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**Life mirrors art in UMM's production of "Our Town"**

*Summary: Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, "Our Town," will kick off the theatre discipline's 2008-09 season. Performances of the play that celebrates life and the American dream will run Thursday-Saturday, Nov. 6-8, with 7:30 p.m. performances and a 2 p.m. Saturday matinee.*

(October 24, 2008)-Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, "Our Town," will kick off the University of Minnesota, Morris theatre discipline's 2008-09 season. Performances of the play that celebrates life and the American dream will run Thursday-Saturday, Nov. 6-8, with 7:30 p.m. performances and a 2 p.m. Saturday matinee.

"Our Town," directed by UMM Associate Professor of Theatre Ray Schultz with scenic and projection designs by UMM Professor of Theatre Tap Payne, captures the simplistic beauty and fragility of everyday life as it examines the lives of community members in the town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, at the turn of the century. "'Our Town' is one of the most important plays of the 20th Century," said Schultz. "It celebrates the triumph of the human spirit as it cycles through life's various stages that make up the play's three acts – daily life, love and marriage, and death."

One of America's most widely performed plays, Wilder's work examines both small-town values and universal truths as the residents of his fictional town show us the joys of life and family, as well as the need to "make time to look at one another." Wilder's study of life, love, marriage and death is simultaneously comic, moving and philosophical.

"While 'Our Town' takes place in Grover's Corners over 100 years ago, the people and events detailed in the play can still be found throughout the world and within all communities. In fact, Morris residents will find many similarities between the characters found in the play and the citizens in our own town. This play is first and foremost a celebration of community," continued Schultz. While "Our Town" is a classic, this production will take a fresh view of the play. "We will be utilizing a bare-bones set and incorporating many projections. Audience members will also see time periods shift throughout the play and we will be highlighting many of the parallels to our own Morris community."

Continuing this theme of community, Schultz has assembled a cast of both UMM students and community members. UMM student actors include Jenna Reiser (Bismarck, N.D.) as Emily, Tim Schmidt (Buffalo) as George, Eric Aufderhar (North Branch) as Doc Gibbs, Erin Denman (Minneapolis) as Mrs. Gibb, Nick James Parker (Louisville, Kent.) as Editor Webb, Jessie Hennen (Shoreview) as Mrs. Webb and Peter Ray (Barrett) as Simon Stimson. Rounding out the cast are Marco Avila (Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua Mexico), Alex McGreavey (Maple Grove), Tony Albright (Seattle, Wash.), Jimmy Person (Buffalo), Jessie Sherman (Bozeman, Mont.), Chris Goebel (Mankato), Tim Gregory (Victoria), Aaron Jansen (Askov), Erin Stahel (Plymouth) and Anna Jessup (Brooten).

Morris community members include Margaret Payne as Mrs. Soames, Chuck Grussing as Constable Warren, Charles Fowler as Mr. Morgan, Reverend Hilda Parks as the Minister, Schultz as the Stage Manager and Nancy Carpenter and Jim Cotter alternating in the role of Professor Willard.

In addition to Payne, the production and design team for "Our Town" includes Stage Manager Kelli Tucker (Stillwater),

Lighting Designer Alex Clark (Woodbury), Costume Designer Elizabeth Karges (Minneapolis), Sound Designer Katie Carlson (New Hope) and Properties Designer Ashley Satre (Herman).

Come visit “Our Town” November 6-8, with 7:30 p.m. performances and a 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday. Ticket prices are \$8 for general admission and \$5 for UMM students and senior citizens. Special group discounts are available for groups of 10 or more who reserve in advance. For more information and advanced tickets sales, contact the [Theatre Box Office](#) or call (320) 589-6249.

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