

The Whetstone

Montreat College's Student Voice

"New Land"

Daniel Sellers

"In the winter of 1911-12, five Englishmen and five Norwegians raced each other to the bottom of the earth. Only the five Norwegians returned. This is the story of the Englishmen."

That chilling line adorns the posters scattered around campus for the Montreat College Theatre Department's student production of *Terra Nova*, a play written by Ted Talley, based off the true story of how Robert Falcon Scott and his team of explorers raced on foot against a Norwegian sled dog team to be the first to reach the South Pole. The following is a quick summary of their journey and its outcome:

After struggling desperately for weeks and manhandling their sled across hundreds of miles of unforgiving ice, all the while dealing with frostbite and a critical hand injury on one of the men, Captain Scott's team finally reached their destination, only to discover the heartbreaking reality that the Norwegian team had beaten them there by almost a whole month. Admitting defeat, but refusing to lose heart, Scott urged his men homeward, promising glory and honor despite their defeat: "We've got to the Pole and back again, as we said we would, and they can be damned proud of the first Englishmen to do it, or to hell with them all!" Unfortunately, the trip home is when everything takes a turn for the worst. One by one, Captain Scott's men are lost to the



cold, until he is the only one who remains, and then he too perishes after writing a letter back home, telling of the journey and the disasters that occurred.

The students' production of this play was masterfully done. Marcus Wall excelled in the role of Captain Robert Scott, so much so that it would be impossible to tell that this was, amazingly, Wall's first time performing in a full-length play. Scott's men, Bowers, Evans, Oates and Wilson (played by Jake Clement, Josh Platt, Christian Tonkins and Nathan Dimmock, respectively) were all exceptionally cast and played. Of particular note was Platt's performance of Evans' gradual decay, both mentally and physically, and finally his violent, heart-rending death. Scott's sweetheart, Kathleen (Lisa Ariola) also made several

appearances in flash-backs. She was convincingly and artfully played, lending depth and insight into Scott's back-story and inner struggle. Finally, Winston Rheinbolt was deliciously nasty as the Norwegian explorer Amundsen who haunts Scott's imagination and memories throughout his journey. If Kathleen acts as Scott's "shoulder-angel" then Amundsen is his shoulder-devil, taunting and tempting him to play God with the fate of his men.

Also of special note was Caitlin Neal's hard work on the brilliant costumes, and Jim Southerland's set design. Both added a great deal of believability to the story. How Southerland got his hands on a full-size ice sled, I will never know, but at the risk of sounding illiterate with my choice of words... it was really cool.

of effort they put into this play (no easy task among all of the academic demands expected of full time college students). Marcus Wall said this about the experience of performing *Terra Nova*, "There was a lot of hard work and many, many hours for *Terra Nova* to come together. But now that the work is done, there is a sense of joy about each performance, and also a sense of peace, even amidst the pre-show nervousness."

Montreat College's student production of *Terra Nova* was, in a word, a success; a tragic story that drags down the heart while at the same time inspiring it. The students' handled and performed the work with the greatest respect, honor and panache, and my hat goes off to everyone involved. Well done.

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make

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"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night."

Psalm 1:1-2