

Cecilia Skemp- *Neighborhood of the Loners* by Jimena Márquez (Reflection)

Director- Kelly Howe

Assistant Directors - Laura Cortés, Cecilia Skemp

Neighborhood of the Loners is, in my heart, a tremendous success. All the hard work the actors, crew, and production team put in paid off in the beautiful absurdist play that lasted all of 85 minutes. I am so proud of them all. I am proud of myself as well for having been a part in the making of this show. The laughter and the tears will always be a wonderful memory for me as we all move on. Theatre after all is ephemeral, there is no choice but to move on to the next project and remember the old ones.

In this production I felt Loyola's mission permeated the space: "a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice, and faith." The environment of learning, the pursuit of justice, and faith. Learning seems the most obvious. Of course, you are going to learn something in a class, but when it comes to theatre, often the learning is not placed in front of you. It happens, yes, there is no doubt about that, but before you even realize it, you have already learned something. In Loners, I had set goals to pursue, some I achieved, others I did not. The learning I received did not always even cross my mind as a goal in the beginning. I think the most important thing that I learned through this process was active consideration. The careful contemplation of others and perception.

Justice is something that came naturally with this play (and of course working alongside Kelly Howe). The political wind floating through the play is light but most definitely there. The approach we took grounds that air while also keeping it light. I felt, as we were working and as I watched the play, that this play is a part of something bigger. A finger pointing up at the collapsing cosmos pushing it back, directing us all to hold it up. It sings of community and togetherness although it seems to say the opposite (from the characters' perspectives).

Which brings us to faith. The play itself is secular, although arguments could be made on the spirituality of it and the afterlife. What faith this story brings us all to and that we as a team augmented in our choices is that of our faith in people. In humanity itself. The play is a cautionary tale of sorts, it wants us to believe in the power that community has and to overcome the danger that the loss of community brings. To be honest, working on this show has only heightened my faith in community. This thing that we all did together, an ironic mix of collaboration and these "loners" outside the world of the play itself, highlighted the way we as a community are stronger than our fears. I hope that this play has strengthened the faith of others as it did for me.

In the end, I feel stronger for having worked with everyone on this project and enlivened to continue working in the future.