The cast of "Silence!" rings out

Play premiere provides insight and entertainment

BY JUSTIN REIDY CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On Friday, Oct. 25, the Department of Theatre at Holy Cross presented the world premiere of "Silence!", directed by Margaret Perry and written by her husband, Brian Dykstra. The play opened to a sold-out audience, and continued to enjoy packed performances for its run through Nov. 3.

Brian Dykstra is a New York based playwright who has written plays in London, New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. He produced "Strangerhorse" at the premiere of the play at London's Bushwells and "Silence!", directed both Dykstra's "Strangerhorse" and "Forsaking All Others." She also serves as the Producing Director of the Access Theatre in New York City. The production of "Silence!" however proved to be a special feat, as Dykstra did not even begin writing the play until last May—translating to the incredibly short time of 6 months to write, edit, cast, and produce the show.

"Silence!" is based on the true experiences of Dykstra's summer teaching project in Fargo, North Dakota. The Fargo school system had introduced a program for "at-risk" high school students, a special playwriting course in which the students would write and act out plays. Dykstra had been chosen as the teacher/mentor for these students, so he was able to develop fairly strong relationships with them over the course of the summer. He helped his students to purge some of their feelings and experiences through their plays. Near the end of the summer, however, as the students were preparing to present their plays, the school's administration squelched their attempts at self-expression because of "objectivational" content. This censorship led to the suicide of one of the students in the program, who had devised a play about the difficult prospects of his coming out of the closet to his parents.

The play does an excellent job of portraying the angst and trials of adolescent life, particularly the difficulties of dealing with authority spiritual.

Buswell discovered the overall theme of his art during childhood trips with his parents. Some of his earliest memories, in fact, involve weekends spent camping out with them amongst the ruins of western Montana's abandoned mines. The family would look for the ore samples that Buswell's geologist father would study. Something else about the ghost towns spoke to him; though, all these decades later, he still searches for the stories of the people who once inhabited these settlements, and "strives to present them in a way that hasn't been seen before."

Buswell values simplicity in his compositions. His photos are all black-and-white, and he uses only natural light. This can create challenges. He once once filtered two hours for a cloud to pass, and once the light was perfect, they found the camera wasn't set up correctly! Another time, while Buswell shot the roof of an old barn, Erica had to hold open an umbrella as it was raining outside. Still, he is proud to rely only on old camera technology. He claims those techniques endure. He believes that he had nine-tenths of century, for example, been filmed using the digital format that is becoming popular today, the pictures of the city from that era wouldn't be around today.

The effect of Buswell's work is powerful. Erica thinks the exhibit is exciting as it brings together the two worlds of present-day Holy Cross and 1900's Montana. The exhibit is also somewhat sad; as a Buswell quote printed on one of the gallery walls says "The frontier miner and the homesteader had their say, but their voices are silent now." They faced the harshest of circumstances—brutal winters and innumerable fatal diseases only two among them—and yet they still tried to make their mark on the great American wilderness. Their resolve reflects something Erica's father has always said to her: "What can you do but just live?" And hope that your life will find a way to echo.

What's Happening in Worcester

An evening with the Ice Cats

BY JULIA CROWLEY ASSISTANT FEATURES EDITOR

I would like to preface this week's article with an apology to any hockey players, parents of players, fans, mascots, or Canadians. Personally, I know close to nothing about the sport of hockey, but I encourage you to read on for a review of the more interesting aspects of my night in attendance at a Worcester Ice Cats Game. You will be quick to notice my lack of sports reporting skills, hence my position on the Features staff as opposed to that requiring even the simplest athletic knowledge.

It is safe to say that hockey may be my favorite sport of all time. I have no clue as to why this is so, I just accept it. It could possibly be related to the fact that I am afraid of sports that include the use of balls. This, I am pretty sure, is related to some unfortunate incidents in grade school gym class (picture something like dodge ball, which should really be called "hit something in the head with this rubber ball as hard as you can"). This particular sport may also be closer to my heart because I have watched more hockey being played than any other sport. I probably have accumulated 15 hours of sport watching in the entirety of my 20 years on this good earth, with four of those hours being dedicated solely to hockey. It's also just fun to watch being played than any other sport.

I went to a Worcester Ice Cats game last season and it was pretty fun. Basically it consisted of hairy, rough group, so you generally won't be disappointed.

While most of the night was filled with my overwhelming fear that the glass I was near was going to be shattered, or that I was going to get smacked in the face with a puck and lose a tooth, I still enjoyed myself (next time I am wearing a mask, although I have been told I should wear one on a regular basis to protect the eyes of the innocent. Thanks Doc!). The highlights for me consisted of the boys being sent to the "time out box" after getting into a silly fight on the ice. I know it's called a penalty box, but "time out box" is more appropriate, as it causes people to roll their eyes if you say it enough.

Erica also talked about how her entire family helps Buswell with his art. She and her younger sister, Stephanie, suggest titles for certain photographs. No one runs any water while Buswell develops pictures in the basement; the temperature in the water bath must be exactly 68°F. (Erica says this procedure "has led to some difficulties"). Most of the photographs Erica offers compliments her father as he takes pictures on the prairie. Sometimes, just searching for subtopics, Erica comes up with random words such as "winter grass," or "beauty." While driving down the highway, the Buswells will often stop their car and get out to look around. Only occasionally will they find something, but it doesn't matter. For Dr. Buswell, simply absorbing the forest smells is "profoundly