

Friday, March 30, 2012

Complex themes don't dull Theatre UAF's 'All in the Timing'

Theatre UAF's "All in the Timing" is a metaphysical comedy, mixing the complex human emotions with absurd, comical moments, juxtaposed against breaks in time.

It's complex, but it's delightful.

Director Stephan Golux has taken playwright David Ives' work and executed it brilliantly. The cast and crew of mostly students handle the six short plays with youthful charm. The shorts hit on multiple topics, like the complexities of falling in love in "Sure Thing," the intersection of life and music in "Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread" and laments of a history that never was in "Variations on the Death of Trotsky."

The chimps in "Words, Words, Words" easily hang off oversized monkey bars, part of the geometric set based on art of Piet Mondrain. That same set, with only minimal changes, is then transformed into a bakery in "Philip Glass Buys a Loaf of Bread." the actors move in and out of them like entryways.

Included in the set is a blocky color scheme of primary colors that is translated into the costumes. The bright, almost cartoonish costumes serve as

an anchor through the wildly disparate shorts.

The set and costumes make the otherwise absurd "Philip Glass Buys A Loaf of Bread" work beautifully. In it, minimalist composer Philip Glass (Chris Mertes) attempts to buy a loaf of bread at a bakery. What

they "sing" they move through the shapes of the set and navigate through similar lighting effects on the stage. It's chaotic and kind of weird. But through the chaos there's wit and an oddly satisfying conclusion that only works because of the creative staging.

Most actors assume multiple roles, many of which couldn't be further apart. In "Words, Words, Words," Marley Horner plays a rebellious chimp trying to write Shakespeare, only to come back at the end of the production in a different short as Leon Trotsky. He navigates both characters well, especially the latter, which he plays with a perfect Russian accent to much comedic effect. Despite the accent, he imparts a

sense of poise, especially as he faces his imminent departure.

Andrew Cassel and Heather Warren are impressive in their grasp of "Unamunda," a fictional language created by Cassel's character in "The Universal Language." Some of the phrases the two spit out are impressive tongue twisters, but beyond the entertaining facade of the language is a complex story full of heart and love.

"All in the Timing" is one act, clocking in at just about 90 minutes long, but it's worth every moment. Golux writes in his director's note that his aim is to "offer a gift that is both wholesome and holistic — a truly light dance of the mind." He has more than achieved that here.

"All in the Timing" runs through this weekend, at 7:30 p.m. today and Saturday with a 2 p.m. matinee Sunday. For more information, contact Theatre UAF at 474-7751 or theatreUAF.org

by Suzanna Caldwell