

St. Margaret's Talent Shines in "Radium Girls"

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St. Margaret's poignant production of "Radium Girls" is an authentic exposition of corporate greed and gender inequality which continue to plague us today. The play follows the harrowing true story of factory girls who contract illnesses from exposure to the radioactive compound radium and their battle for justice.

Sarah Pence demonstrates her skill in a gradual yet powerful transformation of factory worker Grace Fryer from a meek employee, speaking tentatively to her boss as she wrings her hands, to the fiery eyed face of a movement. When radium exposure begins to deteriorate Grace's jaw, Pence adroitly shifts her mode of expression from her mouth to her eyes, firing vindictive glares or desperately restraining a flood of tears. In a particularly painful monologue, Pence elicits pathos as her tone builds from low dejection to exasperated screams.

As tensions build, relationships crumble. Grace and her boyfriend Tom Kreider (Matthew Lizarde) initially present a heartwarming relationship nuanced with lighthearted bickering and moments of tender intimacy. Though a demanding boss, company president Arthur Roeder (Thomas Colglazier) dotes on his wife with loving smiles at home. Fear of Grace's worsening condition causes her relationship to dissolve painfully in a final exchange of despondent pleas, juxtaposed with the decay of Roeder's marriage through abusive insults which expose his questionable morals.

Accompanying Roeder is a dynamic assortment of advisers, each embodying the immoral archetype of corporate executives. Edward Markley (Nicholas Jacome) presents a sleazy company lawyer, sauntering about the stage with an unsettling grin and cocked eyebrow as he relishes in preying upon the girls. As C.B. Lee, (Conrad Kistler) hatches plans in Roeder's office with a calm, calculating tone and takes on a falsely benevolent smile while offering the girls a pittance of a payoff.

Lighting design (Espen Garner) utilizes UV lighting to elicit an eerie green glow from the radium present throughout the show, which emphasizes the substance's omnipresence and potency. When Grace describes the blinding light of the factory, the window lights grow painfully bright, creating the opportunity for an empathetic union between viewer and character.

With emotional performances and clever lighting design, St. Margaret's elicits touching pathos in its deeply affecting production of "Radium Girls."