

Estancia's "Whisper All The Time" is Both Hilarious and Heartbreaking!  
written by Isabella Dym, a junior at University High School

With a splendid mix of absurd comedy and heartbreaking tragedy, Estancia's "Whisper All The Time" follows siblings navigating grief and complicated relationships after their dad's deteriorating state reunites them.

Emily (Zoraida Verostek) and Greg Anderson (Benjamin Hertel) both compellingly highlight the use of humor to cope, but their thoughtfully nuanced interpretations reveal key personality differences. When discussing her parents' nagging her for being single, Emily's deliberately over-melodic inflections and self-deprecating tone convincingly portray how she mocks situations to hide her true hurt, reinforced by strikingly discordant smiles and laughter. Meanwhile, Greg's flippant shrugs, comedically clueless voice choices, and brief cracks in his detached facade impressively illustrate his desire to appear largely unfazed by his father's death, proving he is not fragile, but the facade falls when describing his last moments with his father.

Michael Anderson (Zahari Zavaleta) commands the stage with an aggressive presence cleverly cultivated by loud vocals and intimidating postures, effectively asserting himself as the siblings' leader. His clenched fists and jaw expertly communicate his confrontational tendencies, especially before it culminates in a brawl with Greg. When he finds out his dad was proud of him, he shrinks into himself, softens his voice, and bows his head, poignantly reflecting his emotional conflict.

Derrick Laster brilliantly encapsulates Ben Anderson's complexities with subtle, natural acting choices that depict his inner turmoil. His open palms, intentional pauses, and furrowed brows skillfully characterize his vulnerability. When recalling his father saying he believed in him, he drops his shoulders and purses his lips to persuasively express his efforts to restrain his emotions, especially with his careful, trembling tone.

The props team makes the household feel cozy and authentically lived-in. The bookshelf, adorned with vintage books, framed family pictures, and an antique clock, emphasizes the character's deep connection to their childhood home. The unwrapped boxes interrupt that warm nostalgia, symbolizing the siblings' unprocessed grief as if the house's life is incomplete.

The hair and makeup team excels in defining character personalities, dynamics, and ages through natural and realistic designs, most notably for Connie (Keila Mendez). Her slicked-back ponytail and clean makeup accentuate her polished maturity, which juxtaposes powerfully with her chaotic personal life, representing her fight for control as her affair weakens her already-estranged relationship with her husband.

Estancia's "Whisper All The Time" delivers a beautiful exploration of complex human emotions and connections!