

# The tragedy of 'Hamlet' returns

**Lydia Emily Bashaw**  
Editor in Chief

There never should have been a sequel Hamlet.

"Fortinbras," a comedy being performed by Clackamas Theatre Arts Department, is a story that occurs after the death of Shakespeare's Hamlet. The play, by Lee Jessing, picks up with the arrival of the prince of Norway, Fortinbras, who inherits a crown of Denmark through a quick series of comical occurrences. This new play is forced to pick up a kingdom on the brink of chaos with the ghosts of the past trying to "teach" him.

The play incorporates all those who died during the tragedy of Hamlet, including Hamlet himself, played by first timer Caleb Erdmanczyk. He first appears as a vision on a TV screen that seemed to portray a coy, decisive and self-centered version of the original Shakespearean character.

With a quieter and wiser Polonius, a remorseful Claudius, a sexually repressed Gertrude and a slutty, forceful Ophelia, the play sets itself up to be playful soap opera. However, most audiences with knowledge of Shakespeare will find it to be a bit messy and disappointing.

With a cast full of newcomers and veterans, the play falls short of expectations. The parts seemed to be read, not played intended, and no connection is made between most of the characters.

Main character Fortinbras, played by first timer James Sharinghousen, is not a perfect fit for the part. While the character was intended to be comical, confused and reluctant to change, Sharinghousen was overbearing and connected to not just his cast but the

overall context of the play.

At the beginning, the audience was pulled in by the character of Fortinbras but

funny political satire, it became grating.

In serious moments where Fortinbras was intended to be humble and introspec-



The ghosts of Hamlet, right, and Ophelia, left, share a tender moment of reconciliation on the battlements of Elsinore.

as time progressed and the character supposedly developed, Sharinghousen grew more detached and redundant. His acting became irritating and cocky, especially when he tried to sound more and more like President George W. Bush. Instead of

positive, Sharinghousen portrayed him as arrogant and overly humorous. The lack of a good, solid Fortinbras led the rest of the cast to a duel of who was in the spotlight and the play never recovered from the characters trying to upstage each other.

The rest of the cast was hit and miss. Dominant character Ophelia, played by newcomer Annie Scharich, was well casted and did well depicting the lustful and manipulative character. Yet onstage inexperience and lack of decent cast mates made the character one-dimensional and impassionate.

There was a breath of fresh air when Tony Baer, who played Osric, took the stage. His acting was simple, humble and connected. The part fit Baer, who was easily the best actor in the play. His jokes came off with ease and the character seemed to naturally fit. His rapport with other cast members was much more obvious and he immersed the audience in the emotions of the play. Baer's natural charm and good looks helped him pave the way for Osric's character development. He was certainly the highlight of the play.

Another successful thespian was Polonius, played by Derek Sweet. His subdued, subtle acting style really gave refinement to the new character. At the beginning of Act II, Sweet's soliloquy was pivotal and deep. It defined the relationship between Fortinbras and the ghosts that haunted him.

Overall the show was a disappointment for those hoping for a well rounded and well performed comedy. The high school lunch room humor that relied on sex to get the audience smiling, became irksome, leaving only the immature and uncomfortable laughing. The cast seemed to have trouble making the play flow and it hurt the storyline.

For those looking for a cheap seat and a lighthearted, comedic follow-up to a classic tragedy, then "Fortinbras" is a go. However, those with higher expectations and more mature humor may just be let down.



Above: The smug specters of Claudius and Gertrude, portrayed by veteran actors Jake Whitten and Kelly Miller, gloat in triumph over Fortinbras' distress.

Right: Fortinbras takes a stand against the imagined threat of Hamlet, calling out his ghostly adversary and daring him to laugh at his mistakes. Meanwhile, his ladies-in-waiting watch intently.

Below: After a rushed and impromptu wedding, Fortinbras, left center, attempts to keep his new Polish bride, far left, played by Liz Johnson, and her fellow maiden, far right, portrayed by Hannah Munsey, from falling for Hamlet's ghost, right center.

