

Vishal Varma

Lake

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Ranking *Ranked*

Northview High school is a school that is built on academics. A good portion of the students who go to the school have 4.0 or higher GPAs and the school has consistently ranked second in the state of Georgia. The high school featured in *Ranked* is a dramatized version of this; a school littered with the injustice of grades determining life. When you put the two together in a production of *Ranked* at Northview High school, the parallels become shocking, and the message becomes clear. The Northview production of *Ranked* was a great production, displaying the talent of the Northview Drama team and the extent to which drama can be used to make a stance on an issue.

Something that really stood out in Northview's production of this play was the immense skill the actors had in each role. The actor who played Lily, the main character, had a great voice during all the songs and was able to express the distress of Lily's situation to the audience in such a way to invest us into the story. Other cast members also had this innate talent, such as the actor who portrayed Sydney Summers, who perfectly portrayed the bully-like character that was Sydney. Her performance throughout the play was spot-on, making the audience hate her while also further investing us into the story. Lastly, the performance of Sydney's group was spot on. The male character of this group was especially talented and performed the role well, with his

signature walk with his hands behind his back, looking up at an angle perfectly matching his character. Thus, the overall acting performance of the cast at this production was excellent.

The creative liberty Northview took when making the set for the play was spot on and helped with the dynamic of the play. The set was a staircase into a bridge-like structure that connected the two sides of the stage. The most memorable scene of the play, when Ryan tries to win Alexis' heart, played with this beautiful set design, with other cast members slowly walking up to the bridge and using lights like stars to show the love Ryan had for Alexis. The set design also made the play feel livelier and more like an actual high school. Ambient cast members often used the tables and chairs to appeal to this high school dynamic. Another aspect of the set was the moving news show known as *The Average Update*. With limited resources, the drama team really pulled off a great pseudo-news show that captured the audience's attention and added humor to the play. Overall, the set design of this production of *Ranked* was excellent and showcased Northview's ability to make a great play from scratch.

The way some scenes panned out during the play made my peers and I shocked by the skills and cleverness of all the actors on stage. During one of Lily's solo songs, the twenty extra cast and other main cast members stood frozen for minutes at a time. While witnessing this scene, my peers and I could not believe the amount of time the actors spent frozen and how flawlessly they were able to do so. Another scene where my peers and I were amazed by the impressive performance was during the sentimental scene in the second act, where different characters discussed their emotions on the rank system. During this scene, six actors were on stage in groups of two in various locations with only one group speaking at a time to make it seem like the events were occurring at similar times in distinct locations. During this time, the other groups were still and silent, paying homage to a similar performance in *Trap*, where this

was used in a similar manner. The execution of this was flawless, and my peers and I enjoyed this clever use of stage materials to create the illusion of “meanwhile” in this play. Thus, the way certain scenes went elevated Northview’s production of this play.

However, not all plays are perfect and there were of course some problems with this play. The biggest problem I noticed while watching the play was the lack of a clear timeline; events unfolded extremely quickly, and the audience was just meant to assume days had passed. The most notable example of this was during the week of Rank Redemption, when we skip from Friday to Monday with no explanation given. This jump in time blurred the sense of a timeline in the plot of the play which made some events difficult to understand with respect to the whole story. Another problem I had with the play was how the trailer set was poorly made and did not create the same illusion as the main set. It felt as though too little time had been given to making the trailer set and the main set was given too much time. This made the trailer scene difficult to fully understand, as the set was not up to standard with the main set. Thus, there were some problems with the play.

Over the course of the year, Northview has gotten better and better with its plays; *Trap* was a great introduction to the year that had a lot of clever stage use, *Much Ado About Nothing* showed the immense skill of the cast and finally *Ranked* which combined both these concepts into a great play. *Ranked* was a great play with a lot of thought put into it and minimal amounts of problems associated with it. The play felt like a step up from both its predecessors, and it felt innately Northview like. The plot matched the school’s culture, the actors represented the immense skill of Northview and the creativity involved in the play felt excellent. The Northview Theatre Company exceeded my expectations in this play, and I look forward to seeing future plays due to this stunning performance.

Below is a picture of my friend and I with a cast member.

