

In today's world, with COVID-19 and other obstacles in the way, it is hard to imagine a story of artists doing what they love and making connections. In McLean High School's *Vocal Work*, they showed the sacrifices that artists make to achieve their dreams at a time when those dreams feel far off.

*Vocal Work*, a thoughtful comedy written by Ed Monk, portrayed the working life of Annie, a sound studio manager who had lost her mind because Billie messed up the schedule and her sound engineer did not have the squelching sounds for the diarrhea ad. By the end of the performance, the characters who interacted with Annie helped her realize that the challenges in this line of work were worth doing since it was what she loves.

As a whole, this production felt very natural and had a constant flow of characters coming in and out of the swinging door on stage right. There was a sense of cohesion among the technical elements and the actors which helped with the characters' chemistry onstage and the development of relationships, even from six feet apart.

Annie (Chloe Lahr) is the string that ties this entire production together. Lahr played the anxious character well with great physicality showing her level of stress. One impressive moment in the show was when she spoke to her husband on a one sided phone call, a hard task when there is no one actually speaking to you. Another stand out character was the sound engineer, Phil (Will Chapman). He stayed onstage the entire show and used little mannerisms, like messing with the microphones, to his advantage without being distracting. Chapman's carefree attitude is a huge contrast to Lahr's tension, making for many pleasant moments of character development between the two.

There were few moments in the show that demonstrated the theme as well as the interactions between Katie (Sanjna Kaul) and Meg (Avery Versaw). The two actresses established a clear contrast upon walking into the recording studio and showed the competitive nature of auditions. Kaul showed that it is very difficult to work in the theatre industry with her rejection of a job that wouldn't pay enough, and Versaw revealed the feeling of hope when working on something that you love.

The set design (Vivian Kreeb) for this performance was elaborate, with black and orange checkers on the backdrops and an assortment of album covers and images on the door. The set was very realistic while also adding to the chaotic energy of the show. They also projected two actors on Zoom onto the stage for one scene and showed that flexibility during this pandemic is nothing short of impressive work (JT Fulkerson & Dylan Prestidge).

Overall, this piece portrayed the difficulties of working in the arts in a time where it has been a challenge to work at all. They strengthened their message with the incorporation of Zoom and

the use of their space while social distancing. They showed that in the short time people spend on earth, there is nothing worse than not doing the thing that you love, except maybe diarrhea.