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Mr. Bengford
Drama 1
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Noises On!

On Wednesday October 15, 2008, I saw a play called “Noises Off.” It was written by Michael Frayn and presented by the San Jose City Lights Theatre Company at The City Lights Theater. This 1982 farce is about a bad company putting on a bad play badly. Thrown in are some romances, misunderstanding, and nerves from a life of performing, and you have a hilarious show.

During the show, I very much enjoyed the performance of Daniel Mitchell, who played the character of Tim Allgood, an overworked technician and lackey. Mitchell took his character to the top, adding ticks, nervous habits, and panicked expression the entire show. During the first act, Tim has been working for days on end on the set for the show, so he is very sleep deprived. He stumbled around wide-eyed, delusional, shaking, and randomly popping up completely unaware of the situation (like when he fell asleep while fixing a door onstage during the dress rehearsal.) During the second act (after a LONG nap) he was designated errand boy, and was ordered around, while taking care of missing actors, flowers for an affair that was not his, and an opening night. Mitchell would show his characters distress by rolling his eyes, squeaking to clear his voice before telling the audience to take their seat, and running about. Lastly, in the third act, he fills in for actors, who show up late, shakes and makes guttural noises when he develops stage fright, and over all goes about with an expression similar to a student who has taken all AP classes.

I also rather enjoyed the performance of Charles McKeithan, who played Frederick Fellowes, a dim, well-meaning actor. To show off his dim character, whenever he pondered, such as when he was trying to think of his objective, he would wrinkle his forehead, or scratch his head. He would also smile at any possible moment, to show his character's good-natured disposition. One thing that particularly stood out to me though happened during the two ten-minute long intermissions. McKeithan would come out, not in costume, and lead the real technicians of the play turn the set around. He was what the Westmont Drama Department would call bi-techual, an actor and a tech. Since this matinee was for schools, this act showed the young audience that technicians are very important, and the actors should help out. So aside from playing his character well, he also worked for the good of the show, as the Thespian Pledge tells students.

In addition to the excellent work of Daniel Mitchell and Charles McKeithan, there were many technical aspects to the show. The sound and lights were all on cue, and the audience could hear and see everyone. The props were comical, and fit with the idea that this was a bad play, thus having bad props. I remember the sardines resembling squishy toys, which absolutely fit the show. The costumes were not extraordinary, but again, the props, lights, and costumes all have to reflect how bad this play within play really is. The set was another matter however; it was magnificent. The entire set was on wheels and could be reversed, which was no small feat given the size of it. There were many levels, doors, stairs, a couch, a television, a phone, and a window. It was built extraordinarily. It was a little bit shaky, but it was still safe and it was not distracting.

I enjoyed this highly hilarious farce. It showed the hi-jinks of the theatre world wrapped up in a show. I especially enjoyed the physical acting during the second act.

This play achieved its goal, to put on a good show about a bad company doing a bad play badly. The noises were definitely on.