

Crean Lutheran's "The Diary of Anne Frank"

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The terrifying reality of the Nazi occupation comes to light in the most personal, heart-felt way possible: the diary of a young girl forced into hiding. Crean Lutheran's "The Diary of Anne Frank" beautifully brings the pages to life.

We are brought to the Amsterdam annex in 1942, where the Frank and Van Daan families have just begun to live their lives in hiding. Narrated by Anne, the interactions and relationships are brought under the microscope of a thirteen year-old girl who refuses to lose hope, despite the dreary day and age.

Samantha Stokes brings light to the stage as Anne Frank. The never-ending zest for life in Stokes' bright smiles, wide eyes, and energetic movement project Anne's positive outlook on her negative situation. This also provides a stark contrast between her and her sister Margot, played by Stephanie Benson. Before any words are spoken, the sisters' expressions (a pout for Margot and an adventurous smile for Anne) immediately differentiate the two distinct personalities and ages for the girls.

Playing alongside them as Peter Van Daan, Conner Richardson provides a young love story for the books. The character growth displayed by Richardson and Stokes from shy to sweetly smitten brings a lightness to the show that helps to cope with the dense subject matter addressed by the show. Another endearing relationship is the one between Anne and her father, Otto Frank. Performed by Kyle Tunstall, Mr. Frank, with his kind facial expressions and willingness to hold his children and wife - whether it be a hug or tucking the girls in - create a man who has family as his number one concern.

The publicity team did a wonderful job not only advertising the show, but doing so respectfully in regards to the sensitive material within. Instagram story posts of costumes embellished with the yellow Star of David are cleverly captioned to emphasize the history behind the patch. The use of the yellow for the star on the poster is a subtle, yet effective way to include color without being too bold or brash.

"The Diary of Anne Frank" is no easy feat, but Crean Lutheran High School accomplishes it with skill and grace