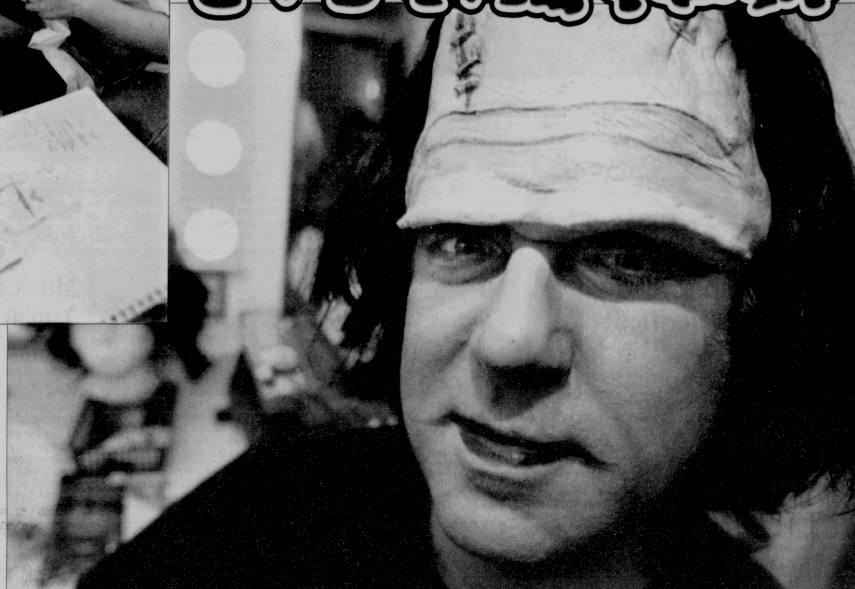




Eric Engman/News-Miner

**FRANKLY, MY DEAR**—Don Evans is reborn as Frankenstein's monster with the help of a headpiece, makeup and the artistry of costume designer Kris McCumby, for Fairbanks Drama Association's "I'm Sorry the Bridge is Out, You'll Have to Spend the Night."

# THE MONSTER MASH



## Scream of a comedy opens Fairbanks Drama Association season

By DEBBIE CARTER  
Staff Writer

... the bridge . . . it's gone." Frankenstein tells the couple, "I'm sorry the bridge is out, you'll have to spend the night." And so begins a romp the Fairbanks Drama Association is calling a "monstrous musical comedy."

John and Mary reluctantly join a house already full of Frankenstein's research "associates"—Count Dracula and his wife Natasha, Frankenstein's monster, a mummy and

Prince Rex, who turns into a wolfman occasionally. Hovering in the background are what director Barbara Pitsenberger calls the solid gold dancers—Dracula's brides, the Draculettes.

Neither John, a nuclear physicist, nor his attractive fiancée, Mary, seem to suspect anything is amiss. "They're very 'Leave It To Beaver,'" said Pitsenberger. But monsters must be monsters,

and the household makes plans for the newest arrivals. Frankenstein wants John's brain for his monster, Dracula wants to add "new blood" to his harem, and the mummy hopes to sacrifice a virgin, if he can find one.

Pitsenberger describes the musical, which opens this Friday, as a "Rocky Horror Picture Show—family style."

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## NY artist exposes human agony

By DAVID COSTELLO  
News-Miner intern

Jerome Witkin creates visions of what most people try to ignore.

The world-renowned artist flew in from Syracuse, N.Y., recently to present his various paintings of human misery, torture and death. He also juried works by Interior artists in the annual 64th Parallel Art Show.

"This is an important show for Fairbanks," said Todd Sherman, University of Alaska Fairbanks art professor, said of Witkin's exhibit. "He's one of our nation's foremost figurative painters. We don't usually get to see this stuff."

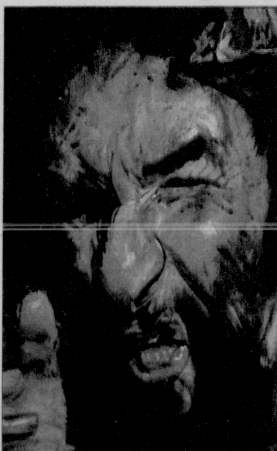
Known for his depictions of the Holocaust, domestic violence and drug abuse, Witkin uses striking colors to create hauntingly attractive narratives of pain and despair. His paintings, on display at the UAF Art Gallery until Oct. 23, confront viewers with images mesmerizing to the eye, yet disturbing to contemplate.

"There is an element of what's forbidden in the mind," said Witkin, whose plain, black turtle-neck contrasted sharply against his painting of a screaming man writhing from a neon pink, electrified cylinder inserted in his rectum. Witkin titled the oil-based narrative "Unseen and Unheard."

"We think about human relations," said Witkin. "Why are we terribly good to each other and yet so good at being terrible?"

Talent and pain have long accompanied Witkin, who began painting when he was 7 years old. By 15 he was studying with distinguished artists Ben Shahn and George Grosz at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, and since then he has studied in Europe and graduated with a master's degree in fine art from Pennsylvania University. Over his career, his paintings have appeared at 35

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SELF-PORTRAIT—Jerome Witkin turns his powerful vision on himself.

## 'Laughter' director takes serious career step



ANGELA BROWNFIELD

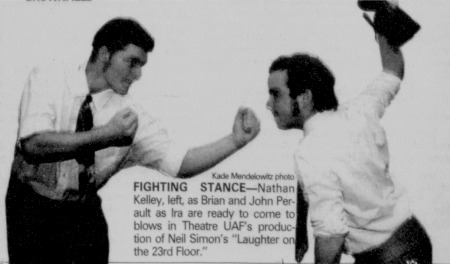
Director Angela Brownfield is not new to theater or to Fairbanks. Born at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital 21 years ago, she has been playing dress-up since she could walk and started her stage career in elementary school with a role in "The Three Little Pigs."

Now as a senior at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Brownfield is directing Theatre UAF's season opener, Neil Simon's

"Laughter on the 23rd Floor." This production, beginning tonight, marks the first mainstage show ever directed by a graduating senior as a thesis project.

Brownfield has honed her theatrical craft throughout her life in Fairbanks. As a junior high school student she and two friends made a film and helped tour a play, both

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FIGHTING STANCE—Nathan Kelley, left, as Brian and John Perault as Ira are ready to come to blows in Theatre UAF's production of Neil Simon's "Laughter on the 23rd Floor."

# UAF: Student director gathers laughs

**Continued from Page C-1**  
 about drug awareness and self-esteem. A returning regular at the UAF Summer Fine Arts Camp she worked on a show for director Eny Figueroa who later became one of her mentors. During her fifth year at camp she was honored as most improved theater major. While attending North Pole High School she competed on regional and state levels in drama, debate and forensics, taking first place in regionals three of four years. Brownfield also gained her first technical theater experiences, including makeup design, special effects and scenic painting, during high school.

After her first year at UAF, Brownfield returned to the Fine Arts Camp, but this time on the other side of the chalk board, teaching pantomime.

"Teaching was and is the most difficult thing I have ever done," she said. "Knowing your subject is only one-third of the battle. I have a new found appreciation for all teachers. Communicating knowledge, and making it interesting for junior high and high school students is excruciatingly difficult, even in a camp environment when you know most actually want to be there."

Now a veteran actor, Brownfield's roles include Puck in "Midsummer Night Dream," Adriana in "Comedy of Errors" and Aunt Martha in "Arsenic and Old Lace." She was also in charge of props for "Reckless" and assistant stage manager for "Tuma: Naam-Gen Eehu" for Theatre UAF, and was a temporary stage manager for one season of Fairbanks Light Opera Theatre's "Riversong."

Her first directing experience was on "Lunch With Ginger" by Marsha Norman, a Winter Short produced by the UAF Student Drama Association.

"Yes, a director can successfully fight stage fright," she said, explaining what she learned from her directoral debut. "No, the best actor is not necessarily the one with the most experience. I had a wonderful experience with Amanda Williams. She had never been on stage before, but did so well and liked it so much she went on to perform as the Empress in "Grand Tarot" and as one of the three Spirits in "The Magic Flute."

To others new to directing, Brownfield advised, "Be careful when directing Friends. It is very easy to get feelings hurt, on either side by criticism or lack of respect. Never add anything last minute."

Her second directorial outing was another Winter Short "On Bailie's Strand" by W.B. Yeats, an opportunity that taught her to be careful in choosing what work to direct.

"Pick a strong script," Brownfield said. "While I loved the

(Yeats) play, it was a very difficult script and I simply didn't have the resources or the time to give it the help it needed. This experience is a large part of my reason for selecting "Laughter," she said.

"My last two shows were tragic in nature, and I feel very drawn to commedia dell'arte styles and Shakespearean comedy, naturally. I wanted to do a show that was more realistic than 'Bailie' had been, and required a strong ensemble cast. I hate scripts that are star vehicles. This script is very fun.

Brownfield was sitting in her dentist's chair waiting for a tooth to be drilled the second time she read "Laughter on the 23rd Floor."

"I was laughing out loud. I couldn't help it," she said. "I hope the audiences find the play as funny as I do."

Simon's play also attracted Brownfield because it is not just shallow comedy.

"There is a real issue underneath the laughter," she said. "The play is funny without being pointless. It asks a very serious question: Is it better to be censored, or no art at all?"

In an era of budget cuts and a general devaluing of the arts, Brownfield said "Laughter" struck her with immediacy not expected from a Neil Simon play. "It is a wonderful script and is a form of protest," she said. "My protest against the cutting of arts education, of federal and state support for artists, and the attempts at censorship of that belongs to the community in its entirety."

Brownfield equates learning to direct with learning to be a better person.

"It is strengthening your communications skills. It is being sensitive to others' creativity, while maintaining your own. It is loving your work and living your love," she said. "Directing is a form of protest, your particular vision of the script, of how to make an audience laugh or cry. A good director is patient and disciplined and expects discipline from those around them. It is always about the art, but if you can't communicate your vision, if you can't get the actors or designers to work towards your vision, it has ceased being art and is merely performance."

The young director considers herself lucky to be working on the first UAF directing thesis.

"This is the culmination of the work I have done in theater in college," she said. "Thesis in theater means that you get a chance to practice your craft on the mainstage, for a large audience, with department support and guidance. You get a budget from the department as if you were one of the other mainstage shows for the season, you get use of department facilities and resources.

and may even have professors design for you. This is a drastic change from the shorts experience where there is a flat \$200 budget per show and you must find students to design and create your sets and costumes on their own time."

As a thesis project, videotapes of the show and Brownfield's written paper will be sent to schools as part of her portfolio. She will be judged based on this show, on its choice and its execution.

"If I hope to continue in this field, this show is very important for my resume," she said. "It means that the department trusts my ability enough to allow me to direct on their stage with their money. If I do a poor job, it hurts Theatre UAF and costs us money. If I direct well, the show succeeds, and we break even. That is a large burden of trust for me, and my actors and crew, to bear."

After graduating in May of 1999, Brownfield plans to go to the United Kingdom for graduate school in directing. Eventually she plans to own and run her own theater company.

The cast of "Laughter on the 23rd Floor" includes Bret Borgeson, Dain Geist, Jeff Hedges, Tiffany James, Naham Kessey, Shannon Luster, Heather Maas, John Perault and Erik Pierson. The set designer is Bud J. Kutz, costume designer is Tara Maginnis, lighting design by Kade Mendelowitz, sound by Bert Arnett, dialect coach Claudia Lively, and stage manager is Jessica Sullivan with assistant stage manager Sarah Bushman.

The play will be presented in the Lee H. Salisbury Lab Theatre Oct. 8-11, and Oct. 16-18. Show times are 8 p.m. tonight, Fridays and Saturdays, and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are available at the Theatre UAF Box Office (student tickets are also available at the UAF Bookstore) Adults: \$12 (\$10 for matinees), UAF faculty/staff, military, seniors, handicapped: \$10 (\$8 for matinees), and students/youth: \$6 (\$5 for matinees). Parents are cautioned that this play contains mature language. Credit card sales and information is available by calling 474-7751 or by stopping by the Theatre UAF Box Office of the Great Hall Monday-Friday noon-2 p.m., 4-6 p.m. and two hours prior to performances. "Laughter on the 23rd Floor" is part of Theatre UAF's season ticket package available for \$25-\$40.

# MONSTER: Comedy musical opens

**Continued from Page C-1**

Set in the 1930s, "I'm Sorry The Bridge Is Out, You'll Have to Spend The Night," mixes farce and vaudeville with silly jokes and witty musical numbers.

Encouraging Igor to have confidence in himself, Mary sings, "Play Your Hunch." Bored with their eternal lives and each other, Dracula and Natasha croon, "The All Eternity Blues." The musical numbers range from 1940s swing music to the blues.

FDA chose the musical to open its fall season because of its Halloween theme and its humor as well as the audience participation, said Pitsenberger. The monster and the mummy team up for a song-and-dance number that combines grunts, Egyptian dance and other silliness.

"I think people's stomachs are going to hurt (from laughing)," she said.

The characters rely on heavy makeup, masks and headpieces. It takes about an hour for Don Evans to metamorphose into Frankenstein's monster, with his headpiece prosthesis. His 5-inch platform heels, combined with his normal height, brings him close to a monstrous 7 feet.

Thomas VanDorp, who makes dentures locally, created realistic fangs for Dracula and his wife, and of course, the Draculettes.

Pitsenberger's husband, Gary, who plays Igor, also designed the set—a gray gothic stone castle that fills the Alaskanland stage. The show will be spooky but

it's not scary, said Pitsenberger, adding that it will be appropriate for children, aged 7 and older.

Bob Pickett and Sheldon Almain wrote the musical. Pickett, a vocalist, actor and musician, is best known for his hit, "The Monster Mash," which he co-wrote and sang.

Dave Presley plays John and Levi Tyre is Mary Helen. Other cast members are Mike Downing, Frankenstein, Mike Libby, Dracula; Terry McCarthy, mummy; Gina Kolloch, Natasha; Erik Seliga, Prince Rex; and Cathi Massey, Mom Talbot. Altogether, the cast numbers 20. Gianna Droghda will direct the music.

Performances begin at 8:15 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday in the Alaskanland Civic Center theater. Other show times are 8:15 p.m. Oct. 16 and 17 and 2 p.m. on Oct. 18.

FDA plans a gala event on opening night with refreshments that include a Jello brain mold. The audience is invited to meet

the cast and enjoy entrees and desserts set up on tables that follow vampire, mummy, Frankenstein and wolfman themes.

The audience of the Saturday, Oct. 17, performances may compete in a monster costume contest. The top prize is a season ticket to FDA's productions.

Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$15 for students and seniors. Call 456-PLAY for reservations. FDA's box office opens weekdays from 4-6 p.m., and about an hour before show time.

Season tickets are on sale throughout October. For \$65, season ticket holders receive tickets for four mainstage productions, two children's productions and an encore performance of "Pipedreams." Theatergoers may also purchase a \$70 six-pack of vouchers, which are good for any combination of shows. Tickets for regular shows are \$15 for adults and \$12 for students and seniors, except for musicals which are \$18 and \$15.

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