

Follow Me Down

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[Di Jayawickrema](#) · October 24, 2010



Pictured: Thomas Anawalt and Graham Halsted in a scene from *Follow Me Down* (photo © Dan Applegate)

"*Follow Me Down* may take place in 1925, but I believe [the] play resonates strongly with what it means to come of age in 2010. In our post-post-modern world, we are all still trying to make sense of the strings we are born with, and the ones we tie ourselves," writes director Sarah Elizabeth Wansley in the program introductory note. This Oxford tale of collegiate rivalry does exactly that and more. This is a wise and darkly funny play.

Patrick Barrett's script is both intelligent and utterly believable. He perfectly conveys the unique camaraderie that develops in dormitories, where conflicting strangers are thrown together and become friends, enemies, and sometimes both. This sort of attraction-antagonism exists between the two main characters, the cynical, cruel, and highly entertaining James, played by Graham Halsted, and the pudgy, earnest, literary-minded Thomas, played by Thomas Anawalt. The dialogue is full of charmingly old-fashioned exclamations—"Monkey!" "Farty!"—and the entire cast relishes the upper-crust English accents they don except that they labor the inflections a little too heavily at times. There are three other very different dorm mates, all played convincingly, and they are soon joined by three women, who have been freshly admitted to Oxford. Questions of feminism, religion, sex, and literature are bandied among this group with humor and insight but it is the tension between James and Thomas that drives the narrative.

"James doesn't believe in anything," Thomas sneeringly informs Tess (played by Kara Davidson), who becomes a love interest and bone of contention for both boys. The play takes a darker turn when James's carefully studied callousness is tested with the sudden death of his father. This sends him into a downward spiral that reveals how much of his cynicism is a mask for a wild confusion and fear. All the boys attempt to aid him and all air their secret grievances against each other in ways that are just slightly too eloquent for common speech. However, the shocking denouement leaves all parties silenced, and the final dialogue-free scene speaks to what

Wansley means about a very modern feeling—the characters are left asking silent questions that have no answers.

Emily Inglis's warm set, with books scattered everywhere, is perfectly lit by Brian Tovar and lends exactly the right tone to the play. With assured direction and a cast embodying their characters to the hilt, *Follow Me Down* is a finely edited, excellent production that speaks to us as clearly as it speaks to its own particular moment in time.

Opened: October 23, 2010

Closed: November 1, 2010

Artists Involved

- **Cast:** Thomas Anawalt, Lydia Blaisdell, Kara Davidson, Jessica Frey, Graham Halstead, Joseph Rende, Jason Resnikoff, Justin Scalzo, Akilah Williams
- **Author:** Patrick Barrett
- **Director:** Sarah Elizabeth Wansley
- **Costumes:** Whitney Adams
- **Lighting:** Brian Tovar
- **Sets:** Emily Inglis
- **Sound:** Gregory Jacobs-Roseman
- **Dialect Coach:** Jill Muller
- **Stage Manager:** Laura Elizabeth Cole
- **Producer:** Aporia Theater

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