

Equus

-Alex Kerai

Over forty years ago there was a 17-year old boy living in a small town near Suffolk in England. One thing set this boy apart from others who lived in his town: he had blinded six horses. Not much else was heard about that crime, but it grew as a seed in one author's head and began to form itself as an intense fascination. What became of that boy was never made clear to the general public, but instead his crime became the center of what has now become known as one of the greatest plays of the twentieth century. *Equus* is one man's journey through the abyss of a highly disturbed young man. It is a highly complex play with issues concerning religion and sacrifice along with the clash between personal values and the expectations of the established institutions. *Equus* was written by Peter Shaffer and it examines a fictional young man who was sent to a psychiatrist for a careful mental evaluation. While he is being assessed by the psychiatrist, the views and values that were engrained upon the boy as a young child are brought to light as catalysts for his current state; and as the psychiatrist delves deeper into the psyche of his young patient, his own fragile state comes to light and threatens his career and life.

For this year's Massachusetts State Drama Festival, Marblehead High School chose *Equus* as its show. Now, *Equus* is a play meant for colleges to perform with adults, not for a high school with a cast made up of fourteen to eighteen year olds, but Marblehead High enlisted the help of the talented Steve Black as director and the skillful Greg Dana as technical director and they managed to pull it off brilliantly. They also managed to cut down a 137 minute show to a mere 37 minutes. Then came the casting. Joe Boyce threw himself into the role of Alan Strang, the disturbed young man who blinds the horses while Chris Pederson became Dr. Dysart, the psychiatrist. Emilie Soghomonian played Alan's love interest Jill Mason, a girl working at the stables and Dan Gawrys was Harry Dalton, the stable owner. The horses were portrayed by Kyra Jones, Libby Janscy, James Zissulis, Julia Taliesin, and Kim Pearson. Adam Power played Nugget, the main horse that Alan becomes obsessed with. Rachel Larson was Hesther Saloman, the magistrate who comes to Dr. Dysart for help with Alan and Tatiana Dalton and Alex Glass played Alan's parents while Alea Moscon played the Nurse. The stage crew was led by Max Levine and Biz Nuccio with light design by Mary Kauffman and sound design by Ben Webber. The music was composed by Tatiana Dalton, Olivia Gould, and Ryan Henrich and the horse masks were brilliantly made by Mary Kauffman, Becca Purchase, and Hannah Landergan.

Marblehead High School did not end up going home empty handed. Max Levine and Biz Nuccio won the Stage Manager Award; Joe Boyce and Emilie Soghomonian both won All-Star Acting Awards; Tatiana Dalton, Olivia Gould, Ryan Henrich, and Ben Webber won the sound design award; and Mary Kauffman, Becca Purchase, and Hannah Landergan won the Technical Award for Mask Design and Construction. In addition, the judges complimented Joe Boyce's portrayal of Alan Strang, calling his progression for the character "believable and chilling." Another judge complimented Chris Pedersen for his role as Dr. Dysart saying that he took on his task as of Dr. Dysart "ably and with assurance." The judges complimented Joe Boyce and Emilie Soghomonian saying that they believed that "these young people had a connection, albeit a distorted one." The judges loved the horse heads, saying that they "created such a wonderful visual for the stable scenes and that the use of the set was splendid." They concluded by saying "Good work bringing both the human and ceremonial aspects of theatre together and one

production,” and that the cast managed to combine “the human and ritualistic aspects of the theatre.”

This year’s Drama Fest was a whole day performances of theatre from seven different schools. Each show varied from the next with different plots and different genres. No two plays were alike in any way. As this was my first year at Drama Fest, it was quite a day! There were comedies, thrillers, mythical dramas, farces, historical dramas, and just plain dramas. Almost every genre had some sort of representation at Drama Fest, and it was awesome! Although *Equus* did not move on to the next round in Drama Fest, it was a fun day and an amazing experience. I think that award winning stage manager Max Levine put it best when he said, “For a really challenging show, I think that the actors really dove into it and performed to their top abilities.” But to me, it’s just disappointing that all the talent in *Equus* was not seen in the next round.

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