

VARIETY

The show must go on: Concordia On-Air prevails through pandemic

MARIA KLIPFEL
mklipfel@cord.edu

Outside the weather is cold, chilling to toes and noses alike, but in Olin on Wednesday nights, the studio is warm with excited energy. The show is about to start.

Chatter and rustling. Laughter and talking. A hand raises, fingers counting down. Five, four—noise ceases—three, two—shifting feet and clothing adjustments—one: a smiling face welcomes you to Concordia On-Air.

Concordia On-Air is a student-run co-curricular program between the communications and art departments that is live streamed every Wednesday from 6 to 6:30 p.m. Senior and executive producer Erin Grabinger has been directing On-Air for two years.

“We are a student-run live weekly broadcast, featuring news and sports that cover at campus, local, national and international levels. Arts and Entertainment is another segment we have that features campus or national events,” said Grabinger.

Along with Grabinger, On-Air is made by a select group of students who do tech, run segments and host the show. First-year student Jack Lanners is one of the show’s hosts. During On-Air, Lanners introduces the show and segments and talks about upcoming campus events. Hosts also conduct interviews with the event organiz-

ers and do fun games or activities.

“I think one of my favorite things as the host is to come up with games or activities at the end. We have done a lip sync battle and pin the donkey before,” said Lanners. “We have fun, but still cover a lot of things. If you’re interested in art, there’s art. If you are interested in Dylan and I making goofballs of ourselves, there’s that too. It has a little bit of everything.”

“As a student-run activity, I love being in the background,” said advisor Greg Carlson. “The content is created entirely by the students involved in the activity. It belongs to the students and that’s something I really like about it.”

Like all other student-run activities, COVID guidelines have created unexpected challenges. On-Air switched to online practice meetings at the start of this year and has found a way to utilize the sets without compromising safety.

“It has been going a lot better than I had anticipated. I was worried about producing an in-person show while still keeping safety restrictions in place, but we have really been able to work with the restrictions in a way that has still kept the show going pretty well,” Grabinger said.

Although it was an adjustment, the show is up and running for this year and many to come.

“I am just really proud that we kept it going, and are able to

produce the same high-caliber shows we have in the past. I will be able to look back and say that we didn’t give up and that’s something I am really proud of,” Grabinger said.

Looking back on her time spent here, Grabinger is glad On-Air was part of it.

“I remember when I toured Concordia I really wanted to see the studio so I went down there and looked around. I thought everything was so impressive,” Grabinger said. “Over the years, I have become so much more comfortable with being on-air and being in a director position. I take for granted how impressive it is to do this show.”

Similar to Grabinger, Carlson is impressed with the show and how it has evolved over the years.

“Technology changes so rapidly, so partly some of the experience of this activity is seeing these changes real-time. When I started 20 years ago, we were editing the show tape-to-tape. Now the show is not recorded on any disc or tape, but it is captured digitally and is streamed live or can be watched on YouTube,” Carlson said.

While technology has a large part in it, ultimately it is the people that make the show.

“I love seeing the creativity that students put into the show. We have people from all disciplines from all across campus who just enjoy the camaraderie and being able to make something and share it. It’s a safe en-



On-Air hosts prepare to go live.

MARIA KLIPFEL

vironment for people to explore their interests,” Carlson said.

“It’s a very supportive space where if you mess up, we all just laugh about it. It’s a space where you can learn and grow a lot as a public speaker and performer. You have all the support that you need,” Grabinger said.

From public speaking skills to teamwork, On-Air teaches its members lifelong skills in addition to an opportunity for fun.

“The hour that we are there everyone is always laughing and cheery. It’s a big boost to my week,” Lanners said. “It sounds cheesy, but everyone there really wants to be there.”

Film Review: “The Little Things” is too out of touch for 2021 audiences



DOMINIC ERICKSON
dericks9@cord.edu

Sometimes, the combination of a movie’s interesting premise, decorated starpower and promise

of an interesting throwback experience sounds too good to pass up. Cue the first wide release of 2021, released in theaters and on HBO Max.

New from writer-director John Lee Hancock (“The Blind Side,” “The Highwaymen”) comes “The Little Things,” a crime thriller following two cops on the hunt for a serial killer in 1990 Los Angeles.

Denzel Washington and Rami Malek play the officers, the former haunted by his mysterious past and the latter young and ambitious. Jared Leto stars as their creepy, greasy prime suspect. All three leads have an Academy Award under their belt. All three

are heavy-hitters in the right light.

As far as what is to be expected of a 90s LA neo-noir, Hancock’s direction and photography are spot-on. The lighting is a high point too, with such staples as dimly lit streets and a flashlight gleaming around an apartment. An updated score by Thomas Newman also tries to bring “The Little Things” to the modern screen.

The fun, unfortunately, stops there. The editing is at some points abysmal. Rapidfire shots jump around simple dialogue scenes, and continuity takes a noticeable absence from others. The script is tiresome and stiff, leaving a dull, predictable story that is far from captivating.

The reason for “The Little Things” out of fashion atmosphere is that it was written in the early 1990s. Thirty years is a long time for a script to hit the screen. Recognized mainly by the eye-roll-worthy one-liners (at one point, Washington’s character says, “harder than Chinese arithmetic,” which surely would have absolutely killed over 20 years ago), the film is all but inventive when it comes to dialogue. There is much emphasis on the “coolness” of the line delivery, but there isn’t much depth to the words at all.

As far as the performances go, Malek and Washington are fine. There’s not a lot of chemistry, but the script doesn’t exactly allow it.

The story feels like it should center closer to Washington’s past eating away at him and his relationship with his wet-behind-the-ears partner. It is far from hitting that mark, and there is too much attention paid to Leto overacting circles around the duo.

Although written before “Seven,” there is no denying the obvious similarities. With the huge cultural resonance that came with David Fincher’s 1995 hit, audiences will inevitably draw comparisons, whether the creative choices were intentional or not. The similarities run further than “old-school meets new-school to catch a psycho killer that plays mind games.”

The process of a production in a pandemic

TORI HATTEN
vhatten@cord.edu

Every aspect of life has been impacted by the pandemic, be it working from home or wearing a mask and distancing when in public. The same is true for theater at Concordia College.

“The pandemic has killed most theater,” said Katie Curry, the theater art department’s costume designer and adjunct instructor.

There have been necessary changes to this year’s lineup, changing the number of main-stage shows and choosing a musical with a smaller cast, because “Carousel,” the original pick, wouldn’t have been safe with a cast of 35.

Currently, the theater is rehearsing “Dance Nation,” a hard-hitting coming-of-age story of 13-year-olds, directed by Reanna Marthaler. Of course, this year, the process looks different than normal. Marthaler explained that this play was chosen last year knowing that the pandemic would make larger and more interactive shows unattainable.



The theater costume shop.

KJ SIEGLE

“These shows aren’t written to be performed six feet apart and masked, they’re meant to be ‘normal.’ Reanna, our director, has done a really good job of identifying the changes we needed to make and came up with some very creative solutions,” said Britney Dodge, a junior communication studies and theater arts major and stage manager for “Dance Nation.”

In rehearsals, everyone is masked and hand sanitizer is

used any time a person walks onto the stage or uses shared materials. They also take the temperature of everyone within the room. Staging is also set purposefully so that actors are spaced out and not staying close to one another for extended periods of time.

Changes have been made off the stage as well. There can only be two student workers in the costume shop at a time. Each actor has an individual 15-minute time slot where they have the dress-

ing room to themselves, actors do their hair and makeup as best as they can before arriving and quick changes are now done unassisted. Each actor keeps their costume pieces and accessories separate. Clothes that are washable get washed every night, and those that are not get sprayed down with sanitizer and scent eliminators.

It is also the costume shop’s responsibility to create masks that match the costumes so that the actors can have mask changes to fit the scenes, especially since it is a lot harder to convey feelings and passion with half of your face covered.

“Theater relies so much on nonverbal communication, like facial expressions. Having half off your face covered means this nonverbal communication is often missing,” said Dodge.

To compensate for the lack of facial expressions, Marthaler spends a lot of time during rehearsal working with the actors on their intonation and body language to make the play more accessible for the audience. She

makes sure the actors understand what she wants them to portray and gives examples.

At times, masks make it more difficult to hear actors give their lines or hear Marthaler give directions. More than ever, actors need to be very conscious of where the microphones are and make sure that they face towards them and project when speaking.

Even throughout these challenges and shifts, the theater still remains a passionate, fun and empowering place. It is there that the actors get to have a light environment in these harsh and heavy times. They do not have to lessen their messages and can still push against norms of society at large.

“We expect pretty, polite and beautiful, but this show is feral, gruesome and real,” said Dodge. “Our production team is mostly women, femmes, and nonbinary students, as is our cast. Because of this, we’re able to decenter the white male gaze we’ve become accustomed to, and produce a show where men literally aren’t the main characters.”