

'Mud' highlights student work on and off stage

GABRIEL BENSON, COPY EDITOR

UPCOMING EVENTS

Morning Chapel:
Ole Schenk
2/15 @ 10:40 AM
Hoversten Chapel

Jump Start Your
STEM Job Search
2/16 @ 8:30 AM
Hagfors Center

Morning Chapel:
Rebecca Noecker
2/18 @ 10:40 AM
Hoversten Chapel

Gilman
Scholarship
Workshop
2/19 @ 11 AM
Marshall Room

Morning Chapel:
Eric Pegues
2/19 @ 11:30 AM
Hoversten Chapel

Politics of
Empowerment
2/21 @ 6 PM
Hagfors 151



MEMBERS OF THE "MUD" CAST FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: BRENDAN TETTER, SOPHIE FINNERTY, AND JACK FISCHEL. PHOTO BY JEFF SYME.

Lauren Syme, an Augsburg senior, directed the play "Mud," written by María Irene Fornés, that tells the story of two men, Lloyd and Henry, and one woman, Mae. At the onset of the play, Lloyd and Mae live together in a small farmhouse in the Depression-era Dust Bowl. Mae, played by Sophie Finnerty, desires to be free of the simple and dirty life that she has been living with Lloyd, a mentally ill and aggressive man (played by Jack Fischel) who relies on Mae for most of his day-to-day needs. Mae brings in Henry, a neighbor played by Brendan Tetter, with whom she soon falls in love with. However, this new relationship makes Lloyd defensive, angry and even violent.

The play takes several different turns as the relationships among Mae, Lloyd and Henry change, sowing seeds of jealousy and lust. Set in a small corner of the black-box theater, the

audience is seated intimately close to the actors, close enough to reach out and touch. This space makes the audience feel the same stifled feelings that the characters do, unable to escape the room that they have been brought into.

What makes "Mud" unique is that it wasn't directed by any theater faculty; it was student-directed. Senior Lauren Syme, a theater performance major, was this year's student director.

The theater department allows students to direct their own play. In order to do this, however, they must go through a rigorous application process that involves a proposal, project parameters and a list of different potential plays which they could direct. According to the application guidelines, "The production should be 20 to 60 minutes. This time limit is to ensure that the experience is not too overwhelming for a first-time director and that you get to dig deeply into the material." "Mud" was about

an hour long, and the work and care that Syme put into directing was clear: from the set to characterization, "Mud" was definitely a show that reminds the audience of why Augsburg is so known for its theater program.

In the director's notes, Syme writes, "The rehearsal process of 'Mud' has been one of healing, collaboration and exploration ... For many of us the world of this play feels so far removed from our own, yet it depicts themes that are relevant in the U.S. today: financial and housing instability, limited access to education and limited access to health care."

Indeed, the themes of "Mud" showed just how close to home the issues of this trio of dirty farmers are. Even though, as a society, we may feel far removed from that time and place, there are still the same issues. "We also agree," Syme writes, "that even though love comes in many forms, abuse is not one of them."