'Letters to Sala' shows how the Holocaust continues to affect families

BY: Jake Grove
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The story of the Holocaust and the plight and horrors that Jews faced during World War II is well documented. The most famous, of course, is "The Diary of Anne Frank." But there are many more stories, and one will come to life on the stage at Anderson University’s Belk Theatre tonight through Saturday.

"Letters to Sala" is a different kind of story. This one brings the experiences of Jews in Nazi labor camps in the 1940s and the struggle that survivors of those atrocities faced when deciding whether or not to share those experiences with their children and the rest of their family. First a book and later a museum exhibit, "Letters to Sala" revolves around the letters received by 16-year-old Sala during her five years of forced labor in different Nazi camps. Sala survived her time there but kept her experiences secret from her family for years until she went to have surgery. It was then that she gave the letters to her daughter, Ann Kirschner.

"It is really the story of the family discovering the letters and the family knowing nothing about this part of Sala's life," said production designer Cara Wood. "Sala never wanted to take them through that part of her life, and it wasn't until she was older that she shared them."

The action of the play, written by Arlene Hutton, goes back and forth between 1945 and 2005 as it shows Sala in the work camps and the life she lived there for five years. Then it flashes forward to the discussion between Ann and Sala's grandchildren, debating whether to donate the letters or keep them to themselves.

Wood said the intriguing part of the play is watching the struggles at both ends. There is the struggle of Sala to survive her ordeal, especially growing up in awful circumstances, and of the family in 2005 trying to find the right thing to do with these letters.
"It is so important for our students and our audience to learn as much as possible about this
time in history," Wood said. "It’s becoming more and more easy to overlook this part of
history for the younger generation, and we want to dissuade that as much as possible."

The show will include around 20 actors and actresses from Anderson University, some
playing dual roles. The students will also have the opportunity to work with Hutton in person
as she has a close relationship with Anderson University and has workshopped many of her
other plays there.

The show only will run tonight, Friday and Saturday with shows at 7:30 p.m. each night and
at 2 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are $10, $8 for seniors and military and $5 for Anderson
University students. For more information or to order tickets, call the Rainey Fine Arts Center
box office at 864.231.2080.

IF YOU GO

What: "Letters to Sala"

When: 7:30 p.m. tonight through Saturday and 2 p.m. Saturday

Where: Belk Theatre, Anderson University, Anderson

Tickets: $10 general admission, $8 seniors and military, $5 students of Anderson University

Information: 864.231.2080