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## **THE WOLVES: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW FROM TWO GALS WHO OUGHTA KNOW A THING OR TWO**

Allow us to set the scene: it was a crisp, fall evening. Not too cold, not too windy, some might say ideal for I don't know...a soccer game? Just chilly enough for the sweater we would later be enveloped in, emotionally shellshocked, using cardigans as a hypothermic blanket.

Location: The Eisner Center blackbox. We knew this night would mean a lot to us from the second we attempted to sit in the balcony seats, awkwardly crossing the set itself, perhaps confusing fellow audience members. Was this, too, a performance? In some ways, maybe. We were promptly bounced from the balcony seats only to find that the seating we had originally selected had been ransacked. We found other seats, though, and settled in. We could not have made it more obvious that this was our first time attending a Denison theater performance if we tried.

We had been really looking forward to this, knowing our friend Avery would be moving the crowd with her wit, visceral emotive qualities, and of course, beauty. Additionally, it was directed by two of Jax's colleagues, Sophia and Sarah. We knew it was going to be very good. We'll enjoy it, we'll go home, and our lives will continue as normal. It's just a play, right?

**WRONG.**

**SO, SO, SO WRONG.**

Naivete is a disease sweetie, get well soon bitch. Upon seeing this show, it is actually LAUGHABLE to think we thought this was going to be some cutesy, albeit emotional, sCHOOl PIAY. It's not that we were expecting AYSO, but we were served D1 artistic finesse. Nay, World Cup. Megan Rapino WISHES.

This play was so, so, fucking good. Anyone who has spent fifteen minutes with a teenager, played youth sports, or just LIVED would have been floored by the performance, writing, and direction, rendering them deeply empathetic to every character on stage even if you aren't exactly proud to understand what it's like to walk in their cleats.

The characters each in their own way demonstrated the tug-of-war we all experienced in adolescence and coming of age between a desire to grow up too quickly and the immaturity that holds us back. It's a lethal combination that, in a lot of ways, is what characterizes youth in and of itself.

Don't you remember those moments in high school with your friends and a choice arises between clandestinely downing the Kahlua in the back of someone's parents' liquor cabinet or watching Justin Bieber's SNL episode again and eating the pizza Jessica's mom ordered? And there being a true, real division within the group between the girls for whom the choice was clear (Kahlua) and the ones who shuddered at the idea of being shoved into the coat closet to makeout with that kid from your social studies class, with whom the only common ground exists is that neither of you would have walked in on your own accord. Did you ever feel like you were somehow both of those girls at once? Or neither? Regardless of which side of the aisle you fell down on then, or even now, you will undoubtedly see yourself or your own trials represented by at least one of the Wolves, if not all of them.

The chemistry between all of these actors was nothing short of remarkable and a testament to their own individual talent as well as the directorial choices by Sophia and Sarah. They existed in their roles in a way that, for audience members, effectively blurred the line...

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## CONTINUED: A REVIEW OF THE WOLVES

between reality and performance in a way that was earth-shatteringly real. You could tell that with every fiber of their beings that these actors believed in this story, believed in the story, and knew more about their characters than we could possibly dream up. At a school of Denison's size where even if we do not know all of the actors in concrete, intimate ways, we have seen each other in classes, in Slayter, just generally "around" the way everyone at Denison is, in some way or another "around". That makes for a considerably more challenging task of convincing your audience your existence, at least for the duration of the show takes shape in a different form, a different place or different time. That's nothing short of a miracle, and the kind of work necessary to fostering that kind of empathy we sometimes can really only learn through art.

Not only were these women able to convince us that were separate, fully defined individuals, they convinced us of the dynamic of a team. We hate to contribute to the stereotypes surrounding teenage girls, considering we both once were and still sometimes feel like teenage girls ourselves, but there is a certain energy that characterizes a group of young women thrust together toward a common goal, but thrust from different the positionality of different stressors, at times hindering their abilities to reconcile their lives and experiences as becoming increasingly more singular while all the while needing to compete both for and against each other. Both individually and in the context of how they function as a team, they manifest an issue that transcends age. How do you reconcile your personal challenges informing your identity without blundering your ability to function as an integral part of the team. Wanting to blend in, but feeling lost in overlapping dialogue and fighting to be heard but not too loudly. This is a line they walk gracefully at some points and clumsily, if not destructively at others. This is a radically honest portrayal not just in the context of teenage girls, but rather more generally the expectations we set for others and in turn, ourselves.

The Wolves experience issues we would think of as being archetypal of the experience of teenage girls: disorder eating, crippling social anxiety, an ever-growing obsession with politics and social injustices, over-bearing parents. But none of the Wolves themselves are archetypes. They are rich, fully developed characters telling rich, fully developed stories in a way that does not cause an onset of exhaustion in the audience fed up with the indulgent sensationalization of teenage angst we so often see when stories of adolescent girls are told. We laugh with these girls, we laugh at them, we fault them, but not with any less compassion we would laugh at or fault our former selves. They hold a mirror up to the ways in which we are grateful for our own wrongdoings and misunderstandings at that age. The play simultaneously offers us an avenue to both forgive those wrongdoings, see our "cringe-worthy" high school moments as less cringe-worthy and more something to look at with a newfound tenderness. What's more is the reminder that there is still much to be learned from watching the hyper-emotive, often cruel interactions these girls have and see elements of not just our past selves, but our current ones, too. In short: what a mindfuck. A beautifully written, and more beautifully directed and performed mindfuck.

To the cast: you have so much to be proud of. We were thoroughly, deeply blown away by each and every one of you (yes, we see the irony in the fact that this is our first-ever Denison theater performances we've witnessed and have elected ourselves cultural critics with zero solid credibility but LISTEN, OKAY?). Please use us as references should you see grad school for an acting MFA in your future. We have stalked all of you on every social media. We have no choice but to stan. It's really disturbing. If you see either of us in public, you don't have to talk to us. We will understand. A knowing smile would suffice. Don't be shocked if we faint.

Sarah and Sophia: well. fucking. done. Y'all took something already impeccably written but gave it new life by how flawlessly this was cast, how well these women knew their characters, and how thoughtfully you all must have led rehearsals to form individual actors not only into a cast, but an actual team. It was real and wildly impactful.

This may have been our first Denison performance, but what a great place to start. Emo as fuck. Do not text.

*-Jax Preyer, Managing Editor and  
Annelise Benschop, Denison Theater  
novice and friend of the 'Sheet.*



### Staff "favorite character" Box

Jax "8" Preyer, Managing Editor  
.....  
Isabella "00" Puccini, Senior Editor  
Sophia "all of them, I'd assume" Menconi, Senior Editor  
James "13" Whitney, Sophomore Editor  
.....  
Zach "7" Correia, Head Writer  
Jay "Formal Memorandum" Huff, Senior Writer  
Charlie "25" Schweiger, Junior Writer  
Elizabeth "2" Arterberry, Junior Writer  
Katie "Soccer Mom" Kerrigan, Junior Writer  
Jack "46" May, Sophomore Writer

