

Horatio premieres at Offstage Theatre

McQuaid's new play a "sequel" to Hamlet

An exciting event is taking place in the local theatre scene. A new young playwright's first major work, *Horatio*, is playing at the Off-Stage Theatre. Author Sean McQuaid, a student at U.P.E.I., has written a clever play as a sequel to Shakespeare's most renowned work, *Hamlet*.

Horatio plays in a partial "theatre in the round", meaning the audience surrounds the acting area like the fans at a hockey game, giving the audience a chance to see the characters from all sides. The set provides a tasteful background for the action with sombre grey's and blacks accented by colourful, medieval stained glass. The costumes look great and represent the Elizabethan era well with the general exception of the footwear, which looks modern, though boots and shoes are notoriously expensive items for costume departments.

Rob MacDonald stands out as a gifted comedian in the small part of a clownish Danish ambassador and Ben Kinder performs chillingly in the role of Osric, an underhanded, ruthless hustler. Other notable performances were Matt Rainnie as the power-hungry yet guilt ridden Fortinbras and Laurie Murphy as the strong-willed yet delightful Danish noblewoman, Diana.

The thrust and parry of McQuaid's dialogue reveals an acute ear for the heated exchange. McQuaid's touching soliloquies point out a sensitivity to his characters which brings them to life, most notably the characters of Fortinbras and Horatio. His use of irony in the character of Osric is the work of an extremely intelligent writer; however, the plot took too many turns in the final act, making it somewhat difficult for the audience to follow. Ironically, Shakespeare himself crams too much action in the final scene of *Hamlet*. Perhaps both playwrights were under pressure to finish their plays.

McQuaid's *Horatio* echoes *Hamlet* copiously. The character of Horatio goes through a variation of Hamlet's madness. The Dane's now infamous hesitation scene is also vividly recalled; however, McQuaid's echoes turn to cheap mimicry when he attempts to recall the

Elizabethan word order. Verbs continually fall at the end of sentences, making some potentially nice lines sound hackneyed. As well, expressions like "A foul murder" too often become "A murder foul", making the line

To write a sequel that does justice to Shakespeare is an incredible challenge for a novice playwright. When *Horatio* simply recalls aspects of *Hamlet*, the play is a pleasure to behold; however, when McQuaid copies Shakespear-

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sound affected. McQuaid uses death-imagery like dust and worms, natural imagery like the flower and societal imagery like the beehive- all images Shakespeare uses often; however, McQuaid does not recreate the Shakespearean design within the imagery; therefore, in *Horatio*, the images tend to fall flat.

ean style, the results are unpleasant. In spite of *Horatio's* flaws, McQuaid is a sensitive and very shrewd writer. The play is filled with funny and intriguing moments due to excellent characterization and polished performances.

ED FOBES



Here we see Sean indulging in one of his favorite pastimes: hanging out with men in leotards. Seriously, that's Sean McQuaid (center), Ben Kinder (left) and Matthew Rainnie (right).