

Skondovitch exhibit set in Washington

Local abstract expressionist painter Alfred Skondovitch, a founding figure of the New York School, will exhibit his paintings Friday and Saturday, on Mercer Island, Wash.

During World War II Skondovitch studied art at the Sir John Cass Institute in London. His student work earned him a job as Oscar Kokoschka's studio assistant and he was included by Kokoschka in an exhibition of international art at London's Wartime International Club, the same show which marked the debut of the important post-war painter Lucien Freud.

Upon the advice of one of his teachers Skondovitch traveled to New York. There he met Franz Kline, with whom he shared a studio and became close friends. Skondovitch attended the Hans Hofmann School and he and Kline regularly exhibited together along with other early abstract expressionists. In 1956 Skondovitch, in the company of such painters as Kline and Willem De Kooning, was included in the exhibition "Ten Americans" which heralded the New York School.

Skondovitch has spent the last 40 years of his career in Alaska, where he became a successful business owner while continuing to paint. Now retired from his reproductive business, he remains active in the Fairbanks community and presently serves as chaplain and historian of the Pioneers of Alaska. His canvases, monotypes and prints have been exhibited in numerous museums and private venues. Site 250 Fine Art in Fairbanks represents his work.

In the Seattle area collectors Matt O'Meara, Kerry Oldenburg and John Oldenburg will host the exhibition of his work. The public is invited to meet the artist and see his new paintings from 5 to 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday at the O'Meara-Belden home, 4453 S.E. 63rd on Mercer Island. For more information, please call (206) 232-9764.

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UAF student director draws strong cast for Simon play

By AMY TAYLOR
 For the News-Miner

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 dialogues overflow 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 Dain Geist gives a dynamic performance as the very intense and very Russian head writer Val. Geist and Luster are especially engaging together as their characters furiously egg

REVIEW

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 performances 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 leading the actors to master Irish, Jewish and Russian ac-

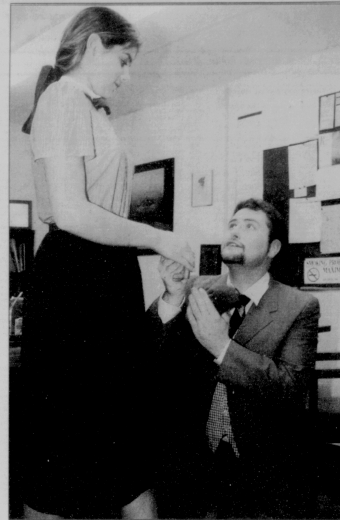
cents. Student sound designer Bert Arnet has just the right balance for the party sounds offstage in the last scene. "Bud Jet Kutz" is credited for the adequate but uninspired set, presumably in protest of the chancellor's decision not to refill the faculty scenic design position.

Though the light design itself is fairly straightforward as called for by the script, the expertise of assistant professor and lighting designer Kade Mendelowitz shows itself in creative subtleties like a beam of "sunlight" coming through the office window in a strategic location and the use of color to mirror the mood of each scene.

Costume designer and assistant professor Tara Magninis 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.

"Laughter on the 23rd Floor" plays at the Lee H. Salisbury Lab Theatre this weekend. Show times are p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets, \$5-\$12, are available at



Kade Mendelowitz photo
 HIT OR MISS?—Shannon Luster as Milt hits on Tiffany James as Helen in Theatre UAF's production of the Neil Simon comedy, "Laughter on the 23rd Floor."

the Theatre UAF box office. Parents are cautioned that the play contains mature language.

TANGO: International Argentine dance makes American tour

Continued from Page C-1
 Cayevue teach in the Argentine Tango Department of the Rotterdam Conservatory. They emphasize that the tango music is world music, and shows clear influences from pop, jazz, salsa, classical and contemporary music.

The show is the collaboration of choreographer Michieli and Castellani, creators, directors and producers of "Milonga Boulevard."

Michieli, an Italian dancer and choreographer, began to dance tango in 1987 with tango teachers visiting Europe. Two years later, she left for Buenos Aires to specialize with the great tango masters.

She danced with Alejandro Aquino, who is considered one of the best tango dancers of his generation. In 1992, they created the show "Tangueros" for an Italian festival. In the following three years, the show had a run of more than 100 theaters and festivals.

Aquino, Michieli and Castellani formed a partnership and created "Milonga Boulevard" in 1996.

The company has toured in Europe, but began its first American tour last weekend in Chicago. The dance company will also perform in Valdez and Anchorage.

An Italian critic, who saw the Tangueros, describes the tango as a "seduction dance, that is to say a love dance, or, in an anthropological context, a courting dance of the primitive world."

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performance this way: "A night with the Tangueros is a seduction play, two bodies that pursue themselves, slip away, then meet, flex, split and catch themselves again."

The popularity of the show is just one sign of the emergence of Argentine tango. Clubs all over the country specialize in this emotionally intense form of dance, which involves more elaborate flourishes and footwork than ballroom tango.

"It's the rage," said Elena Ortiz, a Fairbanks dancer who has danced the tango for years. Unlike ballroom tango, the Argentine tango is more free form. The style has more of a feel, not a prescribed series of dance steps.

"There are moves but you put them together in different ways," she said.

"It's smooth and it's sophisticated and it's intriguing."

The Tangueros will perform in one show only. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$20 for students, seniors and the military, and are available at Hott's Music, Carrs Foodland or by calling (800) 478-7325.

Compania Tangueros will also teach a two-hour workshop Monday "guaranteed to be absolutely authentic Argentine artistry," organizers say. All dancers, regardless of experience, are invited to come to the workshop, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the Alaskanland Dance Center. Registration is limited and the cost is \$20 per person. For more information, or to register, call 479-2655.

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