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## UAF student director draws strong cast for Simon play

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Angela Brownfield, student director of Theatre UAF's production "Laughter on the 23rd Floor," delivers Neil Simon's play like a skillful comedienne telling a good joke.

The play follows a team of comedy writers working on a top-rated television show during the McCarthy era. The action centers around the relationships of the writers, and as one would expect, their dialogue overflows with clever jokes and wicked jibes.

The cast for "Laughter" is unusually young, even for college theater. Out of a cast of nine, only two are seniors. Of the remaining six, four are freshmen and two are high school students. However, the ensemble is surprisingly strong overall with many outstanding individual performances.

Shannon Luster is particularly enjoyable as the flamboyant Milt. As one of the seniors in the cast, Luster's skillful timing and well-crafted characterization are augmented by his considerable stage experience. His unwavering focus and confidence on stage render his character completely believable and contribute greatly to the steady flow of the entire piece.

Freshman Dam Geist gives a dynamic performance as the very intense and very Russian head writer Val. Geist and

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Luster are especially engaging together as their characters furiously egg

each other on with half-serious teasing and well-aimed insults.

John Perault is hands-down hysterical as Ira, a hypochondriac with a flair for the melodramatic and a whiny, New York Jewish accent that puts Woody Allen to shame. In this role, Perault's energy and seemingly effortless comic timing are astonishing, causing one to wonder if this young actor is not long for the coast.

Jeff Hedges does a fine job with his characterization and overall presentation but is unclear about how his character relates to the others and to the play as a whole. Heather Mass and Nathan Kessey's perfor-

offstage in the last scene. "Bud Jet Kuts" - is credited for the adequate but - uninspired set, presumably in protest of the chancellor's decision not to refill the faculty scenic designer position.

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Costume designer and assistant professor Tarn Maginnis also contributes a strong design with a perfect period look for the entire ensemble. The costumes for Luster's outlandish character - are especially fun, bringing a laugh each time he appears in a new one.

Overall, this is a polished and professional quality production, impressive for a student director. Brownfield's thesis show is not only worth seeing and a hoot to boot, it does credit to Theatre UAF as a training ground for hard-working theater students.

mances suffer from a lack of focused attention, with some fine moments, but not enough directed energy to sustain their characters throughout the show. Eric Pierson, Bret Borgeson and Tiffany James are the weakest performers in the cast, with flat line readings and wavering attention. Given that James and Borgeson are the youngest members of the cast, it is easy to forgive their awkwardness, while Pierson's sincerity is charming despite his inexperienced delivery.

Dialect coach and seasoned Fairbanks performer Claudia Lively does an amazing job helping the actors to master Irish, Jewish and Russian accents. Student sound designer Bert Arnet has just the right balance for the party sounds