



Friday, November 8, 2012

by Gary Black

'The Flu Season': A sickening love is in the air

Love in a mental institution is nothing you can get an inoculation for, and it's liable to be a troublesome affair.

That's the condensed premise of "The Flu Season," the rave-reviewed play by Will Eno that is the Winter Mainstage production by Theatre UAF. Directed by University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty member Stephan Golux, the production opens tonight on the Lee H. Salisbury stage at UAF.

"Will Eno is an up and coming, rising star in the playwright world. He's a post-modernist, contemporary, edgy playwright, and he's written a number of plays that address disconnection in our contemporary world. It's been on my list for a while," Golux said of "The Flu Season." "It's an opportunity to present a piece that's quirky and not conventional like a narrative play."

Major roles are just Man, Woman, Nurse, Doctor, Prologue, Epilogue — testament to the out-of-the box type of production it might be. The production drew attention quickly, Golux said.

"The cast jumped at the chance to do something edgy," he said. "The moment the play hit the wires, I was a little deluged by people who wanted to be part of this project."

The cast

"The Flu Season" stars Theatre UAF students Amelia Cooper as Epilogue, Stephanie Sandberg as Woman, Brian Tuohy as Man, Theatre UAF alum Andrew Cassel as Prologue, UAF professor Eric Heyne as Doctor and UAF staff member Siri Tuttle as Nurse.

• Andrew Cassel's previous roles with Theatre UAF include "The Winter's Tale," "All In the Timing," "How I Learned to Drive," "Lysistrata," "Don Juan," "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "The Laramie Project," in addition to many other productions. Cassel received a BA in performance from UAF.

• This is Amelia Cooper's third year as a regular occupant of the UAF Theatre Department. "The Flu Season" is the first production she has been involved with in Fairbanks.

• Eric Heyne has acted in three shows with the Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre. This is his first time on stage at UAF, although he has been an enthusiastic audience member (and English professor) since 1986.

• Stephanie Sandberg is a theater major as well as vice president of the Student Drama Association. She has previously appeared in the UAF production "All in the Timing" and the SDA Winter Short "Speed the Play." She's also worked with FST, appearing in "The Comedy of Errors" and "King Henry IV Part One."

• Brian Tuohy is a third-year student studying theater and English. This is his first main stage performance at UAF. Past experience elsewhere has mainly been in musical theater as well as some comedic and tragic roles, such as Reverend Hale in Arthur Miller's "The Crucible," and Lenny Gantz in "Rumors" by Neil Simon.

• Siri Tuttle appeared in many productions in the previous century, acting in Washington, Oregon, Utah and Vermont. She took a break to raise a family and to study language (she is now a UAF linguist, working in the Alaska Native Language Center.) She returned to performance in 2011 in UAF's "The Winter's Tale" (Paulina) and the UAF-produced film "The Messenger."

If you go

What: "The Flu Season" by Will Eno, directed by Stephan Golux

When: 7:30 p.m. tonight and Saturday and Nov 16 and 17; 2 p.m. Nov. 18

Where: The Lee H. Salisbury Theatre in the Fine Arts Complex on the UAF campus

Bonus: "The Flu Season" won the Oppenheimer Award, presented by New York Newsday, for best debut production by an American playwright. It was a selection in the Play Lab at the Last Frontier Theatre Conference at the Prince William Sound Community College in 2002. Charles Isherwood, theater critic for The New York Times, called Eno "a Samuel Beckett for the Jon Stewart generation." That right there should make it worth seeing.



Photos by Kade Mendelowitz, Theatre UAF