

Holocaust diary remains unforgettable



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Review

Overlooking a canal in central Amsterdam stands the narrow row house where Anne Frank and her family hid out from the Nazis in a 600-square-foot secret annex for two years.

Last year, more than 1.2 million visitors stood in a long line to view the Anne Frank House and

the musty past of her final days. Friday night, performing in front of an audience of 60, the Steel City Theater Company brought her story to life.

The 13-year-old Anne Frank is dynamically portrayed by Akaisha Gonzalez, expressing both the energy and philosophical musings of young Anne. Her palpable connection with fellow actor Cenon Caramanzana, playing Peter Van Daan, emphasizes the budding romance that is often contrasted by the stark and long silences that fill the stage.

In the first act, the

group contemplates whether or not to admit a local dentist Mr. Dussel, whereby Mr. Frank responds with the most powerful line of the play: "If we can save only one person, we must!"

The introduction of Austin Decker as the bright-faced Mr. Dussel adds energy to the ensemble, and his joy at being rescued quickly turns dark while calmly explaining the bleak and terrible reality regarding the machinations of human extermination.

Perhaps the most historically relevant mo-

ment comes when Jason Laughrey, as Anne's father Otto Frank, pauses in the spotlight while handing his daughter a blank diary. However, it is his heart-wrenching soliloquy at the conclusion of the play that leaves one emotionally exhausted, whispering through tears that Anne's diary is "all that remains" of his family.

The sound effects resonate throughout the play, offering a constant reminder of the terror waiting outside. The tolling bell tower, the marching cadence of approaching boots, air-raid sirens,

snippets from Hitler's speech and updates from Eisenhower all provide an anxious tension.

Andrea Garrett's production is a story of resilience and determination, one that cannot be forgotten. Do not underestimate the power of this tremendous performance, perhaps all too relevant for me having lost so many family members in the concentration camps.

I've seen the German bureaucratic documentation, sheets and sheets of paper titled with my family's name listing their final destination: Aus-

chwitz, Dachau, and Anne Frank's terminal stop, Bergen-Belsen. Given today's political climate, the play forces us to ask ourselves, who is the Syrian Anne Frank? Who is Sudanese Anne Frank?

Only a few tickets remain for Sunday's show, and the Steel City Theater Company should be applauded for boldly choosing this sorrowful and poignant play. Hopefully, plays like "The Diary of Anne Frank" will remind us that past atrocities, stemming from fear and hatred, cannot be permitted to continue today.