

Guilt Echoes in Tesoro's *The Girl in the White Pinafore*
written by Rebecca Supran, a sophomore at San Clemente High School

Some stories don't whisper - they linger. Tesoro's *The Girl in the White Pinafore* transforms a real-life disaster into a poignant meditation on guilt, grief, and redemption.

Shifting between 1937 and 1960, former superintendent William Shaw is haunted by children who perished in a natural gas explosion - especially a young girl in a white pinafore who refuses to let him forget. Past and present blur as spirits force Shaw to confront the tragedy etched into his conscience.

Addy Engelken delivers a chilling Amelia Davis with remarkable authenticity. Crossed arms, stubborn pouts, fingers twisting into her hair, and fun banter with the ensemble capture her childlike innocence, while her steady Texan accent grounds the role. Yet it's her ghostly transformation that truly stands out - a subtle head tilt, widened eyes, and eerie nursery rhymes that turn sweetness sinister. With strong stage presence and impressive vocals, Engelken makes Amelia both endearing and unforgettable.

Zach Alweheiby delivers a gripping performance as Mr. Shaw in the 1960s timeline, portraying a man unraveling beneath crushing guilt. Hunched in his wheelchair with trembling hands and sudden, sharp outbursts, he radiates nervous intensity. Even in silence, Alweheiby's portrayal of Shaw's torment is impossible to ignore.

Sienna Sleichter infuses Mary Davis with a gentle yet steadfast motherly presence that makes the family feel achingly authentic. Her chemistry with Isaiah Medina as John Davis is deeply convincing, from tender domestic moments, clutching John's shirt and speaking in a soothing voice, to the harrowing aftermath of tragedy. Her piercing scream upon discovering Amelia's body is unforgettable, instantly silencing the audience.

Led by Caitlyn Willoughby, the set crew constructed a towering, multi-leveled structure frozen in the moment of explosion - chairs suspended midair, charred walls splintered with wood and concrete, a design ready to collapse. Despite its precarious appearance, the set remained maneuverable, allowing actors to navigate through the wreckage. Lighting, led by Emily Palmer, deepens the emotional landscape, bathing pre-tragedy scenes in warm oranges and yellows before washing the 1960s aftermath in somber purples. During the explosion, Palmer's strobing blue lights collide with Aminah Sesay's piercing high-pitched sound design, filling the theater and leaving the audience breathless.

Fueled by fearless performances and unflinching emotion, Tesoro's *The Girl in the White Pinafore* proves that powerful theater doesn't just tell a story - it leaves an imprint.