

Mater Dei's "The Diviners" is Weighty and Wistful

written by Catherine Mitchell, a freshman at University High School

A powerful bass chord resonates. A young boy is pulled under the surface of the water, gasping for air. A group of arguing townspeople in the background are oblivious. Everything moves in slow motion as the boy helplessly sinks deeper.

When C.C. Showers, a disillusioned preacher, first arrives in the southern Indiana town of Zion, it doesn't take long for him to befriend Buddy Layman, an amiable fourteen-year-old with good intentions. However, the more time they spend together, the more evident becomes Buddy's ingrained fear of water. Once Buddy is plagued with ringworm with cold water being the only form of relief, C.C. must find a way to make the boy willing to confront his worst nightmare.

Sebastian Ledesma is charming and heartrending as the disturbed Buddy. He is genuine and sympathetic, whether daydreaming about his late mother flying in the sky as an angel or clutching himself under a blanket with terror in his eyes during a rainstorm. His innocence and trust in others shows as he opens up to C.C. with his fears, hopes, and dreams.

Joshua Weed captivates the stage as C.C., compassionately interacting with Buddy using kind words and soft smiles. However, gentle motions shift into powerful ones as he grasps and shouts at a hyperventilating Buddy in the rain, telling him that his mother is gone and will never come back. His attachment to Buddy is clear when he finally pulls the boy's limp body out of the river, sobbing and praying for everything to be alright.

Darlene Henshaw (London Coco Griffin) stands out as a charismatic and comical character. She first appears rebellious and chic in front of her friends, but quickly becomes meek and proper when faced with her aunt Norma. Norma Henshaw (Cynthia Garcia) is equally amusing as an old-fashioned, conservative Christian, whether passionately preaching the wonders in the Bible or proclaiming trivial things as signs from God.

Lighting, designed by Jake Hulina, intensifies the performance effectively. Each setting, be it day, night, in a rainstorm, or underwater, is obvious with the soft hues that illuminate the stage. As Buddy's fear of water grows and recedes, so does the saturation of blue, which creates a magical effect.

Emotional and touching, Mater Dei's "The Diviners" explores the theme of love and community in a compelling production.