

Youth

Aquinas play explores love and murder in rural parish

By Rob Cullivan

Before he played the part of Father Brian Rivard in *The Runner Stumbles*, David Yehl didn't think he could cry on stage. But after working with director Brian Buff, the Aquinas Institute senior found he could.

Not that Buff — who teaches economics, drama and global studies at Aquinas — did anything to bring tears to the young actor's eyes. Rather, it was by extensively discussing Yehl's own emotional life that the pair tapped into the feelings the student needed to relate to his character.

"He got me to know myself," Yehl said of Buff, noting that after evening rehearsals, his character's gloomy emotional state carried over into the actor's next day. "You sit down the next day in biology class the next day and think that you did it. (Crying) seemed so natural at the time," Yehl remarked.

The plot of *The Runner Stumbles*, which concluded a three-day run at Aquinas on Sunday, Nov. 6, offers much to cry about. The play opens at Father Rivard's 1911 trial for the murder of Sister Rita, who had been assigned four years earlier to serve with the priest in the mining town of Solon, Mich.

The play flashes back and forth between the trial and incidents leading up to the murder. In one flashback, the audience learns that the cold Monsignor Nicholson (junior Brendan Pickett) had banished the young priest to the mining town as punishment for his continual rule-bending and questioning attitude.

Life is miserable for Father Rivard in Protestant-dominated Solon until the arrival of talkative Sister Rita, energetically played by freshman Anastatia Prince. The priest and the sister slowly fall in love, although they don't admit their feelings to each other until just before her death. When tuberculosis strikes the two sisters with whom Sister Rita shares the convent, Father Rivard innocently allows her

to move into the rectory with him to avoid infection, although he worries about how the move will appear to outsiders.

Mrs. Shandig, the rectory housekeeper and a convert to Catholicism, notices the budding romance with horror, and loses her mind after the young nun is killed. At Father Rivard's trial, Mrs. Shandig admits to murdering the sister, garbling her confession with a description of how she killed a snake in her youth.

Mrs. Shandig's confession scene took a lot of practice, according to junior Molly Peterson, who played the housekeeper. "I tried different tones of voice," Peterson said. "At the beginning I didn't use my hands."

At Buff's direction, Peterson slowed down her speech and used gestures to emphasize her character's murderous actions.

In another scene, Monsignor Nicholson arrives at the rectory for a visit, and Father Rivard stands by quietly as Sister Rita falsely tells him that she is living in the convent. Yehl was particularly effective at the close of this scene, smashing a dinner plate to bits when his superior leaves. "What have I done!" he cried, "What have I done!"

Prince said that her youth may have helped her portray the naive Sister Rita. "Just like Sister Rita, I'm kind of new at everything," she remarked. Throughout the play, Prince's high-pitched voice and animated gestures evoked an emotional vulnerability that was her character's dominant trait.

All three of the leading actors admitted to some nervousness performing the play at a Catholic school. "At one point I have to say I hate God," Yehl noted. "I have had a lot of good relationships with priests ... (but) I tried not to think about the controversy."

Prince said the controversial nature of the play made her wonder about a potential fuss, but the play's overall purpose is not simply to shock the audience. Referring to the play's tragic action, she said, "Instead of showing how awful it was, it showed how human it was."



Linda Dow Hayes/Courier-Journal

Sister Rita, played by Anastatia Prince, looks heavenward for guidance during Aquinas Institute's production of Milan Stitt's *The Runner Stumbles*.

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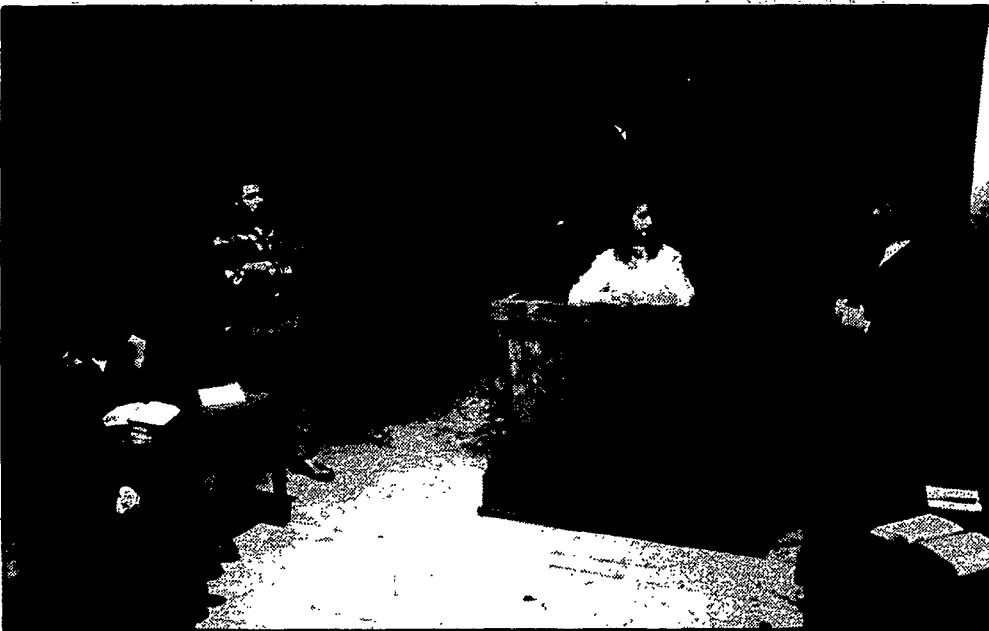
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During the trial, Louise (Michelle Pappano), a student in the parish school, gives damaging testimony against Father Rivard (David Yehl).



Sister Rita clutches her rosary.

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All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

The Courier-Journal
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Cardinal Mooney High School

Do music videos portray women negatively?

KEVIN AMAN, senior:

Music videos are the reflection of the artists' taste and interpretation of what their songs mean to them. For this reason, the overtones that are stressed depend upon the individual artist. One video may portray a woman as dominant, wearing leather and chains, and another video may have a woman delicately picking flowers along a stream. To classify the portrayal of women as either positive or negative would be too broad a judgement as it is relative to the individual presentation.

LISA FUSS, senior:

I think women are portrayed in a negative way. They always seem to be the "cause" of the singers' problems. If a woman is not the cause of the problem, then she is the object of some sexual fantasy. In Aerosmith's "Rag Doll" video, the lead singer waves goodbye to women in each house as he drives down the street after getting what he wanted from each one. Women are portrayed as ignorant human beings put on this earth only for men's use. The worst part about it is that women are portrayed as accepting this treatment.

JOAN GRAHAM, senior:

In music videos, women are portrayed nega-

As Teens See It

tively. They are there only for looks and physical aspects. This contributes to a chauvinistic attitude that is also found in other media. To help everyone, especially children, develop a healthy attitude towards women, they must be portrayed realistically — with intelligence, stressing aspects other than the physical.

AMY HARRISON, senior:

I think that women are portrayed in negative ways in music videos. Women are shown as sex objects to attract the young viewer's attention. The women are treated with no respect, and I think this feeling carries over from the videos into society. Women are used by the music industry to make songs more appealing not only to the ear, but also to the eye. The videos not only take advantage of the women, but also the viewers.