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arts

Existentialism, mirroring make “No Exit” into gem

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“No Exit” is an outstanding rendition of the original play written by Jean-Paul Sartre. This performance surprised me very much, the more I found out about “No Exit”, the more wary I became.

I was wrong, very wrong, in my trepidation. “No Exit” is an amazing display of imagination, talent, and direction. From the first moment, it captured my attention and interest. I was captivated until the lights came back on, signaling the end of the production.

Upon entering the auditorium, the sounds of clanking chains and rushing wind filled my ears. I was overwhelmed by the feeling of the scene to another place. Anticipation built. Lights dimmed, music faded, the light shining on the stage brightened, and I knew that this was going to be a dynamic play.

It begins with three people, one man, Garcin, played by senior Craig Brooks; and two women, one played by junior Anna Gagne-Hawes; and Inez, played by senior Jenny Schlotfeldt. The three characters recently died and are living out eternity in hell with only each other for company. They are trapped in a room with three chairs, referred to as sofas, eternal light, and no torturer or anything that might resemble the traditional image of hell as portrayed in “Dante’s Inferno.” The three soon discover that they were put together for a reason. Each person acts as a torturer to the other characters—about their lives and the sins

that placed them in hell.

Though subtle, there is a concept of “mirrors” explored throughout this play through the existentialism theme. Existentialism is a 20th century philosophy that stresses that humans are free to do as they wish, but are responsible for their actions. This is the concept of the play, “No Exit” and the point of Butoh dance. The mirror theme is further explored by putting on two performances at once, “No Exit” and “Huis Clos” the Butoh dance performance. Though they are held on opposite stages, the divider that is usually closed making two separate stages, is partially open creating a mirror effect for audiences on either side.

The concept of using the Butoh dance performance in the background as a mirror effect for the play, and also as a background for “Huis Clos,” was a good idea, but the execution was a little faulty. I found the Butoh performance in the background of “No Exit” more distracting and detracting from the play than complementary toward the play. It was distinctly separate and had its own storyline that did not correspond with the storyline of the play. However, when “No Exit” and “Huis Clos” were combined it did add a certain intrigue, and the finally joined separate performances unified and made sense.

Although “No Exit” may sound a bit boring to some, be assured that it is not so. This performance is a hidden gem. It is entertaining, intriguing and captivating for all audiences of all ages and genres.