

## ***The Diary of Anne Frank***

A review by Danielle Goldstein  
Dover High School

From the moment you walk through the doors of the Delaware Theatre Company, it is made clear that you are not in for a lighthearted night at the theatre. *(You need some sort of transition phrase here. You've just said it's not lighthearted. Then you say it is a more lighthearted take. I know what you are going for, but it will be confusing for a reader.)* Wendy Kesselman's adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* is a slightly more lighthearted take on the sordid story of a young *(for plot purposes, you probably want to insert "Jewish" here)* girl chased into hiding during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in World War II. Nevertheless, I often found myself holding my breath in frightened anticipation, despite knowing and expecting what was to come (due to numerous readings of the Diary itself). *(This is a good opening paragraph which gives the reader a peak into the gut emotions they can expect to feel when seeing the show.)*

The play takes off with Anne and her family in a mad rush to go into hiding, earlier than they had expected. The set *(give credit to set designer)* was designed to illustrate the tight quarters in which they lived, especially given the large crowd of people sharing the space. Without being able to construct actual separate rooms, the set gave the proper illusion of the annex's space. *(You could give a more specific description. The reader will have a general idea of what impact the design had, but not really of how it was done. They won't be able to "see it" from your words.)*

Costumes *(give credit to costume designer)* worn by the main characters—those Jews who were in hiding—were modest and undefined *(I'd question "undefined." Do you mean there was no attempt to define differences between characters, establish age, etc?? Did Margot wear the same kind of clothes as say Mrs. Van Daan?)*; the only noticeable characteristic being the large yellow star on their shirts, which they made a point of removing *(this sounds like they made a point of removing their shirts, not their stars!)* once they established they would not be leaving the annex.

Perhaps one of the most significant factors that influenced the terrified tone of the play was the use of actual radio recordings of Adolph Hitler *(give credit to sound designer)*. These recordings were not just played aloud as a filler for a transition of scenes *(Be specific here. The reader might think Hitler recording played during all transitions.)*, but reverberated all around the theatre—coming at me from all sides, and leaving his voice echoing in the back of my mind. *(Good job describing the emotional impact of sound design choices.)*

In this adaptation of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's play, the pair strives to show that Anne is just a normal teenager, who happened to live during a terrifying period of history. *(Actually, this focus on Anne as a teenager comes from Kesselman's adaptation rather than Goodrich and Hackett's original play. We'll talk about this point in our next meeting, as you'd only know this if you had read the original play as well. This will fit into a discussion of how much research one should do as a critic.)* The developing relationship between Anne and annex-mate Peter is just like any other young teenage romance—unsure and clumsy, with a sweet innocence.

As Peter, Henry Raphael Glovinsky portrayed his role with the perfect amount of awkwardness. Both Sara Kapner and Joel Leffert perfected their versions of Anne and her father, with an absolute truth to the father-daughter chemistry (*good job giving specifics as to how Kaper and Leffert “perfected their versions”*). Kapner was stunning in her ability to remain constantly aware of the fact that Anne is a very young girl, and kept her girlish tendencies invariable (*It is interesting that you found it useful that she kept her “girlish tendencies” evidenced throughout—another critic had a different feeling. Grounds for debate!!*) throughout the performance.

Much credit must be given to director Meredith McDonough for finding the perfect balance of having a main character that is a sign of hope in a somber time—adding unwavering light to an increasing dark story. (*Good job describing and analyzing the director’s vision on the impact of the production. This was a purposeful choice on McDonough’s part and it’s nice you picked up on it.*)

After a powerful ending, and a particularly inventive use of stage space (*Good job giving the reader an intriguing hint as to what they could expect at the end without giving away the powerful effect!!! A lot of critics would just describe the choice of having the actors on stage in the fringes during the final moments and thus ruin the “surprise” impact on the audience.*), the cast once again took the stage for a solemn, smile-free curtain call. Despite the (understandable) lack of enthusiasm of the cast, the audience rose from their seats without hesitation. Walking out of the theatre, viewers were almost completely silent, whispering as if anything they said would be too trivial to say out loud. There was none of the usual murmur of discussion; however, this spoke more to the fact that this adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* struck each member of the audience with such severity as to leave them speechless. Although the story itself is incredibly powerful, this particular performance might well have been the most moving portrayal I’ve seen yet. (*Wonderful job very specifically capturing the impact of the performance on the audience—as well as on you. I like that you qualify it—“might well have been”—and don’t just give a grandiose statement like “this is the most moving story you will ever see.”*)