

“Almost, Maine” explores all kinds of love

BY JADE MCDOWELL NEWS EDITOR

After spinning out wild fantasies in “The Wizard of Oz,” Hermiston High School’s drama department returns to the stage Friday with a much more realistic tone.

The high school’s production of “Almost, Maine” explores the idea of love in all its forms as it weaves together a series of short plays showing nine different couples during one cold winter night in the town of Almost, Maine.

“I like that it shows different types of love — unrequited love, new love, old love,” sophomore Dezirae Klaviter said. “It’s really unique.”

Klaviter plays a waitress who continually interrupts an unexpected meeting between a man and his ex-girlfriend at a bar. She said she enjoys her character’s energy as she witnesses the awkward encounter.

The romantic comedy’s relatable themes of love and life have made it the most-produced high school play in the past decade. Aurelio Marin, who plays two different men during the show, said everyone should be able to relate to at least one of the couples portrayed.

Marin, a freshman, said he particularly relates to the scene where he plays Pete, a “sort of nerdish guy” who finds himself alone for the first time with a friend he is romantically attracted to, and “screws it up.”

“I know where he’s coming from,” Marin said. “It’s his first time being alone with a girl. They’ve probably only been on group dates before.”

The show’s wide-ranging look at love also includes a married couple whose relationship is on the rocks, a woman who lost her husband and two women falling in love with each other.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Samantha Steffey, playing the character Sandrine, kisses Aurelio Marin, playing the character Jimmy, in scene two, Sad and Glad, in a dress rehearsal for the Hermiston High School production of “Almost, Maine” on Monday in Hermiston.

The latter scene is one that has drawn controversy at some high schools. Director Beth Anderson said when the play was first announced she had some concerned calls from people who disagreed with having LGBTQ characters in a high school play, and one adult who had previously helped her with shows declined to volunteer with “Almost, Maine” due to the scene.

The scene is chaste compared to some of the other couples’ performances featuring kissing or sexual innuendos. It uses characters literally falling down as a metaphor for falling in love.

“It’s absolutely the most benign of all the plays,” Anderson said.

She said the students involved in “Almost, Maine” had been mature,



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Marci Carrera applies makeup on actor Isabelle Herrera backstage while getting ready for the dress rehearsal.

respectful and professional about dealing with the more grown-up moments of the show, and no one was being asked to do anything they weren’t comfortable with (some students, for example, chose to fake “stage kisses” while other scene

partners decided together that they were comfortable actually kissing each other during rehearsals and the show.)

Anderson asked the students if they wanted to remove the scene between two women in order to

those roles, so the scene was gender-swapped.

Jessica Ferguson, a senior who plays one of the women in the “gay scene,” said she appreciated the “wide variety” of love shown in “Almost, Maine.” She said she was playing her role to the best of her ability and wasn’t concerned about possible negative reactions as people watched her character process her feelings for another woman.

“If you’re uncomfortable with it, that’s a ‘you’ thing,” she said.

Many of the scenes use symbolism for love, such as a woman who can’t tell a painting is of a heart, just like she doesn’t pick up on the artist’s attraction to her.

Samuel Serber, who plays three different men in the show, including the artist, said he loves that even though the play uses so many metaphors, there are moments that feel very true to life.

“I just loved the awkwardness of certain scenes,” he said of the first time he read the script. “It’s very real. It’s not like TV drama all the time, it’s just awkward like real people.”

Other students said they also liked that the show was broken up into many smaller plays, so they could focus on perfecting one scene. Allison Galdamez, a senior who plays a woman who wishes her boyfriend would propose, said she liked that she could participate without having to memorize “a whole bunch of parts.”

Isabella Herrera and Bridget Wizner both said they related to their characters when they got the part. They said if there was a downside to their roles, it was that their scenes took place outside in the dead of winter, meaning they were sweating under layers of winter coats and scarves and sweaters under the hot stage lights.

TICKETS

“Almost, Maine” will be playing at Hermiston High School Friday and Saturday (May 10-11) and May 17-18 at 7 p.m. The show is recommended for audiences age 12 and older. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$4 for senior citizens 65 and older with ID, and \$2 for students.

avoid controversy, but she said they were adamant that it was important to include representation of LGBTQ couples in a story about all kinds of romantic relationships.

The scene was originally written for two men, but Anderson said few male students tried out for the play and she couldn’t find any interested in playing



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