

Theater Showcase Critique

Samuel Beckett's "End Game"

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The Dorothy Dart Center is known at Wilkes University for its velvet-curtained large theater, the music department, WCLH radio station, classrooms and offices. Yet, beneath ground level, a jewel of the Wilkes University's Department of Visual and Performing Arts lies dormant until the next presentation.

Getting to the theater creates as much intrigue as sitting through one of its performances. Access to the Black Box can be made through the side entrance on South River Street where you proceed until there is only a right or left turn. Turn left and enter the elevator. Take the elevator down to the basement. Once out of the elevator turn left, then a few feet turn right, then a quick left again. Travel down a long hallway, passing a few doors on both sides of the hall. And finally, at the last set of doors you get to the Black Box.

Enter the theater. Blackness. Total blackness. Hence the name: The Black Box. The square shaped room is completely black—walls, ceiling, and floor. There are three rows of comfortable folding chairs set in three tiers for viewing without interference. No curtain, no frills, just a simple room, with complex action.

On Saturday, April 27, the Black Box hosted *End Game*, a play by Samuel Beckett. *End Game's* questionable theme began with complete blackness. Lights revealed a man sitting in a wheelchair draped in an American flag. A few feet away were two figures covered in a white sheet. A hunched over character then

removed the covers revealing two sitting figures made to look attached by a powder blue quilt covering both their legs. Their heads

were covered in what resembled an extra large black shower cap pulled down over their faces.

The man in the wheelchair donned a black scarf over his face attached under his beret. Wilkes student Jermaine Hinkle played the part of Hamm, a bitter blind wheelchair-bound veteran stuck in a house with his two decrepit chair-bound parents Nagg and Nell, played by Dale R. Heller and Tila Paris Angley respectively, and an odd gopher named Clov played by Alexander W.P. Kashatus, who was summoned by the sound of a whistle.

Hinkle in the part of Hamm, had perfect rhythm throughout the play, especially when reciting, "And now... it's time to play... the end game." Further, when Hamm (Hinkle) called out, "Is it time for my pain killer?" It was believable that he was truly in pain.

Aside from the intrigue of the play, the acting ability of the four Wilkes' students was outstanding. Kashatus' character, Clov, was equally as impressive in its own distinct way. Clov (Kashatus) dragged his feet in



(Left to Right) Tila Paris, Dale Hellar, Jermaine Hinkle, and Alex Kashatus in Samuel Beckett's "End Game". (Beacon Photo/Adam Polinger)

well-worn slippers along the black painted wood floor of the theater each time he was called by Hamm (Hinkle) and created much depth to a simple character. His acting drew out compassion and empathy for the character he portrayed.

Quiet for most of the performance, but providing both interest and authenticity, were Nell (Angley) and Nagg (Heller). They offered the audience a spectacle of intrigue, as they lay dormant like lifeless beings.

Paul E. Mitchell directed the play while Emelia Rae was in charge of the lights.

Kashatus revealed to the audience that the cast only rehearsed a week-and-a-half before opening night. One would never know it. It is evident from the quality of the acting in the Black Box that true talent doesn't need much preparation to shine brightly.

The Black Box is a jewel waiting to be found. If given the opportunity stop by and watch a performance. You won't be sorry.