

IN THE DARK REVIEWS

North Mason's 'A Wrinkle in Time' deserves to be experienced

North Mason High School's theater students embarked on a bold experiment when they and their faculty director set out to assemble a virtual adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's 1962 novel "A Wrinkle in Time" via Zoom video conferencing. While they're the first to admit that the results, livestreamed on the evenings of March 11, 12 and 13, were hardly glitch-free, the results were compelling enough that I'd like to see their efforts continue.

It was miraculous these theater kids were able to make this play production happen at all, with everyone in different locations on internet connections with wildly varying degrees of reliability, with cast members responsible for supplying their own costumes and staging backgrounds, and with Hilary Gennaro, who teaches fine arts, English and language arts at North Mason High School, directing the students and editing the video together, complete with sound effects.

Like Gennaro, I read "A Wrinkle in Time" as a child, and I enjoyed the Ava DuVernay-directed movie adaptation in 2018, but it might not have been my first choice for a stage play adaptation, if only due to the scope of what the novel often describes.

L'Engle's science fiction was such high-concept stuff that, unless a production can bring a multimillion-dollar blockbuster budget to bear in

rendering it, the best approach in a live-action adaptation really is to tackle it from the other end of the telescope, as a stripped-down Thornton Wilder-style showcase for the actors' emotive abilities and the ideas involved, without sets, scenery and minimal props.

Speaking as a former high school theater kid, I'll agree with the preface that Gennaro added to this production, in which she pointed out how hard it can be for an actor to deliver a well-rounded performance without having the reactions from an audience or cast members. However, these young dramatists somehow stayed in sync with one another, to the point that I never felt like I was watching separate recorded clips being spliced together.

Everyone on screen was feeding off each other's energy, in a good way, and even managed a few screen-to-screen physical "handoffs" of minor props that felt seamless.

This cast reminds me of a fledgling version of Orson Welles' "Mercury Theatre on the Air" radio company, because the limited window of time they had to assemble this production lends it a hectic vibe, and like so many shows from the so-called "Golden Age of Radio," it's essentially recorded live-to-tape.

Some minor stumbles occurred along the way, but the briskness of the narrative's pace turns it into a tango, so whenever our young actors get

tangled up, they possess the wisdom to brush it off and tango on.

The production's occasional technical difficulties are well-suited to the nature of the material, with the slightly grainy video quality and intermittent touches of lag heightening the dreamlike atmosphere and already suitably alien performances of a number of the actors, just as the simplicity of resorting to identically blank face masks for the inhabitants of Camazotz underscores their unnatural uniformity far better than more complex props or costumes could.

I must commend Gennaro for devoting the opening to broadcasting the play's program, thereby introducing us fully to each actor. I was particularly impressed by the work of junior Natalie Boad as the chipper polyglot Mrs. Who, junior Aurora Chambers as both the precocious Charles Wallace and his chillingly IT-possessed counterpart, sophomore Terrell Vanorsby as the sensitively introspective Calvin O'Keefe, and senior Ashea Sedgwick as the ever-frustrated and self-critical Meg Murry.

Although this assembled production was borne of broader contemporary necessities, I'd love to see North Mason High School students employ such mixed media to launch even more ambitious experiments in the future. In the meantime, if there's a way the rest of the public could watch NMHS's "A Wrinkle in Time," now that its three-night run is done, it would be worth it.



By **KIRK BOXLEITNER**

Market: Artists draw inspiration from Hood Canal

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sights, whether it's George Stenberg's photography of the Olympics, or watercolors of the fog when it lifts, or even turned bowls made of cedar from Lilliwaup," Leggett said. "Creative people have been flocking to this area for ages to be drawn from the transient poetry of the sky and the water together."

Leggett and several fellow artists previously had to travel far to sell the wares crafted in tribute to this locale, but she's heartened that she can now invite those artists and those interested in seeing their work to the same place.

The Union City Market is online at unioncitymarket.com and on Instagram at "unioncitymarket." For more information, email info@unioncitymarket.com.



Top: Among the art available at the Union City Market are hand-painted oars that have been repurposed as home decor. Left: The Union City Market offers a variety of artwork and crafts from people inspired by their surroundings.

Courtesy Photos

The Northwest Playwrights Alliance & KGY present a recreation of the July 1920 opening night festivities for the Hotel Olympian – "The Hotel that Saved Our Capitol." After a devastating fire destroyed Olympia's largest hotel, Olympia lacked proper accommodations to house Legislators, lobbyists and visitors. The lack of a first-class hotel was used as a club against Olympia in attempts to move the Capitol to Seattle or, heaven forbid, Tacoma. Plans for a new hotel were delayed by World War I, the Spanish Influenza and a faltering economy. Just when it appeared our Capitol would be lost, over 150 private citizens pooled their resources (over \$320,000) to build a "world-class hotel."

This one-hour, 1920s-style radio recreation of the Opening Night Gala & Dance features a small orchestra, ten songs, a love story, and speeches from the major players who spoke at the original ceremony.

Written by local playwright Bryan Willis. Deane Shellman directs an all-star cast of local actors. Musical direction by Daven Tillinghast.

Donations from the broadcast will help support Harlequin Productions and Olympia Family Theater!

