



Nothing cold about Theatre UAF's 'The Winter's Tale'

FAIRBANKS - The first thing to notice with Theatre UAF's production of William Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale" is that the play is not set in winter. The "winter" in the title refers more to the season of the characters' lives rather than the actual season itself.

"It's ritual rebirth, as it deals with the success and the hope of a coming generation in the face of the older ones," said director Stephan Golux. "It's not about winter."

Even though "The Winter's Tale" is considered a comedy in the Shakespearean sense, don't expect any gags. Golux, an assistant professor of theater, directing at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, said the first half reads more like "Othello" — dark, angry and full of psychologically complex characters — while the second half is more like "Twelfth Night" — happier, less angry and romantic.

The plot goes something like this: Initially childhood friends, Leontes, the king of Sicillia, and Polixenes, the king of Bohemia, are visiting each other. Polixenes wants to go home, but Leontes wants him to stay. In the process, Leontes has his wife, Hermione, try to convince Polixenes to stay, something she is able to do with extreme ease. Leontes becomes jealous and accuses the two of adultery. From there the plot darkens. There's jealousy, betrayal and death before things are neatly and happily resolved in the end.

The play is one of Shakespeare's later works and is based more on prose than on poetry. That means more conversational language, but it is still a challenge for the actors.

Vocals coach Carrie Baker helped cast members pronounce the text in a way modern audiences can grasp.

Golux explained that Shakespeare puts ideas at the end of a sentence, with emphasis on that part of speech. Today, most



King Leontes (Andrew Cassel) speaks with his wife, the Queen of Sicilia (Hadassah Nelson), in UAF's main stage production of "The Winter's Tale" Photos by Kade Mendelowitz/Theatre UAF

people put emphasis and ideas at the beginning of a sentence. Baker's role was to make that language more accessible.

Speech coaches are fairly rare in Fairbanks theater productions, but Golux noted they were lucky to have Baker, a professor in the theater department, assist.

Another unique element in this production is that the set and lighting design was created by one student, Rhi Johnson, who is a UAF junior pursuing dual degrees in technical theater and foreign language.

Johnson said she designed a minimalist set that ties together the play's two different halves. "It's more helpful to provide a background that the action can use instead of trying to influence the action by having things move around and define everything too much," Johnson said.

The lighting, actors and costumes create the mood and the setting, which is inspired by "once upon a time," not a specific place in history.

Assistant professor Bethany Marx created at least 20 costumes, a complicated task that Golux said was executed beautifully. Her costumes and Johnson's set created the world of "The Winter's Tale."

"They've done a great job in rendering this rich, fairy-tale world," Golux said



Antigonus (Pedro Lizardi), Paulina (Siri Tuttle) and Sicilian Lord (Sam McKiernan). Paulina is fiercely loyal to Hermione, Queen of Sicilia, during the dark first half of "The Winter's Tale"

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