



Radium Girls – Gainesville High School

Hundreds of women of all ages are working at the United States Radium Corporation. Their job is simple: paint clock dials with glowing radium paint. Management tells them to sharpen their dull brushes with their lips, exposing themselves to dangerous radiation and leading to premature deaths. While it has been almost 100 years since these events, Gainesville High School kept these girls' stories alive through its thought-provoking performance of Radium Girls.

Radium Girls, written by playwright DW Gregory, was first produced in 2000 at the Playwrights' Theatre of New Jersey. Radium Girls tells the story of three young women in New Jersey who, in the 1920s, worked for the United States Radium Corporation. Seeing her friends start to die and herself becoming ill, Grace Fryer wages a war against her former employer through both litigation and the court of public opinion. Can she achieve justice, or will her pleas be "brushed" aside?

Overall, the actors in the show focused on shifting their acting choices. Grace Fryer, played by Alexis Cottrell, became more and more independent as the show went on, starkly contrasting her more reserved acting choices in Act One. Alexis effectively shifts towards confidence, opposite Kathryn Schaub's (Callie Nicewonger) show progression. Callie was resolute in the first act, confidently performing lengthy monologues for her friends' health, including an impassioned speech in the health department's waiting room. Later, however, she spoke in a more reserved tone, correctly reflecting her worsening condition. A similar switch occurred with the company's president, Arthur Roeder, played by Matthew Del Vacchio, and the vice president, Charlie Lee, played by Sydney Martin. Matthew started by leaning into his character's confident, sinister side. In the second act, Matthew softens and adds hesitancy to his voice, symbolizing his lost confidence in his company's safety. Sydney, however, gets more assertive as the show goes on, showcasing the difference in the morality of the two characters. The evolution of this cast's acting choices helps elevate the characters from words on a page to living, dynamic people.

The show's tech was very focused on realism as well. Every girl working in the Radium Corporation had a similar uniform. However, the costume department, run by Sydney Jones, Caelyn Driscoll, Savannah Sok, and Ivy Eyestone, showcased each background character's personality through minor outfit adjustments. They also leaned into the show's radioactive theme by splattering glow-in-the-dark paint onto the uniforms, which provided proof of how much radium was used and created ominous foreshadowing for the effect of that radium. The sound effects by Piper Sahlberg and Calvin Suglo also focused on realism. Whether the clicking of a typewriter in an office space or 20's music playing in Grace's home, the sound effects made the setting feel authentic.

Gainesville beautifully pulled off a challenging show. The script had many moral questions and complicated emotions, making it a complex show to portray emotionally. However, it was navigated expertly by creating realistic characters and technical elements, leading to an emotionally grounded show. Radium Girls dropped everyone's jaws with its incredible performance!