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3-15-2006

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Dark Castle is children's play

Summary: This year's Children's Theatre play, "The Dark Castle," bubbles with simply great messages about the importance of asking for help, the idea that one is never alone, the triumph of good over evil and the importance of love and friendship.

(March 15, 2006)-The theater discipline at the University of Minnesota, Morris again invites children from throughout west central Minnesota to its 37th annual Children's Theatre Production. This year's performance of "The Dark Castle" by Sally Netzel is directed by UMM Assistant Professor of Theatre Siobhan Bremer. The play bubbles with simply great messages about the importance of asking for help, the idea that one is never alone, the triumph of good over evil and the importance of love and friendship.

Public performances of "The Dark Castle" are at 1 and 7 p.m. Saturday, April 1, in the Proscenium Theatre of Humanities Fine Arts on the UMM campus. Free, convenient parking is available throughout the weekend in all UMM lots. Admission for a performance is \$2 per person. Invited student matinees for elementary schools are also scheduled for March 30-31 and April 3-5.

"The Dark Castle" highlights the journey of a handsome, but not-so-bright, young man, named Dimwit, on his way to save the downtrodden duchess Lumina, who is caught in the clutches of her evil uncle, the Baron. Lumina refuses to give up hope that one day a suitor may overcome the impossible tasks her uncle has set forth and rescue her. Even as Lumina's light begins to fade, her ladies-in-waiting--Lady Nozzle, Lady Ogle, and Lady Murmer--stay faithfully by her side. Inspired by the goodness that Lumina still radiates, Dimwit is helped along his way by a hermit named Hiccup and three former suitors--Sir Grope, Sir Clamor, and Sir Snort--who all offer their own bit of advice to Dimwit. With the help of so many friends who believe in goodness and kindness, how can Dimwit lose?

Nick James Parker (Louisville, Kent.) as Dimwit and Katie Sundquist (New Hope) as Lumina lead the ensemble with their "shining" on-stage examples. Philip Burgraff (Fairmont) as the evil Baron stands as a sharp contrast to the radiantly kind Hermit, played by Lisa Burton (Rochester). Will Holmes (St. Paul), Justin Kemppainen (Spicer), and Robert Mallory (Fairmont) gleam as Lumina's three former suitors, and Amanda Holter (Appleton), Adrienne McCarthy (Minnetonka), and Laurel Orman (St. Paul) all sparkle as Lumina's ladies-in-waiting.

French impressionist Claude Monet's paintings of "Sunset in Venice" and "Japanese Bridge," with their sublime colorings and fantastical feel, inspired Director Bremer's visual concept for this children's show. Assisting Bremer in her concept is Visiting Professor Adam Parboosingh, who designed the sets and lights, and UMM student David Wilson (Brainerd), who designed the costumes and is completing his senior project with "The Dark Castle." Wilson sees children's theatre as an "opportunity for magic," an idea that inspired his designs that are full of "character-[defining] accessories, contrasting lines between the people in the castle and the people who live outside the castle and happy blended colors." Overall, Wilson described his designs as "fun to wear, fun to watch."

The play also completes the senior theatre project for stage manager Megan Losure (Apple Valley). Assistant stage

managers are Laurel Cutright (Saukville, Wis.) and Aly Sepnieski (Minnetonka). Sound designers are Alex Clark (Woodbury) and Abby Swafford (Bemidji). The movement assistant for the show is Kelsey McChesney (Little Falls). Prop master is Tim Hellendrung (New Ulm).

For more information about tickets and student matinees, contact the UMM Theatre Box Office at (320) 589-6249 or e-mail inquiries to thrupub@morris.umn.edu.

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