

Review for Women of Wallace directed by Kat Swank
By Dustyn Martincich

I saw the closing performance of Women of Wallace in the Tustin Black Box theatre. Kat Swank's directing first years offered our Bucknell audiences and our incoming students a great chance to collaborate, connect, and get introduced to our Department of Theatre and Dance. I'm only commenting on the production and not the process, as I was not part of that discussion. For me, there were many strengths in the final production. The energy and cohesion of the cast was palpable, which is a testament to the director's building an ensemble. The relationship between the grandmother and Wallace remained consistent and endearing; the actors playing each role seemed comfortable and like they were listening to each other most. There were clear choices that demonstrated risk-taking on the part of the director: the abstract nature of the mother's death in conjunction with costume and lighting choices; staging the tomato upstage and dowstage; following the photos that offer metaphor of memory; staging repetition in Wallace's monologue.

I was left with the following questions: Why is Wallace connected to his mom? Dad? What was part of this backstory that was discussed with the actor? How is the connection with his Grandma flushed out elsewhere in the play- perhaps in the healthy relationship toward the end- could there have been a similarity in staging between the two? This is a complicated part of the character, but how to can the director help the young actor get through the pseudo-misogyny of Wallace- the director discuss the oedipal connections, especially considering the other show in the fall season. There were some missed some opportunities with the psychologist in terms of relationships or at least some physical expression that could supplement limited and literal text. How could Wallace's evolving psychosis translated physically- beyond the Jon-isms... are there other physical objects, costuming, specific gestures, etc that could help him shed some of these habits ? Is there a way to empower women, to allow them to take ownership in scenes, to feel less disposable given that it's Wallace's POV- rhia How can you deepen the female characters' gravitas... beyond "whore" "sage" or other archetypal roles? Are there other points to make for abstract staging like the tomato and mother's death? To tie these moments together? Anything to bring back the mom in another way?

Congratulations on a clearly collaborative showcase experience! It was a challenging text that made room for a lot of female-gendered characters, but really was about the only man. That is challenging in itself.