Sara James  
Staff Reporter

The curtain is about to fall for the last time at Truman for Lee Orchard, professor of theater. Outside of his office in Ophelia Parrish, poems, famous and inspirational quotes and advice on how to live for today decorate the wall. Those are only the smallest insights into his life. Inside his office, 15 years at Truman have lined the walls with books, file cabinets full of files and programs spread from the floor to the 24-foot ceilings; the number re-counting every second of it.

“I had butterflies about leaving, and I felt as though I will be leaving a family,” Orchard said. “I just have a whole adventure waiting.”

His final production is fairly ironic because of his announcement of departure from Truman.

“All the Way Home” is almost like a farewell show in a sense,” Orchard said. “It’s warm, family-oriented, it deals with significant weighty issues, and it deals with them in a way that’s audience-friendly.”

Orchard selected a farce-style play last semester before he realized he would be leaving at the end of this year to teach at Valparaiso University, an hour east of Chicago. After he realized he would be leaving, he decided to select a different play, which resulted in a year’s worth of preparation for all of his colleagues.

I wanted to pick something I’m more comfortable with,” Orchard said.

“All the Way Home” is based off “A Death in the Family,” a 1961 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by James Agee. It is a story about a family and how it deals with a death. Orchard did not reveal who dies. However, he did discuss the concepts of the play.

“It’s about how you cope with an unexpected loss and what is required of the family,” he said.

“All the Way Home” offered the opportunity for him to be around as many students as possible, which is something the previously selected play would not have allowed.

“I wanted to spend quality time with as many students as I could,” he said. “This play virtually doubled the cast.”

Not only did this play allow him to get to know more students, but it also gave him a link to the community, he said.

“One of the lead characters is a boy who’s 6 years old,” Orchard said. “It allowed me to do a little bit more community outreach.”

Junior Nick Freed, who will play the role of Andrew Lynch, said he understands the connections Orchard feels with the play.

“Some of us have viewed [the play] as a parallel with what’s going on with [Orchard],” Freed said. “We all know why he chose it.”

Freed said the play demonstrates as the awkward period after a funeral and how to deal with the grieving.

“I think people will enjoy it, and they’ll be able to connect with it as well,” Freed said.

Sophomore Courtney Schaefer, cast as Aunt Sadie, said she agrees with Freed.

“I really encourage people to see the work,” Orchard said. “It’s such a beautiful play.”

Orchard bids Truman students farewell

Design by Lindsey Koonke,  
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