

## **A Powerful Story of Love and Loss at Laguna Hills' Infinite Black Suitcase**

written by Kat Cheng, a sophomore at Crean Lutheran High School

Laguna Hills presents an emotional and insightful production that explores concepts surrounding death and the essence of coping with grief through the weaving of three storylines over the course of a single day.

The performance opens with Stan Kalinski (Dylan Glatfelter) striking up an intense argument following the suicide of his brother-in-law. Glatfelter seamlessly switches between suppressed anger and fervent denial, eventually breaking down in helplessness as he struggles to dress his emotionless and dazed sister-in-law, Janie (Kai Hoover).

Terminally ill Dan Hanlon (Henry Gray) faces the prospect of mortality and leaving his lover behind. Laying slumped in a hospital bed, Gray cracks jokes with a dry humor and gestures with drooping limbs. When seeing his boyfriend for the last time, Gray speaks with an emotional and regretful sorrow, consoling Stephen with a heart-rending goodbye.

As Stephen Miller, Ethan Ervais expresses a surrendered hopelessness that he strives to conceal from his boyfriend. Ervais moves between a humorous banter while visiting Dan in the hospital and a tired posture and emotional vulnerability when purchasing a grave for his lover.

As the ex-husband of cancer patient Katie Liu (Katie Romero), Joe Stricklin (Ryan Patterson) is tasked with agreeing to share custody of his daughters with her new husband. Patterson captures the brokenness of his character by using a softer and wavering tone of voice, radiating a nervous stage presence through his awkward smiles and uncomfortable laughter.

After the death of his unstable father, Frank Harper (Kevin Gramling) expresses his resentment and frustration in a surprisingly humorous conversation with the wise and comforting Father Sebastian (Teyo Jacobson). Gramling sits with a hunched posture and speaks with heaviness, later stumbling around a bar while muttering to himself in a realistic-looking drunken stupor.

Sound, featuring original compositions by Seth Whiteaker, and lighting design work together to create a sense of realism through subtle background tracks and minimalistic yellows. The projection design by Elena Sierzchula aids in tracking the passage of time by displaying a monochrome clock following scene changes.

The production was brought to life through the work of seven outstanding student directors. Through each storyline had a different director, the narrative flowed seamlessly to create an emotional and noteworthy piece.

Laguna Hills' Infinite Black Suitcase is a touching reminder to value the time we have left with the people we love most.