

## **Cappies review #1**

**Mackenzie Wiebe**

### **Strathcona Christian Academy**

The Second World War is remembered as a time of great anguish, when many lives were robbed. Attempting to escape such an outcome and protecting those you love can be a tedious and frustrating task. However, even in the worst of circumstances, it is through the eyes of a child that the possibility of joy and hope is found. This was expressed in Archbishop Jordan High School's production of The Diary of Anne Frank, exploring both the difficulties and the joys faced by Anne Frank.

The play is an adaptation of the Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank, a true story from the German occupation of Amsterdam. To escape capture, eight Jews live inside the secret annex, a cramped portion of Mr. Frank and Mr. Van Daan's office, hidden behind a bookcase. Living in close proximity to the same people for an extended period of time creates increasing tension, often leading them to forget the imperative need to avoid discovery.

Nicole Murphy led the show with a gripping portrayal of Anne Frank, reflecting the abounding energy and enthusiasm of a child as well as the frustration and difficulties of her situation. Mr. Frank was played by Patrick Cassidy, who showed the desperation and difficulties they faced, working as a mediating force among the other occupants of their secret home.

The actors all stayed true to their characters throughout the play, consistently demonstrating the correct age and demeanour their part required. One notable example of this was Kelsey Bryant in the role of Mrs. Frank, showing the emotions and expressions of a despairing mother throughout her performance. Amy Klingspon as Mrs. Van Daan brought a comedic contrast of snootiness and hostility, expressing an adverse reaction which may occur in traumatizing experiences.

The stage was dominated by a four-level set of the secret annex. Student-built and designed completely by students Gareth Davies and Kiana Davies, it had both period-appropriate design and props, bringing you into the world of the show even before it began. Another fascinating part of this play was its use of technology. Projections designed and executed by Brittney Bilesky during scenes when the families listened to the radio helped to reflect the grim nature of the news they received.

Telling the story of a girl whose world is taken away from her, Archbishop Jordan's The Diary of Anne Frank was a compelling production. As the last line was spoken and a hush fell, quiet sobs could be heard throughout the theatre. When bows were taken, they were met by a standing ovation.

## **Cappies review #2**

### **Claire Merkosky**

#### **J.H. Picard High School**

How could a group of high school students even begin to recreate the atmosphere of what Anne Frank described as "a patch of blue sky threatened by an impenetrable black wall of menacing storm clouds?" Archbishop Jordan students researched and created a detailed set, costumes, and props as accurately as they could to transport the audience into the era.

Archbishop Jordan High School performed The Diary of Anne Frank, a play adapted from the novel Diary of a Young Girl, which was published in 1947 using parts of Anne's real diary found following her death. The diary describes the young German girl's two years living in a secret annex in the Netherlands. Between 1939 and 1945, during the Second World War, the majority of the world's Jewish population was, as Anne said, "at the mercy of the cruelest monsters ever to walk the earth." Led by Adolf Hitler, these "monsters" caused Anne's Jewish family and friends to go into hiding for fear of oppression and death. The play first showed in 1955, and inspired the 1959 movie of the same name.

A four-level stationary set showed the eight characters' inescapable home of two years. Painted details such as bricks, shadows and wood created a space which was realistically cramped but artistically purposeful, filled with fear and tension and as well as friendship and self-discovery. The masters behind the entirely student-made set were Kiana Davies and Gareth Davies. Doug Kelly and Aidan Murphy's lighting design and execution transitioned the set into a romantic moonlit room, a disturbing nightmare and a lifeless hold. Real radio transmissions, lifelike bombings and authentic Jewish music periodically filled the theatre thanks to sound technician Braden Welsh. Paired with Brittney Bilesky's special effects, including projections of real Nazi propaganda, the technology in The Diary of Anne Frank helped the audience imagine the lives of the eight annexed citizens.

Anne Frank is known to many as the young writer who suffered the Holocaust, but Nicole Murphy showed the audience that Anne was just like them. She too envied her sister, idolized her father and had her first kiss. At the beginning of the play, Murphy jumped around and shrieked like a 13-year-old girl; at the end of the play, Murphy spoke like a 15-year-old

wise beyond her years. Patrick Cassidy played Anne's loving father, the sole survivor of the war. Cassidy personalized his character with consistent tone of voice and posture suited to Mr. Frank. Cameos by Doug Kelly and Tyler Boessenkool left an impact on the audience despite their little stage time.

The Holocaust is a something known to most, but few can really visualize what it was like. Archbishop Jordan's students showed how relatable the characters of The Diary of Anne Frank are despite their situation, and exposed the audience to the shrill atmosphere of the cluttered annex. A lasting impression was instilled of the passion of Anne Frank and her virtue of seeing the best in a bad situation.

### **Cappies review #3**

#### **Mark Soriano**

#### **Ross Sheppard High School**

Persecution, anti-Semitism and injustice ran rampant during the Holocaust. Tensions between nations increased, and the world was in the midst of another devastating world war. The situation became seemingly hopeless, and it was hard to believe that help would ever come. However, one young girl hiding up in an attic with her family continued to show optimism even in the direst of times.

Her story was brought to life by Archbishop Jordan High School with their production of The Diary of Anne Frank, perhaps the most famous Holocaust story that highlights the humanity and strength of the oppressed.

The student production was adapted from the 1947 book Diary of a Young Girl, which chronicles the story of Anne Frank and her family as they go into hiding in the Netherlands to escape from Nazi persecution.

The actors of the production remained dedicated to her story, and the cast stayed in-character even during intermission.

The production showed commitment to keeping the story accurate from the checkered diary of Anne Frank to the traditional Hebrew songs sung during Hanukkah which brought realism to this powerful production.

Nicole Murphy as Anne Frank embodied the character's seemingly boundless energy, and effectively portrayed her optimism and her desire for future greatness. Murphy and Stefan

Overgaard as Peter Van Daan had chemistry with their delightfully awkward encounters as their characters continued to mature as teenagers.

Amy Klingspon as Mrs. Van Daan, the sassy resident with a sharp tongue, and Sheldon Wanke as the awkward Mr. Dussel commanded comedic timing and displayed their dramatic ability during times of distress.

Ambitious and unique, the period set contained four storeys, which gave an interesting dynamic in the production. As the spotlight focused on the actions of characters in one room, actors in other rooms continued to stay in-character.

Projections designed by Brittney Bilesky and sounds designed by Braden Welsh worked together effectively to immerse the audience into what life is like during the Second World War.

As the show ended, the audience arose with a standing ovation for the actors who brought the story of Anne Frank to life.

Archbishop Jordan's powerful production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* showed the utmost respect toward the victims of the Holocaust, and reminded us of the injustices and atrocities of war.

#### **Cappers review #4**

#### **Robyn Slobodan**

#### **Strathcona Christian Academy**

Fifteen-year-old Anne Frank is a living skeleton of her former spirited self, last seen through a barbed wire fence, naked, her head shaved, and crawling with lice. Utterly powerless, her forlorn father clutches her diary with trembling hands, recounting the last days of his dearest wife Edith and daughters Margot and Anne, who died of either exhaustion or typhus mere days before the Nazi camps were liberated. Casting his blurry eyes on the diary and raising it up, a quivering Mr. Frank states, "All that remains."

Anne Frank paints a heart-wrenching picture through the haunting pages of her diary as she describes the precarious teetering of her new secluded reality between unshakable hope and unavoidable fear. Opening on Broadway in 1955, this true story documents the lives of the Frank family after the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands. They are forced to go into hiding in the confines of a small annex they cannot leave. From the almost unbearable closeness of

eight individuals cooped up in an attic for more than two years to being physically ripped from each other's arms forever, the cast and crew of Archbishop Jordan High School crafted an unforgettable retelling of The Diary of Anne Frank.

An unparalleled perception of reality was created through the unique intermission, which involved all actors remaining onstage to improvise, refusing to fracture the world of the play for even a second and capturing for the audience the claustrophobia of the annex inhabitants.

One urban myth dictates that during a performance of this production, the lead actress playing Anne was so atrocious that when the Nazi officers burst into the annex, the audience shouted with glee, "She's in the attic!" The complete opposite was true of Nicole Murphy's portrayal of Anne, which left audience members physically aching to scramble onstage and smuggle Anne away into their own homes, no matter the consequence.

Although it takes a year and half for them to truly talk, Peter Van Daan (Stefan Overgaard) and Anne more than make up for lost time, meeting secretly in the attic to sneak smooches and gaze at the moon. Their precious romance evoked giggles combined with the strained hope that what is anxiously awaited upon — whether it be a first kiss or the end of the war — will eventually come true.

Imagined, designed and created entirely by students Kiana Davies and Gareth Davies, the set was four levels of intricate and meticulously planned perfection. The use of scratchy radio broadcasts and projected visuals of Hitler and other propaganda brought the Holocaust so terrifyingly close it was impossible to look away.

One of the other inhabitants of the cramped annex, Mr. Van Daan (Kris Pittet), exclaims to Anne, "What have you got to write about that's so important all the time? How much does a 13-year-old have to say?" This cast and crew proved why thousands of diaries survived the war, but none had the same impact. Shalom, Anne Frank.

### **Cappies review #5**

**Josephine Chua**

**Ross Sheppard High School**

The sound of the carillon bells rings through an attic. Fear, hope, innocence and uncertainty linger in the expressions of those who reside in it, even as the ringing of the bells fades

away. Outside, a war rages on. Archbishop Jordan tackles the moving play of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

Written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, newly adapted by Wendy Kesselman, the play *Diary of Anne Frank* premiered on Broadway in 1955. Based on the journal of Anne Frank: *the Diary of a Young Girl*, the play follows the story of a young Jewish girl during the Holocaust. Having to escape from Nazi soldiers, eight people take refuge in a storage attic. Isolated in the small closure, tension builds quickly and the fear of being discovered grows with each long passing day. Amid the horror of it all, 13-year-old Anne Frank keeps her best friend — the diary — at hand, penning her thoughts while battling demons with her own wit and hope. This Pulitzer-prize-winning play brings forth the themes of growing up, love, selfishness but most of all, the tragedy of oppression.

Archbishop Jordan students supported one another as they effectively contrasted their characters' unique personalities. The cast was able to transition smoothly through the various moods that occur, whether it be humour or grief, while at the same time, maintaining the challenging grim undertones of its reality. Research had been done well to stay faithful to the aspects of the story.

Much praise goes toward Nicole Murphy for the portrayal of Anne Frank, creating a convincing depth to the character. Constantly exploring her surroundings, while rambling on her lines with natural ease, Murphy displayed the mischievous and curious side of Anne Frank. With a clear voice, she revealed the thoughtful girl who grows up much too fast. Mr Frank was played by Patrick Cassidy, whose purposeful stooped shoulders delivered the heavy-burdened but peace-loving father of Anne.

Another strong performance was Kelsey Bryant as Mrs. Frank. She carried herself with the air of a proper woman, but also a vulnerable mother who longs for the love of her daughter. Stefan Overgaard took on the role of the insecure Peter Van Daan. He didn't shy away from being the awkward adolescent boy falling in love and drew many good-hearted chuckles from the audience.

The beautiful and detailed sets, designed by Kiana Davies and Gareth Davis, accurately matched the time period. Its worn out green walls with various shades created shadows and captured the fearful mood which crept around them. The lighting crew handled the many difficult lighting cues well, complementing the atmosphere created. The lighting further assisted in creating the realism of having different areas of the attic.

Archbishop Jordan's successful portrayal of *The Diary of Anne Frank* certainly touched the hearts of the audience.

