Portola Tells a Twisting Tale in "Trap"
written by Halle Ewing, a junior at University High School

Menachap, California, is the home to rolling greenery, agriculture, and all things normalcy. The only unnatural aspect of this otherwise conventional town is the infamous Oak Box Theatre, known for its deadly history. When an inexplicable, seemingly supernatural tragedy haunts the walls of the Oak Box once again, first responders, professors, and loved ones come together to save the 241 victims of the incident. But details begin to emerge, revealing a truth much more sinister than originally anticipated, begging the question: can they be saved at all?

Golsa Khamsehnia as Detective Heche stunned with her consistent physicality and emotional range. Khamsehnia's desperation to find an explanation for the inexplicable was tactile, her body language going from stiff and uninterested while completing her slush work to releasing blood-curdling screams in a retelling of a time she felt unprecedented fear—unparalleled, until she began working in Menachap.

Jay (Jaehun) Shin as Ephrain commanded the stage with his expressive physicality and emotive vocal inflection. Shin's tenacious hold on the victims of the Oak Box Theatre incident was palpable, with his voice throaty and rasping and arms extended towards the sky, slowly devolving into destructive obsession. David Sloan's Capt. Donovan worked alongside Shin beautifully—with their competing voices and body language, the two characters' reluctance to believe one another merged their desperation to listen, creating a touching and terrifyingly juxtaposition in an otherwise unsettling production.

Lighting by Jad Cera, Vivian Chang, Wyn Gutierrez, Manpria Sandhu, and Jasmine Davis was masterful.The lighting team contributed to the eerie storyline beautifully, with sharp changes from warm, rosy lighting that emanated across the stage to frigid, jarring downlight that cast shadows over the actors' faces. As Detective Heche narrated a story concerning a peephole and an unexpected eye, the lighting slowly waned in and out, originally illuminating her before leaving her in the dark, creating an unnerving, discombobulating scene deceptive to the human eye.

Justin Pham, Amicus Carrasco, and Cori Dudley fulfilled their over 400 sound cues excellently. From the sound team's clicking noises to represent the moans of the unconscious victims, to the piercing sound of a foghorn created a bewildering and enigmatic cacophony, every sound was appropriate and added to the characters' tangible terror.

In a whirl of twists, turns, and unending paranoia, Portola unleashed unadulterated hysteria in this gripping narrative. A loop of spine-chilling and blood-curdling fear; it would be a crime to miss this riveting spectacle.