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Paper Lanterns Paper Cranes

Rebeca Wallin

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Play Review

Title: Paper Lanterns Paper Cranes

Author: Brian Kral

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Publisher: Anchorage Press Plays, Inc.

Publication Year: 2002

Number of Pages: 74

Production Requirements: Flexible scenery created with screens and projections and stylistic backdrops, moveable hospital equipment, medical equipment

props, simple time-period costuming.

Estimated Run Time: 90 minutes

Number of Acts: 2

Number of Characters: 15

Cast Requirements: 9 female, 6 male

Time Period: 1950s

Reading/Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Review

When Kyushu wakes up unexpectedly in a hospital she finds herself forced to confront her past. Orphaned at 5 years old after the atomic bomb drop in Hiroshima, she has lived on the streets and managed to scrape by. After collapsing in the street though, soldiers find her and bring her to a hospital that specializes in treating those with sicknesses related to the bombing. Kyushu is quickly losing her sight and the doctors find her condition hard to assess since she refuses to provide information about her past. The American psychiatrist trying to study and help her is also firmly rebuffed as the visions that have haunted Kyushu since the bombing continue and increase. Kyushu begins to soften as she befriends her roommate Sadako, a 12 year old with leukemia who is attempting to fold 1,000 Cranes in the hope that completing this task will heal her. As Kyushu becomes more trusting she is able to open up, accept the help of the doctors and psychiatrist, find resolutions in her terrifying visions, and begin the process of healing and forgiving.

The American Alliance for Theatre Education awarded Paper Lanterns Paper Cranes "Best New Play Published in the United States" in 2003. With the thought-provoking, strong plot lines, well-developed characters and character relationships, and natural, flowing dialogue it is easy to see why. While the true story of Sadako Sasaki has been told, dramatized, and immortalized in sculpture, this new character in a similar situation – though arguably with an even more tragic back story - provides an opportunity for a more advanced young audience to study the serious subject matter in depth. Questions about placing the blame in war and facing the consequences when innocent people are harmed are explored within the text and could be explored further post-performance with parents or teachers.