



[caption:] Rangeley Humanities students travelled to experience live theater at Portland Stage with help from the Rangeley Friends of the Arts and the Maine Arts Commission.

PRESS RELEASE CONTACT: Pam Ellis – 207-864-5000

STUDENTS REACT TO PORTLAND STAGE PLAY

With sponsorship from the Rangeley Friends of the Arts and a "Ticket to Ride" Grant from the Maine Arts Commission, RLRs teacher Maryam Emami, Tim Straub and Sonja Johnson traveled with their Humanities classes to Portland Stage on November 14 to see "Refuge * Malja * ملجأ". The play follows a Jewish-American war photographer who feels compelled to assist a young refugee who steps in front of her camera. She calls an old friend to translate but hesitates to reveal why she is so drawn to the boy. The narrative shifts back and forth in time and we see how each character defines culture, identity and home. The play covers many themes; motherhood and family are some of the main motifs. In the end we are left without resolution. This poetic, decade-spanning drama explored how we each define and find our own Malja (refuge). Below are some student responses.

Hannah McMillan: Though it was hard to follow and stay on top of, after the question/answer section at the end, most of my concerns and confusions were resolved. I was confused but also fascinated about how the action of the play moved back and forth in time and location. I admired the role of the olive tree because at first it was a symbol of violence and injustice, but in the play was reclaimed by Ibrahim's mother as the symbol of peace and healing. The play had a very non-linear script and overall plot, but I remained intrigued.

Winnie LaRochelle: My reaction to the play was that I was upset when Waleed was found by Jamie. Jamie was off on her own and Waleed's English wasn't good, therefore, if Waleed was hurt Jamie wouldn't know how to help him because of Waleed's inability to communicate. Then Jamie's mom got sick this caused Jamie to have to leave and leave Waleed by himself again. Jamie was balancing Waleed, being pregnant, trying to be understanding the relationship between her and Ibrahim, and also balancing her and her mother fighting all the time about how Jamie's mother wants her to start a family but Jamie is scared to because her mother didn't show her how to be a good mother. She

was scared to continue with Ibrahim because she didn't want to become a mother because she didn't think she would be a good and successful mother because she wasn't mothered correctly. This set the tone throughout the play because she was running from most of her problems and pushing people away who were trying to help her.

Ella Shaffer: I thought that the play we watched, Refuge Malja, was kind of confusing at first, but overall was a good play. I thought it was a good play because it had many elements, like the going back in time with Jamie and Ibrahim's relationship, and the bringing in of Waleed. Also the wolf, that represented Jamie's grandfather, which then her mother sees in her hospital bed.

Mya Laliberte: In the play Refuge Malja there was an overall theme of motherhood. Throughout the phone calls we got to see the relationships between the characters and their mothers. The character Jamie had a bad relationship with her mom and they were not speaking. The character Waleed was searching for his mom because they were separated. And the character Ibrahim had a strong relationship with his mom, but she did not speak. The play showed how people can have different relationships with their mothers and how that impacts the person they are going to become.

Chase Carmichael: After Ms. Emami explained the play, I understand it a lot better now and I can say that I enjoyed the play a lot more but I have a lot of questions. Did the girl get an abortion, did the boy take the shoes and what happened after the last scene, also why was the burning of all those olive trees give the wife such bad PTSD? I have questions for the writer to like why would you make a play about refugees and shoes, why all those flashbacks and the timing of them?

EmmaRae McFawn: My reaction to the play was that the people who were acting and portraying the characters had to be very serious about this. The play's plot line was all over the place, because of the flash backs. The flash backs give the play depth and a way to show what happened throughout Jamie's life leading up to the first and last scene where she made the phone call. The way that they communicated through the pictures was a different way of communication and representation of different people and cultures. The play also expressed the need of help just a few years ago and still now.

Lily Lavallee: Refuge Malja made me really think about how lucky we are as a society to be as privileged as we are. Many other countries have much less than we do and it really put that into perspective. It also brought the thought of humans being the only ones to fix what we as humans messed up before. We use opportunities to make up for jumps or risks we didn't take earlier in life.

Abi Madrid: My favorite part was the whole thing. I like how the play was explained through a phone call. I've never seen a play like that before in my entire life. The story behind the play is great because it shows the connections the people had with their mothers and also the connection Jamie had with Waleed and wanted to mother him even tho years before she didn't want to be a mother at all and even aborted her baby. It was great.

