal of August. An antagonist to the core, Waltz brought a threatening complexity into his work during the numerous hard-to-watch scenes. Unlike the novel, the director wisely combined the Uncle Al character with August, narrowing and pinpointing the field of evil to one person. Although Waltz could have portrayed greater remorse, he mastered the obsessive attitude August has toward his wife, the brutality he shows toward animals and his uncontrollable anger which often leads to

chucking employees off a moving train. There is no fear in a movie without a wonderfully threatening actor and with Waltz the audience was speechless.

But it wasn't Waltz who I was worried about going into the theater; it was the monotonous work of one Twilight vampire who I thought would ruin the show. Surprisingly enough, I thought wrong. While playing Jacob Jankowski, Pattinson proved that he can handle serious and developed characters. Although his chemistry with Reese Witherspoon, who played Marlena, was lacking, Pattinson brought a unique vitality and originality to his character.

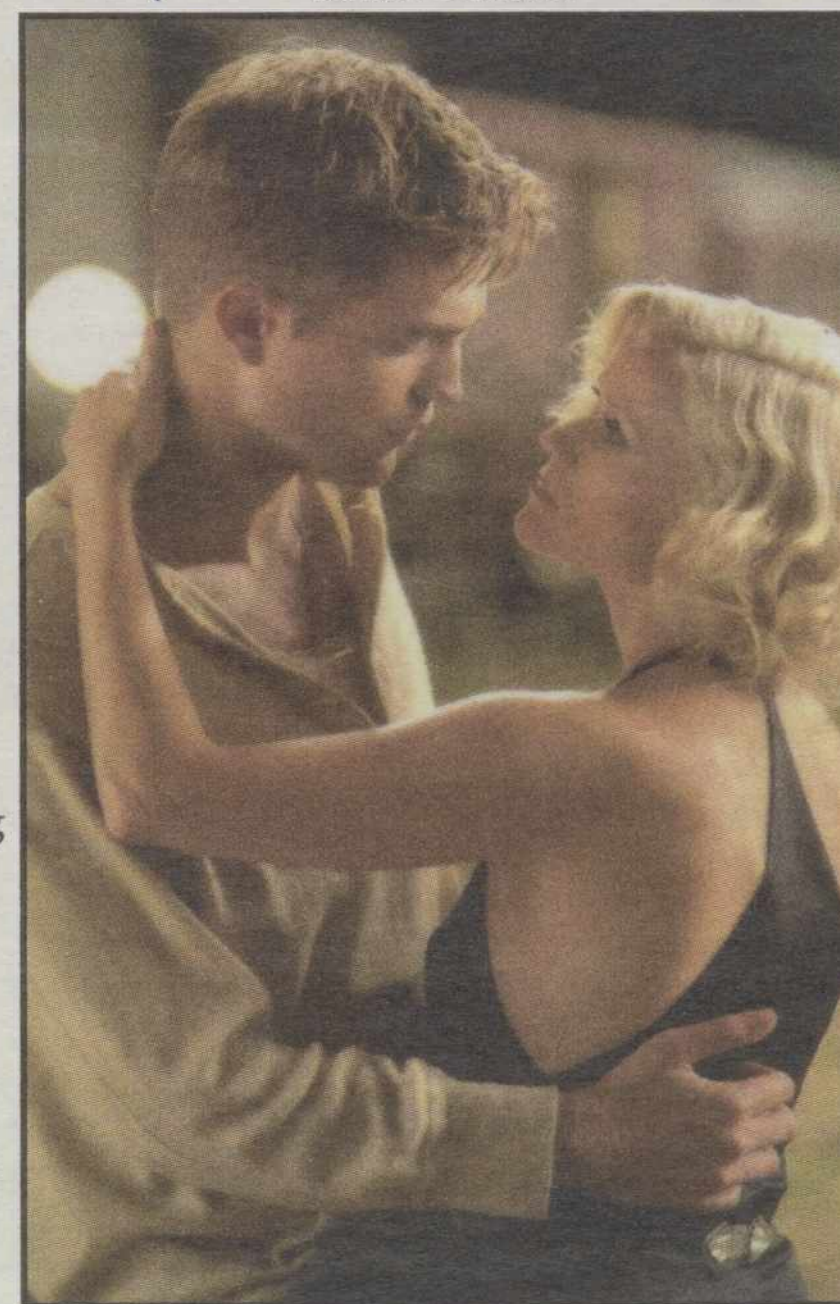
The chemistry issue between Witherspoon and Pattinson may in part have been because Witherspoon seemed a little too mature for her part. I always thought that Marlena was a strong character, and I appreciate the mothering quality of Reese's performance, but I felt that she could have played up the romance a little bit more. As an abused character, I felt that if Witherspoon was more vulnerable to masculinity, her strength

and fear of falling in love with Robert would be more justified and less lacking. The romantic aspect of the novel was very important in the development of the plot and should have played more prominent in the film.

Overall, the film stuck very close to the novel with the exception of a few combined characters. The structure of the film mirrored the framework of the novel which was very satisfying for people who had read the novel. The artsy costumes and surreal mood set the stage for a phenomenal performance which left audience members crying, laughing and holding their

breaths. I would give this movie ★★★★★ and recommend it to young adults who appreciate quality art.

The film is rated PG-13 for scenes of violence and sexual content.



Courtesy of 20th Century Fox Studios
Jacob Jankowski (Robert Pattinson) and Marlena (Reese Witherspoon) share a not-so-romantic moment in the new movie Water for Elephants directed by Francis Lawrence. The film opened on April 22, dazzling audiences with its quality design and amazing elephant performance.