

*The Seagull* is a formidable work of art to produce. It ranges all the emotions of the human condition, and has very little distinguishable plot. It is a rare thing to see a group of actors bring a play to the stage with such confidence, passion, and wisdom as the actors of The Roundtable Ensemble have done with *The Seagull*.

*The Seagull* tells the story of the ultimate dysfunctional family. Konstantin is an aspiring writer who is looking to challenge the traditional conventions of the theater his mother and her lover, Trigorin, have made a name for themselves in. Starring in the play is Konstantin's love, Nina. The unconventional play abruptly comes to an end when Arkadina, Konstantin's mother, belittles the play. Konstantin is devastated because he is desperately seeking the love of his mother. As a matter of fact he is seeking any kind of love from anyone. Accompanying Arkadina is the famous playwright, Trigorin, with whom she is having a love affair with. Nina becomes enamored with Trigorin and eventually runs away with him and has an affair only to be left empty and desperate when he leaves her. The loss of Nina sends Konstantin spiraling further into his depression.

One of the first lines uttered in the play is by Masha who is in love with Konstantin. She is



asked why she always wears black. She replies (delivered beautifully by Kelly Hutchinson), "I am in mourning for my life." No other line could set in motion this play better.

All of these characters are in mourning for their lives. Nina wants fame and attention, thinking it will right everything in her life. Trigorin, who is a popular writer, is terribly disappointed in himself and wants to be known as more than just "not as good as Tolstoy." They live their lives like a melodrama. Each small problem of life is the end of the world for them, and sends them closer and closer to the edge of the cliff, until finally one of them jumps. In the end the play sees a loss of innocence as life goes by for the characters, and very few are left untouched. Nina is the *Seagull*. Konstantin shoots a seagull and gives

it to Nina as a token of his love for her. Later she says to him, "Do you remember, you shot a seagull? A man comes by chance, sees it, and out of nothing else to do, destroys it." Nina is left destroyed after her affair with Trigorin. No longer is she the young innocent looking for love and fame in the world.

Michael Barakiva's adaptation of the Roundtable's production of *The Seagull* fuses together the tragedies of life and the comedy found in everyday moments. The two often have an uneasy co-existence, but here they play off one another quite nicely.

There are a few standouts in an overall talented cast. Kelly Hutchinson excels as the secondary character Masha. The character's depression, sadness, and "mourning" were shown gracefully. David Barlow's Konstantin all at once was depressing, hopeful, and sad. His final moment when he is resigned to his fate and tears up his writing was heartbreaking. The awkward Oedipus moments between Konstantin and Arkadina were nicely done. I truly felt sympathy for Garrett Neergaard's Medvedenko every time he was ignored or pushed aside. *The Seagull* took a little while to get going, but when it does it is brilliant and riveting. It is a lovely piece of theater.