



Courtesy of Christen Holly Photography  
**BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE...** Anne Frank (Caleigh Anne) writes in her diary that would turn a historical tragedy into a deeply human story during Westfield Community Players' production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

## WCP Delivers Powerful Staging Of *The Diary of Anne Frank*

By DEVON GOHDE

WESTFIELD- *The Diary of Anne Frank* is one of the most profound first-person accounts of history, having sold over 30 million copies and translated into more than 70 languages. The real thoughts and feelings of a teenage girl in hiding from the Nazis in a small secret Annex with her and another family. A story that many have come to know over the last few decades since the Holocaust.

Westfield Community Players had their opening weekend for their fourth production of the season, *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Once you enter the theatre, you see the small, cluttered, and tightly arranged set. Beds, tables, and chairs crowd the stage, feeling deliberately cramped and leaving narrow paths for the actors to move around. This claustrophobic stage design powerfully illustrates just how small and suffocating the hiding place was, drawing the audience deeper into the daily fear, strain, and fragile hope experienced by Anne and the others in hiding.

Caleigh Anne portrays Anne, showcasing the innocence, spunky, radiant light she was described as having. Anne regularly speaks to the audience while reading excerpts from the diary, discussing her fear of the current war and her longing to once again feel freedom. The monologues not only showcase the fear she had, but her curiosity about herself and who she was becoming as she grew over the two years she spent in hiding.

Caleigh's range of showcasing these many difficult and complex emotions that Anne Frank experiences was mesmerizing. Showing that despite being put in such a fearful situation, Anne was still a teenage girl obsessing over movie stars, fashion, and dreaming of the world she wished to explore again.

John Paul Durrazo as Otto Frank, the gentle and sincere father who does what he can to protect his family, delivers a deep and moving performance as Anne's father. Joined by Dawn Lanoue as Edith Frank, the scared yet trying to remain strong and keep a sense of normality mother, Lanoue approaches the role with raw emotion, showcasing to the audience the quiet strength and vulnerability of a woman struggling to hold her family together under unimaginable circumstances.

Margot Frank, the older, quieter, and more obedient sister, is portrayed with breathtaking depth by Danielle Becht. Even when she is not speaking, you can see every thought run

through Margot's head as she struggles to keep it together and remain strong in such unforeseen circumstances.

What stood out most in the production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* was that, during the intermission, the cast did not return backstage; they remained in the claustrophobic set. Moving about as a projector shows the passing days and months. While the audience checks their phones or takes a breath outside, the cast continues performing in silence. Reminding everyone that there was no intermission for these people and how trapped they were waiting for their liberation.

*The Diary of Anne Frank* reminds theatergoers of the dangers of intolerance and the horrifying consequences of hatred, while also highlighting the resilience of the human spirit. In a time when many communities around the world continue to experience injustice and displacement, Anne Frank's words encourage empathy, understanding, and the importance of standing up against discrimination so that the tragedies of the past are not repeated.

"It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals; they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."

Westfield Community Players will be performing *The Diary of Anne Frank* on March 14, 20, and 21 at 8 p.m., and on March 15 at 2 p.m. For ticket information, visit [www.wcptheatre.org](http://www.wcptheatre.org) or call (908) 232-1221.