

## **Love and Loss at Mission Viejo's "The Unloved"**

written by Mia Selvan, a junior at Dana Hills High School

Stressing the complicated nature of passion and devotion, Mission Viejo's production of "The Unloved" conveys the trials and tribulations of loving and being loved.

Whitehands (Kayla Holliday), who acts as the narrator, is the picture of elegance and sophistication. Perfectly poised from head to toe, Holliday's movements are slow and calculating. Every flick of her wrist has intention, and she scans the room with her eyes with great intensity and laser focus. With pursed lips and her gaze tipped slightly forward, Holliday electrifies the stage whenever she speaks.

The ensemble, referred to as the Unloved, traipse around the stage and throughout the audience wandering aimlessly and passing out notes expressing their loneliness, staying completely in character. The Unloved are equally perplexing and captivating.

Jacob Beaver and Kaylia Pham demonstrate their incredible musicality through their choreography. Not only does the choreography in every dance piece convey emotion, but it also continues to tell a story through movement. Beaver and Pham incorporate a fusion of multiple dance styles and embraced the time period of the 1960s as inspiration. Their execution of these dance pieces is equally impressive, as Iseult (Kaylia Pham) and Tristan (Jacob Beaver) are able to express their emotions through actions rather than words. Pham's beautiful body placement and extensions are complemented by Beaver's agility and commanding stage presence.

The Heartbreakers Band is crucial in truly transforming the set to feel like a 1960s nightclub. The bass, drums, guitar, and voices of the singers all blend together to become the perfect soundtrack for Tristan and Iseult's romance. The band performs songs all correlated to love, loss, or heartbreak, staying true to the themes of the play.

The costumes are beautifully executed by Emily Collins and McKenna Dement. Each piece fits the style of the 1960s and there is beautiful incorporation of color symbolism. Iseult wears the same vintage dress three different times in three different colors and patterns. The dresses represent her priorities and emotions at that point in time. Whitehands is dressed in white head to toe with white gloves to match. Her sunglasses and off the shoulder dress are sleek and elegant much like the character herself.

Mission Viejo High School's "The Unloved" is a cohesive artistic experience. Expressive choreography and music combine with powerful acting to capture the extreme things people are willing to do in order to escape the status of being unloved.