



Laughter and Tears at the Student Theater Festival

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circus over her tiny head to the tune of the Beastie Boys's "Girls," were hilarious, and clear crowd favorites. Shepherd must be commended for her amazing work creating the puppets, along with the many other hats she wore for this production.

"Back and Forth" was written by and directed by Mariel Rosati '08 and Sheerley Zinori '08. It was the story of a vaudeville star, played by Larissa Romero '09, who falls asleep in 1914 and is transported to the present day, where she watches a modern film actress prepare for her move to theater. The play got some laughs out of the transition to 2007; I adored the gag where Romero snuck into the actress's dressing room and played with the buttons on her cell phone, until someone planted in the audience received the call and answered it, scaring the old-fashioned gal. Both Romero and Rosati were greatly charismatic, but the real stars of the show were the pair of Romero's back-up dancers. Katie Sovonick '09 and Zinori were

the Shakespearean fools of the play, providing slapstick comic relief and full-on guffaws from the audience every time they appeared on stage. "Back and Forth" taught me what vaudeville should look like, and that I really, really like it as a style. My only complaint with the show was its length. I could have watched them dance, sing, and yuk it up all night; alas, the show lasted a mere fifteen minutes.

My issues with the Student Theater Festival still stand from Week 1. I wish there were a better system for reservations, and that there were space for more patrons. These shows are clearly a lot of work for everyone involved, and they are amazing. It would be great if someone other than the parents and best friends of the directors and stars would attend.

So there you have it. The Bi-Co Theater Festival: I laughed, I cried, I shuddered, I laughed some more, I was entertained. What more can you ask for?

Post Office Exposé Yields Unexpected Results

by **jessica schwartz**

As a self-professed lover and frequent user of the U.S. Postal Service, I have often found myself frustrated with the Bryn Mawr College Post Office. Why do my credit card bills arrive the day they are due, yet the postmark indicates that they were sent three weeks ago? Why did it take four weeks for my friend in Reading, PA to receive a small birthday package? And what about the time when the Office closed without warning for Clinton's visit?

Such questions inspired me to find out the true story of what occurs behind the doors of our sticker-covered mailboxes. I fully intended to do an exposé of the BMC Post Office: I was going to scoop them.

However, my visit to the Office led to me an entirely different story. Although I am slightly embarrassed and even ashamed to admit it, I was the one who got scooped. More specifically, I was scooped by a group of delightful, cantankerous older gentlemen who take pride in their work.

Upon requesting an interview on a slow Friday afternoon, I was ushered into the back room and offered a seat. The three gentlemen working at the time—Jim, the head of the office for roughly a decade, Paul, a full-timer of nine years, and Nick, a part-timer of seventeen years—were visibly happy to have a visitor and amused by the seriousness of my mission. I soon abandoned my list of

questions and enjoyed the company of my three laid-back acquaintances who preferred to be on a first-name basis right from the start.

During my hour and a half visit, the staff happily taught me about the inner-workings of the Post Office: the staff size of 2 full-timers, 2 part-timers, 4 students, and a driver, the three daily campus mail runs, the two daily Bryn Mawr Post Office mail runs, mail sorting, and other details that I suspect are of little interest to *college news* readers.

And much to my disappointment, I found no flaws at the Post Office. In fact, everything appears to be well-organized and the current system (as described by the staff) seems to run like clockwork.

The story that emerged from my visit is not one of mechanical flaws, but rather one of human strengths and character. In my short time at the Post Office, my inquiries were met with genuine interest, I was treated as a welcomed guest, and the camaraderie of the staff was a pleasure to experience.

As I discovered, I found nothing worthy of an exposé except a reminder in the life lesson of "don't judge a book by its cover." While I do not have any answers to my questions and frustrations, my interest in pursuing them has disappeared and been replaced by a new appreciation for an important yet largely ignored part of Bryn Mawr's staff.

After all, it's only mail.

Norman Finkelstein Talk

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Finkelstein, 141 Palestinian children died in the conflict compared to one Israeli child.

"Here's an example," Finkelstein elaborated. "It's as if someone takes a dagger and plunges it into your heart and says 'I was just testing how sharp the blade was.' You are responsible for foreseeable acts... If Israel encounters a crowd of demonstrators and fires indiscriminately into a crowd, as it always does... that's killing with foreseeable consequences. Under international law that's irrational... there's no difference between premeditated acts— Hamas—and reckless use of force— Israel— except perhaps that Israeli terrorism is four times as lethal and no demand has been put on Israel to cease terrorism, only Hamas."

He went on to address questions over the future of the Israel-Palestine conflict, saying, "Is it so complicated? In fact for the past thirty years there has been a consensus in the international community on how to solve it, and that is commonly called the 'two state solution... go to your web and enter under Google 'peaceful settlement to Palestine question' and you will see the whole world on one side.'" The whole world except, as Finkelstein went on, Israel and the U.S. and a few other countries, and this is why the "Palestine question" remains unresolved.

"Brutal sanctions are grinding Palestinians down to hunger and poverty," he said, detailing the consequences of this hesitation to reach a resolution. "The wall annexes ten percent of East Jerusalem and severs the West Bank into segments... While Hamas has often threatened to take apart the Israeli state, Israel is in practice dismembering the Palestinian state."

After all this, what Finkelstein found to prove that there is no real controversy over the past, present, or future of the Israel-Palestine conflict, he asked again, "how do you account for the controversy swirling around it?"

He responded to his question by saying he believed there were legitimate differences of opinion, going on to say that, as he saw it, "people can agree on the facts and reach different moral opinions. We can agree that the Palestinians were subject to ethnic cleansing but disagree on the morality of ethnic cleansing." As an example of this he quoted Alan Dershowitz, his colleague and rival at Harvard Law, as saying "ethnic cleansings are a fifth rate human rights issue, analogous to urban renewal."

"You can say these are Nazi moral judgments, and I think that's a fair description," Finkelstein went on, "but you can't say they're wrong."

Finally, he described what he feels is the main problem surrounding what he calls the "mystification" of the conflict.

"It is described as a truly unique conflict to preempt people making the obvious analogies because Israel always ends up on the wrong side... I once compared the Israel-Palestine conflict to the dispossession of the Cherokee in North America, and it's not Israel that's on the trail of tears." And as for the claims that the Palestinians are anti-semitic, anti-Israel, or anti-West, he said, "if a historian came along and said that Native American resentment toward Euro-Americans was all due to anti-Europeanism, anti-Christianism, anti-Whitism, you would laugh."

The speech came to a climax as Finkelstein elaborated on the sentiments that have caused his critics to call him a Holocaust denier and anti-Semitic.

"Israel's the only country in the world to legalize torture, the only country in the world to legalize house destruction as punishment, to legalize hostage taking... we're told yes, well, remember the holocaust," he explained,

continuing that it's "politically quite useful" to "play the holocaust card."

"They want to turn Israel into the victim, focus on the alleged suffering of the Jews rather than the real suffering of the Palestinians," he continued. "The most depressing aspect of this conflict is the extent to which it is riddled with fraud and fakery... what makes the Israel-Palestine conflict unusual is the extent that the lunacy is validated by intellectual institutions."

To illustrate his point he went on to criticize the writings of Alan Dershowitz, calling it "sheer fraud," and explaining how he had published a book countering the claims Dershowitz has made that Israel has a "superb human rights record." However, his book was ill-received, in fact he did not receive "one mainstream review" in the U.S. He compared this "awesome spectacle of uniformity and consensus" to the 1938 meeting of the Communist Party in Albania, which decided everything by consensus because "in the 1934 meeting, of the two thousand delegates, half were shot by Stalin" for disagreeing.

Finkelstein ended his speech by telling the crowd, "We have the weapon of truth at our disposal, the weapon of justice... you have to learn how to wield those weapons, have a little courage, have a little backbone, you're not going to get shot—you're not a six year old Palestinian in the face of an Israeli tank."

After his speech there was a question and answer session that began with two previously submitted "hostile" questions— about his support from Holocaust denier David Irving and anti-Semitism in the Arab world—and then the floor was opened to anyone in the audience. Only three audience members chose to pose questions to Finkelstein, asking about his thoughts on the sustainability of the Israeli state, how he had come to the conclusion that Hamas had recognized the Israeli state, and how he envisioned peace working between religious extremists on both sides.

Finkelstein closed the night with a final statement on the conflict. "Israel's headed on a suicidal course and those who are sincere supporters of Israel, and not those who fight from Cape Cod, who don't want to see it ruined would recognize that scandal."

"It would be fun to have a class with this guy," laughed Nicky Belletier '09 after the speech was over.

"It was interesting to hear so many facts," Zaineb Tambawalla '08 said, when asked how she felt about the talk. "It gave me history I wasn't aware of."

"It was a great opportunity to have a different and refreshing point of view," agreed Diana Tung '10.

"We were really glad to hear Finkelstein say himself that we are responsible for doubting everything including all that he has said," said Sarah

Alibabaie and Jenny Kim, International Justice Week organizers. "We were also surprised that more people did not ask questions during the live Q&A session. Nevertheless, we were very pleased with the turnout and we believe that now, after Finkelstein came, spoke, and left, we can begin to focus on the real conflict in Israel/Palestine and not Finkelstein himself."

The Students for Justice and Palestine who helped organize the event were pleased with the speech as well.

"I thought it was very powerful and bold and I think the audience took it very well," said Caroline Brigham '07, of SJP.

"I think I was expecting a little more controversy and what happened was that what he said couldn't be debated" beamed another SJP member, Laura Kramer '07. "I think he proved his own point and spoke well for the Palestinian cause for liberation."