

American Muse garners standing ovations, praise

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Staff Writer

American Muse, a production chronicling the life of famous model Audrey Munson, played several showings at Satterlee Hall's College Theater over the past two weekends. The brainchild of local playwright Elaine Kurcina, *American Muse* was directed by Associate Professor Kimberley Bouchard and choreographed by Department Chair Robin Collen.

Ms. Munson, a native of Mexico, NY and long-time resident of Ogdensburg, modeled for many of the most famous statues in Manhattan. Her body of work includes the statues at City Hall, the public library, the Manhattan Bridge, the Plaza Hotel, Columbia University, dozens more statues, and several coins, including the 1916 Mercury Dime and Walking Liberty Half Dollar. She was also featured in the 1916 motion picture *Purity*.

On show nights, the experience began upon entering the Academic Quad. A bright New York City skyline was projected on the roof-work bridging Dunn and Satterlee

halls, and a stream of white silk, illuminated by pale blue spotlights to represent the Hudson River, led the curious into the lobby of the College Theater, where several ar-



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The city skyline projected in the quad helped set the tone.

ticles about and pictures of Munson could be perused. Similar attention

was paid to the set design, which included a large projection screen on either side of the stage for actual photographs and footage to be displayed during the production.

The lush design of the stage contrasted sharply with the simple set pieces used within the production, comprised primarily of tables and stepladders, reminiscent in many ways of *Our Town*. This simplicity showcased the actors and dancers, and the device of the simple white sheet for nudity or nuance suited the tone of the play well.

Amongst the cast, the most obvious commendations are due to Molly Clancy and Nancy Horan, who played the young and old Audrey with remarkable aptitude. Both captured well the inherent grace of a woman famous for putting motion into stillness. Each played a secondary character as well, interacting with the other's version of Audrey to excellent effect, an aesthetic choice that was particularly effective.

Congratulations are due also to Rebecca Adams, who played Katherine, Audrey's mother. Katherine is a difficult character to sympa-



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Audrey Munson recounts her teenage years.

thize with, and her humanity is only revealed in time. Adams captured this well, and by her final scene - the train ride to Ogdensburg, bringing her only daughter to an asylum she would never leave - had some members of the audience in tears.

Also notable was Caylynn Lott, whose portrayal of Elizabeth Granis was particularly inspired. Entering mostly at the audience's level, pacing the aisles with loud

words, Lott was the very epitome of moral indignation, and the *thunk* of her soapbox hitting the floor served as brilliant punctuation to her sermons on universal chastity.

Reactions were positive. "We feel really good about it," said Adjunct Instructor Edwin Clark, who played Dr. Wilkins. "Four of the six performances got standing ovations."