



# The Sun Star

University of Alaska Fairbanks

## “All in the Timing” brings laughter and philosophy to the stage

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David Ives’s “All in the Timing,” directed by Stephan Golux, is a beautifully abstracted intellectual playground.

“All in the Timing” consists of six one-act plays, each with its own insight to meaning. “All in the Timing” is playful, making use of wordplay and philosophical references that flirt with the search for greater meaning.

A girl in blue read alone in a “De Stijl” bistro as the audience trickled in on Friday night. They found their seats on either side of the stage, which was built on top of the Salisbury Theater’s main stage. Golux described the arrangement as a tennis court, or alley-style stage. It forces the audience to be aware of their counterparts watching the play, which provides a slightly surreal experience. Surprisingly, this configuration wasn’t distracting at all.

Staging is minimal, but not minimalist. Everything seems to spout from a unifying fountain of neoplasticism, an artistic movement of the 1920s that reduced art to its fundamentals. The play is set in what is essentially a three-dimensional Mondrian painting: overlapping, black, metal-frame rectangles hang at deliberate angles, lights shine straight down in red, blue and yellow squares, and costumes share the same simplicity and primary palette.

The first play in the six-show collection was called “Sure Thing” and featured Stephanie Sandberg and Tyler McClendon. The play chronicles dozens of ways that two people could meet to emphasize that everything must fall into perfectly into place for them to hit it off. The pace dragged a little bit, but “Sure Thing” held on to its charm.

“Words, Words, Words,” a room full of philosopher apes-Milton (Chris Mertes), Swift (Marley Horner), and Kafka (Tiana Hanson)-follows “Sure Thing.” Each chimp parodies the philosophies of their counterpart as they attempt to type Shakespeare for “the man.” The actors make great use of their set in this piece, climbing and swinging from their cage.

“All in the Timing” has a cast of nine, which means that many of the actors play multiple roles. This is typical of productions of “All in the Timing.” It adds another dimension to the abstraction, by associating behaviors of characters with one another.

Andrew Cassel, who is graduating this semester with a bachelor’s degree in theater, delivers an impressive performance all around. His first appearance is as Don, a failed con man, in “The Universal Language.” Seasoned Cassel acts alongside Heather Warren, a UAF English graduate who is acting on the main stage for the first time. The duo are a delight to watch-their acting styles merge in a very organic way. Chioke Buckley is also in this piece, if only for a moment. Buckley is an emergency manager at Eielson Air Force Base, and this is his second main stage production.

These three actors return in their respective colors later as Al (Cassel), Mark (Buckley), and Waitress (Warren) in “The Philadelphia,” a play about existing, or not, in metaphysical representations of cities, or not, and the effect of attitude on overall quality of life...or not. Al shows Mark how to manipulate his Philadelphia from the safety of his Los Angeles, until their worlds mix and Al has trouble taking his own advice.

Between “The Universal Language” and “The Philadelphia” is perhaps the most bizarre of the plays: “Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread.” It is a look into how Philip Glass (Mertes) views the world, even how he participates in day-to-day activities, such as buying a loaf of bread. It is a musical almost entirely without pitch. Two unnamed women (Hanson and Sandberg) and a baker (McClendon) dance around Philip Glass, repeating, reducing, and reinventing the scene by chanting the lines and removing them from context. Mertes plays a disheveled, glassy-eyed Glass, dressed in brown. Philip Glass is the only character who wears a color other than the three primaries.

The last piece is called “Variations on the Death of Trotsky.” It is the year 1940, and Trotsky (Horner) is tending to his political journal. Mrs. Trotsky (Codi Burk) has read in an encyclopedia from the current year that her husband dies that day from a pick axe wound. Trotsky reacts variously to the news, often analytically, but ultimately dies every time. Variations on the Death of Trotsky is similar to “Sure Thing” in form, but the mood is much different. It brings the show full circle. Trotsky spends the whole sequence with a “mountain climber’s axe” in his skull, which has been “smashed” there by his gardener, Ramon (Mertes).

“All in the Timing” runs 90 minutes with no intermission. It will be performed in the Salisbury Theatre at 7:30 p.m. March 23, 24, 30, and 31, and at 2 p.m. April 1.

Golux, a theater professor at the university, has been directing for over 20 years. This is the fourth play he’s directed for Theater UAF. Shakespeare’s “Winter’s Tale” was the last show he directed, from which “All in the Timing” borrows many cast members. He has been asked to direct the show “bo-brauschenbergamerica” by Chuck Mee in Anchorage this summer.

Hanson is also a graduating senior. She was recently selected by the theater faculty to be Theater Student of the Year, and she is directing “Famous For Fifteen” through the Student Drama Association in April.



Tiana Hanson (left) and Marley Horner (right) act out a scene with a typewriter. Photo provided by Kade Mendelowitz.