

# WITH the AUDIENCE

against the crowd

Spectators witness 12 Angry Jurors performance from a different perspective

story by m. holcomb

The lights dimmed along with the already hushed chatter. An odd anticipation was settled into every audience member which was amplified in the cast, who were hidden from sight by a single prop door that was only inches away from some audience members. One sound was missing from the unique pre-show symphony: the whooshing draw of a curtain. The audience would view the performance of 12 Angry Jurors from chairs placed within the actors' reach, up close and personal.

"What Higg is after with the audience being on stage is an experience, both for the audience and for the actors," **Kenda Fairbank** [11] said. "It's different when viewers are up in your face."

This format forced the actors to cope with the audience's closeness and ability to catch and scrutinize any mistake made by the actors, but they kept nerves of steel with divine help.

"[The audience being so close] gave me a feeling to really show emotions knowing that they were close enough to see my facial expressions," **Dusty White** [10] said. "I wasn't really nervous though because I just gave it to the Lord when we prayed backstage. I knew whatever happens is His."

To get into character before performing, the actors are taught to think the thoughts their character would as well as the emotions they would be experiencing in the time frame before the jurors enter the deliberation room.

"Behind the curtain, I'm in the play—in the story already, going through what my character is thinking," **Drew Frazier** [12] said.

"I'm bored and hot and tired, but still into the trial."

In this way, theatre production goes beyond costuming. It is about breaking out of a shell and stepping into a character's skin which may seem incompatible with how the actor behaves or thinks.

"At first, I felt super uncomfortable with whom I was acting, but then I just decided, 'Oh ok, this is my character,'" Owens said. "It's really fun though because people are like 'What the heck! Ryan?' like they don't know if it's really me. Then I'll say, 'Nah, I'm just playing!' and we'll laugh about it."

Owens played a character opposite of her own personality, but she was not the only actor to push herself on stage.

"At first, I'm supposed to be a big bully," **Cody Presson** [11] said. "Since I've been bullied a lot since elementary and now I have the chance to act that part, it's a bit uncomfortable to me. I don't want to but I have to. That's kind of what being an actor is about."

Most of the time, the emotion is written into the play's lines, and an actor doesn't have to overcompensate in order to portray the character's personality. It is important to observe real life, trust the words of the playwright and use a little imagination.

"You are able to go anywhere in the world and be anything—be a part of a story you wouldn't otherwise be a part of and impact peoples emotions," Frazier said. "For this, it is the most unique form of entertainment."

In a pose resembling Rodin's The Thinker, **Eli Hernandez** [10] observes the effects his lighting has on the mood and setting of the play. Hernandez and **Alex Evans** [10] worked the lights from above and would also provide feedback for the actors in practice. all photos by d. smith



With intensity in his expression, Juror 8 [**Drew Frazier**, 12] uses a diagram of a witness' home in order to invalidate the testimony. Jury members were either respectful and attentive or stubborn and difficult to convince of the boy's innocence.



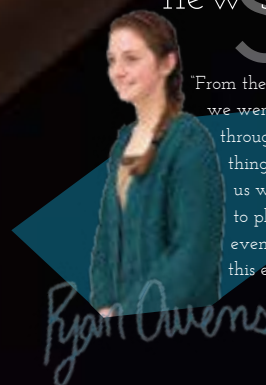
On her feet, Juror 11 [**Zoe Lambert**, 9], a European immigrant, speaks of the beauty of the American justice system. Social and political commentaries were peppered throughout the play, pointing out the victories and losses of humanity during the time period.



Hands clasped openly and emphatically, the jury foreman [**Dusty White**, 10] attempts to be the voice of reason and balance to the chaos of opinions. The group of jurors all predispositions toward the offender of the case, but through open-minded jurors like White's character, the whole jury was eventually swayed to agreement with Juror 8.

new stars emerge on stage

"From the very beginning, we were all going through the same thing. Basically all of us were brand new to plays. I'd never even seen one before this experience."



Ryan Owens

"I don't have much experience, but I like the determination Higg has and the fact that he can do great things."



Josh Feltner

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