

The High School View

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Thespians enveloped in award letters

By Sophie Lew

The students of the high school's Theater II class returned from the preliminary round of the the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild Festival (MHSDG) with a victory and will now proceed on to the semifinals.

Last Saturday the students, along with director Kate Murray, traveled to Attleboro High School to compete in the festival. There were seven schools that performed at that specific location.

The high school was one out of three high schools that came out victorious in the preliminary round. They performed their original play Letters. Now they will advance onto the semifinals and then possibly onto the finals.

"It was an amazing performance," said Janis Whightman, head of the Performing Arts Department.

The rules of the festival were strict and provided a wel-

coming challenge for the students involved. Each group was given 40 minutes to present their play and five minutes before to set-up and five minutes after to break down the set. If any part of the play including the set-up or breakdown exceeded the time limits, the group would be disqualified.

"We were really concerned this year," said Kate. "Our play ran one minute over the 40 minutes allowed during our last practice. Amazingly in their festival performance they got it down to about

36. I am going to make them slow it down a bit for the next round."

Another challenge that the actors faced within the performance was quickly transitioning between different characters as each actor played at least two roles.

Letters is an abstract play written by the students in the high school's Theater II class. It came from many different exercises including discussions about play writing and structure, long and short form improvisation, and writing practices. The class

learned how to create solid plots, character descriptions, and studies the differences between character driven and plot driven plays.

In the end the class split into two groups and each group wrote character descriptions. They took four or five of those characters and described them in detail and created a play around them. When both groups were finished, they took the two plays from each group and shared them.

"The funny thing with these groups was that the plays were easily mended together," said Kate. "Using that script, along with pieces from our improvisational work, Letters was born."

It focuses on a young man named Mo who is of both Saudi Arabian and Southern heritage. His father is Saudi but Mo grows up in his mother's home in West Virginia. Mo becomes a marine and goes to Iraq. "The play travels from Mo's family to scenes in Iraq to an Amish family in West Virginia to scenes in a hospital psych ward," said Kate. "And then there are these other abstract scenes that are basically the chaos in Mo's mind."

"The abstract part traverses time and space between past and present and possibly reality," said Kate. "We don't know if he's alive or dead or what's happening, audi-

ence members have to make their own interpretation of it."

Abstract playwrighting is one of the many genres that the Theater II class works with. "It is one of my favorite styles," said Kate. "I really like playwrights that make the audience think. I also think it is a challenging thing for high school students to work with."

It has not been performed on the Island yet. But, the drama department plans to exhibit it locally in the near future. Details will be posted on the school's website soon.

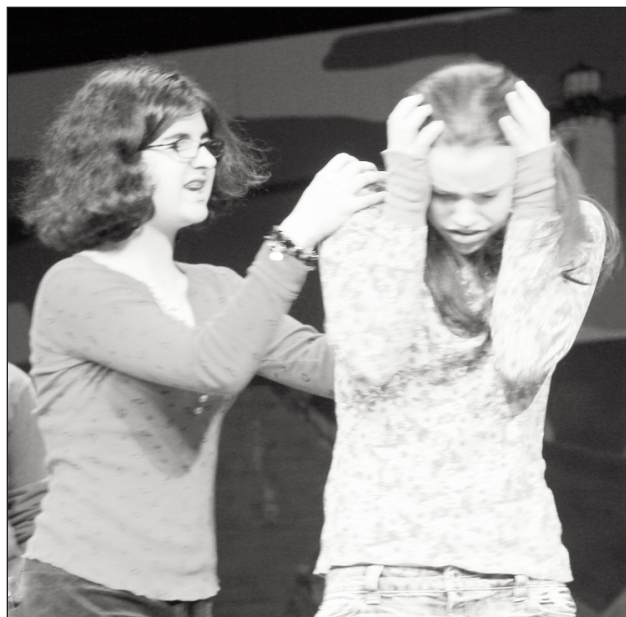


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Left: Freshman Clara Corjulo, who plays Nurse Allen comforts Nell played by senior Katie Clarke. Right: The students from the high school's Theater II class gather to celebrate their success in the preliminary round of the competition.

Mind the gap

By Kayla Montambault

They began their journey like Jack Kerouac did a generation before, on the open road. Last fall, while most regional high school graduates where nervously greeting new roommates and trying to get to their college 101 classes on time, three regional high school alumni left the Island in pursuit of a classroom without walls.

Lucas Emin, Seth Seeman, and Ben Williams chose to defer their respective college acceptances and spend the year traveling around the country and the world, instead of enrolling immediately in college.

Traditionally, high school students planning to continue their educations enter college directly after graduation; however, gap years are becoming increasingly popular in the high school.

More and more students are

opting to take a year off to discover what interests them most before they continue their education.

"It depends on the person for whether you should take a year off," said Seth Seeman. "I don't think it's ever a bad idea, but you need to make sure you get something out of it."

Seth is spending his gap year traveling in the United States, France, and Italy where he attends culinary programs in local cuisine. His first stop was The Sushi Chef Institute in Los Angeles, California where he spent two months studying Japanese cuisine.

Seth took advantage of the Institute's California location by driving cross-country with friends. "We drove 3,200 miles in 48 hours, not stopping except for Subway sandwiches, red bulls, and fuel," said Seth.

After The Sushi Chef Institute, Seth attended a month-long program in Agde, France where he studied French language, pastry and cuisine. He is now attending a

similar program in Florence, Italy that focuses on Italian language, cuisine, and wine. Seth deferred from Skidmore College and will be attending in the fall.

Lucas Emin graduated a semester early from the high school and spent the next months until graduation snowboarding in Colorado and traveling with high school Irish Studies teacher Elaine Weintraub's Irish history class to Ireland. After working through the summer, Lucas spent six weeks hiking along the Appalachian Trail in North Carolina with fellow classmate Micah Thanhauser. Lucas will be attending Marlboro College in the fall.

"I decided to defer because I didn't want to wait any longer to see and experience things," said Lucas. "I was itching to see anything I wasn't familiar with."

In addition to traveling, some students decide to take time off in order to make money. Ben Williams worked through the fall in order to make enough money to

travel around the country. Now he's visiting many of the major U.S. cities, staying with relatives, college freshman, and in youth hostels across the country. He will attend Reed College in the fall.

Although they are missing out on traditional academic learning, graduates who take a gap year tend to feel that they experience a different type of learning that cannot be experienced in a classroom. "People are going from K to 22 and all they've done is be in school," said Ben. "I feel more mature knowing what I like and what interests me, and I have a whole new perspective on what the world is like now, and how it's important to be free."

There are many challenges that students face in going out into the world directly after high school. "The most difficult thing from this experience was a new feeling I encountered," said Lucas. "For the first time I felt older, but in a different way than I ever have. I was no longer feeling like a kid, but

desperately wanting that safety back. Like a vulnerability, having no help but having to deal."

Yet as difficult as coming face to face with his own impending adulthood was, these new feelings and experiences proved invaluable to his learning about himself. "The reward was in dealing with it and finding out what you're capable of," said Lucas.

Aside from the emotional difficulties of a gap year, there are many other challenges. "Trying to get by in Europe with one real language and a little butchered French has been embarrassing," said Seth. "In many towns and train stations it will take you a lot of time and a bit of charades to communicate."

Said Lucas, "I was so ready to run off into the wilderness or buy a one way plane ticket somewhere, but now I want that opportunity of smart people whose job it is to teach me. Now I see college as an opportunity, not an obligation."

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