STAFF WRITER

Molly Ringwald is forever known to film fanatics as the spoiled princess from The Breakfast Club and also a member of the Brat Pack. However, after her divorce from the film director that made her famous, she moved on to independent films and also stage.

Such an example is the Broadway smash, Sweet Charity, which is playing at the Pantages Theatre. Here, Molly Ringwald continuously prove to her fans that she is just not another screen scarlet but also an outstanding actress and singer.

Charity is a hopelessly optimistic girl who continuously falls in love with the wrong men. The musical opens with her and a prospective husband and with her talking about their lives together. However, all he does is push her into the fountain and steal her purse, which contains all her life-savings.

Determined not to allow that to occur again, she vows to close her heart off to all men. Then one day she meets a tax accountant and she falls in love. However, in the end, those two were not meant to be together.

It was very amusing to have found Molly Ringwald in this role. All the previous movies of her starred her as this unreachable gorgeous girl whom all the guys wanted as his girlfriend. But in this musical, it was her who just never seems to find the perfect man for her.

Before stepping into the theatre I expected Molly Ringwald to be casted in a similar character as her characters in the blockbuster films that made her famous. However, she plays a hopelessly optimistic women who longs for a better life. Her goal is to get out of her current occupation: dance hall hostess and her strategies is to marry a man who can take her away from it all and also to educate herself.

It was when she decided to educate herself that she meets Oscar at the local Y. Played by Guy Adkins, Oscar is a shy accountant who happens to fall in love with Charity after she helps him out of an uncomfortable position for him. He is an incredibly actor but it seemed at some points that his character was not a shy man at all.

The elevator scene had very interesting snap shots because Oscar, is VERY claustrophobic, and the elevator that both Charity and Oscar happened to be in becomes stuck. Oscar's strategies to survive is to press his whole body against the body, to attempt to climb out of the elevator, and to twist himself into unusual positions to save the oxygen.

The set was wonderfully used in this musical as the elevator actually went up and also every set was automated and computerized. The sets were also beautifully created and seemed very authentic and also the lighting also helped. For example, in the Fandango scenes the lighting was also musky and dim revealing that the dance hall was a shady place to be.

The costumes for the Fandango Dance Hall also mimicked the lighting. The male characters were all in trench coats and hats, thus impossible to make out their faces while the girls, including Charity, wore slinky outfits. The costumes for the Club Pompeii, however, was the complete opposite. The men were all in tuxedos and the girls were wearing colorful beautiful clothing.

The lighting and the sets was also very different from Fandango. The lights was very bright and also there was a waiter, a bumper, and also tables and chairs for visitors to dine in. Club Pompeii was also where Charity meets Vittorio, the famous Italian actor, who broke up with his girlfriend and who took on Charity as his "date" to the Club.

After fainting from excitement, Charity goes with Vittorio to his apartment and that is where Ursula, Vittorio's girlfriend, enters the scene to reason with Vittorio. This scene also had interesting snap shots, as Charity hid in the closet while Vittorio and Ursula managed to settle their differences. The most hilarious snap shot was of Charity wearing Vittorio's bath robe and hat and waving her hands frantically, behind Ursula's back who opened the closet door and who was apologizing to Vittorio for accusing him of hiding a "cheap tramp" in the closet.

In my opinion, the director did not include any interesting levels of power and this can be seen in the Mexico restaurant scene where Oscar proposes to Charity and at the same time, Charity attempts to tell Oscar that she is not the girl that he taught her to be. In this scene, both Charity and Oscar have their back to each other and also because their head and body was in the same level throughout this whole scene.

Overall, this musical is the perfect musical to watch for all theatre fanatics to all Molly Ringwald fanatics and to any families looking for a little family time. It is to no surprise that this musical is a beloved classic and also an award-winning musical.

2. When most people think of a play, they think of a stage, with actors cast in specific roles who interact with each other through song, dance, or dialogue. "Cirque du Soleil- Delirium," performed at the Staples Center on September 15, 3006, is a performance that differs from the average play in that it lacks an ongoing script. The performers conveyed emotions through acrobatic movement and song, the stage was set up in an innovative position, the costume design was unique and was enhanced by the lighting and images projected across a screen.

Beginning with a man flying on a balloon, swinging and performing flips in the air, this show contained a large cast, but not all of the actors were given specific characters to play. This show revolved around the man's dreamland, hence the name "delirium," which means "madness, hallucination, frenzy." The man's goal was to get out of his imaginary world, and he was able to suspend the audience's disbelief by his confusion and sporadic appearances containing craziness. Other important characters were those sang about his life and dreams, flying through the air suspended by a wire, with long dresses barely gliding over the floor. "Cirque du Soleil" is a circus, meaning that there were acrobats and people performing tricks. The performers that were most memorable to me was the woman who successfully twisted fifteen hula hoops around her entire body, the two men with bulging muscles who stood upon each others head, the small Asian lady who made shapes with her white dress, and the acrobats who performed tricks using cloths hanging from the ceiling. I was stunned at the strength it took for the people to perform those tricks, and the performers' dedication to the show they were putting on. Every movement was an interesting snapshot because the tricks were so intricate, and because the actors used every piece of space on the stage and above, which made for easily seen levels of power. The use of the triangle was more difficult on the set the performers were given, but it could be seen when there were two people in the air and one on the ground or vice versa.

Another aspect of "Cirque du Soleil" that I enjoyed was the different set, lighting, and costumes. The set was a long strip of stage with screens that were mechanically driven across both sides of the stage so that images could be projected on it, but so that the audience would still see the performers. Some of the images on the screens were different types of people opening and closing doors in black and white color, symbolizing the awakening of new dreams and ambitions, and hands grabbing at air. Costumes were also very interesting, and reflected the type of act the person performed. For example, the dancers that stayed on the ground wore extravagant colored and designed make-up on their faces, symbolizing animals and fantasy. The lady with the hula hoops wore a tight body suit. Singers who swung from the sky wore long dresses and hair pieces of bright colors. The tone and the mood was a state of craziness depicted by beautiful movement and talent, to which the set, costume design, and lighting all contributed.

Overall, I enjoyed "Cirque du Soleil- Delirium." I was awed by the ability of the performers and the uniqueness of the show. At times, I would get lost in the stage picture and momentarily forget the purpose of the play. For this reason, the acrobatics and tricks took away from the average play experience. To witness "Cirque du Soleil- Delirium" is a fascinating experience in which everyone should take part.

3. Walking into a theatre is like taking a gamble: you either win the jackpot and walk out understanding a new perspective of life through theatre, or you lose and walk out disappointed and bored, or both. I had been to the Falcon Theatre last year and been pleasantly surprised with the production of "Leap" which I had seen because of its three person cast and intimate accommodations. For these reasons, I looked at their website to see what shows were playing and my eyes caught on "Alice in One Hit Wonderland 2 Through the Looking Glass". For obvious reasons, I was interested in seeing how another director could twist the words of Lewis Carroll into a modern and entertaining script. I was pleasantly surprised with the ingenious actors and actresses, script, and portrayal of the world of Wonderland.

I do not know if I can even call this a play, because it was a combination of comedy, improv, music, dancing, and acting. Firstly, this story was not about the average Alice. It was centered around the Brady Bunch's Alice (the maid), who wanted to be queen for a day. She fell asleep and woke up in Wonderland, and then made her way across the chessboard until finally reaching the final square. Escorted by knights and met with by

the Red and White Queens, Alice ultimately fights with the Jabberwocky and faces her irrational fear. The Brady family joins her at the end of her journey and return with her into reality, where she tells them about her "dream". Bizarre in context, I was not bored for a single moment during the show. The "one hit wonder" part of the title derives from the fact that the show was a musical of re-worded one hit wonders. There were only thirteen actors who all played multiple parts, all sang, and all danced. I was blown away by the quick-wit and talent multiple times. Another aspect of this play that I enjoyed was the close interaction with the audience. The actors ran around down the aisles and consistently broke the fourth wall. In one instance, Lewis Carroll, who half narrates, half partakes in Wonderland, says, "Now we will break the fourth wall" and then Alice turned to the Jabberwocky and says, "You will not hurt me or my friends" looking and pointing to us. In such a small theatre, whenever an audience member laughs or comments loudly, the noise is heard throughout. At one point, a little boy asked his father, "Who is Gallagher?" when one of the actors said it, and then both actors on stage look at each other, acknowledge what the boy said, and made a running joke out of it throughout the rest of the show. The characters also used improv (or very well rehearsed improve-like moments); for instance, Lewis Carroll would say, "New choice" and the character would change the line. The reason I think it was improv was that the new choices would sometimes be followed up with another line from the actor depending on the reaction from the audience, and there were constant mockings of current political figures and economic occurrences.

Performed by the Troubadour Theater Company, "Alice in One Hit Wonderland 2 Through the Looking Glass" continues the story of Alice from the Brady Bunch going through Wonderland to find her place in the family she is serving. Upon opening the program I read, "The Troubadour Theater Company is a company of performers, musicians, and writers dedicated to the revitalization and deconstruction of theatre as we know it…the company strives to entertain always, educate sometimes, and take itself too seriously never," and this sums up my experience at the theater today perfectly. I recommend this show to people who can reserve their judgments until they give the performers the opportunity to show their talent and apparent energy for entertaining and being onstage, because those who allow themselves to be taken into this quirky Wonderland world will not be disappointed!

4. The Mark Tapper production of House of Blue leaves not has an interesting plot complete with a surprising ending, but an array of talent displayed though the emotions of the actors. Although I arrived ten minutes late with my rush ticket in hand, I was able to catch on to the exposition of the story quickly. In the opening of the play, the audience is introduced to the main characters: Artie a man in a mid-life crisis, Bunny, the women he is "in love" with, and Bananas, his crazy wife. Throughout the exposition we learn who they are, what there relationships are, what there goals are and what is stopping them. Artie and Bunny both want Bananas to move into a home or die so they can move to California where they believe all there dreams will come true. Bananas goals are a little more challenging to identify because she is harder to read as a character. Some of he choics consisted of throwing food at the others, tossing Bunny's coat out the door and acting like a dog. One can conclude that she wants to get rid of Bunny and return to her normal life.

The plot thickens with the secret arrival of Artie and Banana's sun Ronnie who plans to assassinate the Pope to get attention and revenge on Billy. Billy, who is from California is engaged to Corrinna who is a deaf actress and killed later by the explosion. Throughout the play the actors broke down the forth wall with monologues to the audience letting them know their backgrounds. The emotions of the characters where very believable. Because of this, along with the set, the show had a very natural feeling. As an audience member, I felt like I was in the home of these unique people, and when they would have their asides, I felt like they were talking to me.

The set cosseted of a living room a kitchen and a door leading to the

other part of the house. The way the set was designed actors could easily move around even when there were up to seven charters on the small stage. They did a very good job balancing when they had on person out in the audience, others crouched by the TV or someone cooking in the kitchen. They always had business or movement, which also made it more realistic. Eventhough characters such as Bunny turned her back to the audience when she was dancing along to the piano, it was done on purpose. Because she wasn't talking, and Artie was the focus at that time, it was OK. Eventually, when she did have lines, she immediately ran up to the doorway and turned around to speak.

The costumes were simple, but fitting to the characters and the setting. Everyone dressed in a 1960s way and spoke with a New York accent. For the most part, Bananas wore a night gown untill later where she wore a red dress. To match Bunny's eccentric personality, she always wore pink, and had a full face of makeup. Ronnie wore an army uniform and an alter boy outfit showing how crazy he really is, and the nuns dressed like nuns.

The use of lighting was carefully thought out. Whenever someone would go off stage and talk to the audience the background would dim. Sometimes a blue light would be used for a more dramatic tone. The effects for the explosion were impressive. There was a loud bang, flashing lights, and even pieces of the apartment broke off to make it more realistic. In the end a blue spot light was used when after he killed his wife and then the blue curtains came down. The blue lighting fit very well being that the play was called House of Blue Leaves.

Over all, the show was very well done and the actors definitely gave it up. Although I did not love the story itself, I can appreciate all the effort and the talent that went into making this show.

5. The play Miss Julie by Swedish playwright August Strindberg was written in 1888. The play is set on the Midsummer night of 1874 at the estate of a count in Sweden. In a small kitchen of the servant's quarters a war breaks between the mistress of the house and her witty servant. The plot centralizes around three characters: Miss Julie (played by Kristen Hansen) is the daughter of the count who owns the estate. Jean (Eric Satterberg) is the manservant to the count. Kristin (Julie Marie Hassett) serves the count as the head cook and is Jean's fiancé. Preformed on Sunday, October 24, 2010, the Live Exit Theater Company gives the century old play a modern twist with a heavy focus on sex, power, and class that applies to all periods and places of the world.

The actors of this three-cast production clearly conveyed Sttrindberg's messages about humanity in the seventeenth century that are evident today.

Jean, a servant since childhood is very well-read and ambitious. He has secret aspirations to change his position in society by moving away and establishing his own hotel. He openly admires Miss Julie in conversations with his wife. In adoration of her ability to be extremely haughty yet a spiraling tornado of confusion and destruction, Julie serves as his ladder "up". In overcoming class divisions of society, he brings Julie "down" by wooing this confused young woman to bed. In viewing the first scene of the play, the roles of Julie and Jean are unclear. The actors try to convey this by Julie commanding Jean to perform ridiculous tasks of servitude and Jean obeying her every command.

Throughout the beginning there were excessive pauses that led to some confusion as to the relationship between Julie and Jean. When the situation was said and clearly defined by the actors the audience understood their relationship. In obeying Julie, actor, Eric Satterberg's trigger words were fairly weak. He completed her commands with no motivation or purpose. Finally when he objected to do her biddings, strong trigger words were used to convey a struggle for power between the two characters. The accent used by Satterberg was inconsistent in annunciation and led to some confusion in minor lines of his monologues. Nevertheless the accent was an appropriate decision for the period and setting. In Jean's sorrowful monologue to deceive and gain the sympathy of Julie, although sometimes flat lining, Satterberg's target emotion was clear and appropriate to the dilemma of an intelligent being's desire to finally feel what it means to be "up". These target emotions that made the audience favor the character of Jean, soon change to vindictive and villainous motives to bring Julie to a plummeting fall after having sex with her footservant. To convey that Jean had lost all respect and admiration for Julie, Satterberg made the decision to have the character of Jean to be extremely nonchalant and cold to the presence of Julie. He would often use a tone triggered by disgust, envy, and sarcasm towards Julie's "noble" position in society.

From this Satterberg is able to take power of the following scenes, cornering Julie into his plans. When it seems his plans will fail, Jean jumps into extreme hysteria at the thought of the count's return from his voyage and discovering their affair. At the very sound of the bell that announces the count's return, Satterberg's usage of trigger words helped him to extreme desperation. He consistently used the basin at the side of the stage to wash his face and pull back his hair when he portrayed the target emotion of anxiousness. At the end of the play Satterberg bursts into tears due to his failure to rebel against the bell, against the count's hat and boots that lie in the corner—against his servile nature. Jean represents the struggle between classes and the strong defining lines of class in societies of the seventeenth century and somewhat present today.

Julie represents struggle between man and woman in one human being resulting in her internal struggles. Julie was raised by her mother to resent men and never submit herself to the command of a man. Julie's mother wanted to defy society's separate spheres for men and woman and emphasized on acting like a man. This caused a great amount of conflict between Julie's mother and father. Julie is a heap of disorder in result from an unclear definition of her own persona from childhood. She desires to come "down" from her social status to feel what it is to touch the ground and see who she truly is. Upon Julie's initial entrance, after her description as a wild and untamed woman in the conversation between Jean and Kristin, she bursts through the door and bids that Jean continue to dance with her at the Midsummer night festival. In this first scene, actor, Kristen Hansen's decision to include a significant amount of pauses decreases the intensity of what is said. This decision contradicts the descriptions of Julie. It also makes the audience question if she is truly as wild as described, but simply a strong-willed woman that does desire acceptance from her society. As the play progresses the strength of Hansen's power over the scene builds exponentially. This is portrayed by Hansen jumping onto the kitchen table as she commands Jean to kiss her toes. Hansen's movement provides a clear definition of power, although it is not completed with natural purpose. In the beginning of the play the trigger emotions were not strong enough to motivate such powerful movement throughout her monologues. As the plot intensifies, Julie is brought into a dilemma in dealing with her affair with Jean. She must contemplate facing her society, her father, and dealing with the values instilled by her mother. Hansen is deeply engaged into the character and scenes in which the plot boils. Her trigger emotions of bewilderment and depression combine to lead her into deliria, while sweating and shaking she often stumbles and crumbles to the floor in tears. Julie's power is entirely lost and the roles are switched: Julie is at service of Jean, seeking his guidance and is at his unforgiving whim. Finally when both characters are at desperation, Julie makes the decision to flee the country. Hansen, completely absorbed into character, parts from her pathetic servant who choking back tears screams, "the first will be the last!" The first to break away from the rules of society for women, men and class will be the last to suffer from its barriers.

Kristin represents morality in a force totally separate from that of Julie and Jean. She has an omniscient point of view of the entire situation, and as woman ahead of her time, finds a safe conclusion in living with her status, her society, and her period. Actor Julie Marie Hassett used her character Kristin to try to establish a relationship between the characters in the ensemble. She does this by using target emotions to give facial reactions to the events between Jean and Julie. Appearing in few scenes, she often reprimands Jean for taking advantage of such a confused young woman. Hassett shows a deep understanding of the character's concern for the greater good and the divine way rather than her personal gripe and discontent. The other characters are very intense and internally wound into their struggles. Kristine serves as motherly consoling role when she talks to Julie about God and his plan for each of his children. Hassett's decisions for this role is effective to an extent, but lack of connections within the entire ensemble makes it difficult for audience to connect all characters together.

The costumes were not specific to any time period. This decision upon the director allowed the performance to lean toward a more contemporary time period. Unlike having the servants and Julie have drastic differences of dress to convey division of class and power, having all characters in similar dress put them all on similar levels. This allowed the audience to receive the greater message regarding human equality.

The blocking, lighting, and staging was carefully choreographed according to the roles of power and importance in each scene; although it was not interwoven with the performance. Each actor knew their positions and areas of working space, but moved to them systematically rather than naturally. The actors would often turn their back to the audience in completing an action. These are considered as some of the "don'ts" of theater, yet these decisions of the director were effective in creating a stylistic pattern to the performance. The general pattern of emotions throughout the play tended to dramatically sway up and

down. This was engaging for the audience and metaphorically represented the chaos between the characters and the chaos we deal with daily within our own relationships.

The performance was approximately two hours long without an intermission. The actors kept the audience engaged in this highly sentimental and suspenseful performance recommended for all to experience.