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Washington-Lee's 'Anne Frank' Shows Poise

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As Otto Frank held his little girl's diary, the lights began to dim and enchanting music played. Suddenly, a girl's voice could be heard on stage; Anne Frank was ready to tell her story. Washington-Lee High School's production of "The Diary of Anne Frank" had begun.

The story, which takes place during the Holocaust, follows the Frank family over two years of hiding from the Nazis. The original show opened on Broadway in 1955, a decade after World War II ended. It received a Tony Award for best play in 1956 and a Pulitzer Prize in drama the same year.

The Washington-Lee cast made good use of the award-winning material. Morgan Sendek displayed talent as Anne Frank. Whether she was nagging Mr. Dussel, gossiping with Mrs. Van Daan or trying to find herself as a 13-year-old, Sendek's character development and actions were completely plausible.

Ahmad Helmy displayed warmth and caring in his portrayal of Otto Frank. Helmy perfected the cool, collected, fatherly image with flair.

Zach Bowman made for a great addition to the ensemble as Mr. Dussel, an elderly unmarried dentist. Working the comedic aspects of his character, Bowman used every moment to his advantage. Although certainly not the biggest role in the show, Bowman made it a memorable one. And Caleb Wroblewski as Peter Van Daan did a superb job of expressing confidence.

The set, designed by Maria Raffaele, consisted of multiple rooms. A dramatic yet simple lighting design by Mollie Welborn added to the professional-looking set. Joan Cummins's stage crew was unobtrusive and made for a smooth show.

The Washington-Lee cast performed "The Diary of Anne Frank," set against the backdrop of one of the most horrible and chaotic events in history, with distinguished beauty and poise.

Michael Ariale

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Morgan Sendek, as Anne Frank, and Ahmad Helmy as Anne's father, Otto Frank, in the Washington-Lee production. (Photos By John McDonnell -- The Washington Post)

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