

Play's bizarre portrayals envoke laughter

BY JOHN O'BRIEN
Staff Reviewer

Cursing puppets, stroke victims, limping men with lisps, dyslexic druggies and a case of amnesia is hitting the stage in the James G. Severns Theatre this weekend as the Theatre Department presents its production of David Lindsay-Abaire's comedy, "Fuddy Meers."

First debuting in 1999 at the Manhattan Theatre Club, this critically-acclaimed comedy took audiences by storm with its zany style and comedic perspective on health topics. Suffering from a rare form of amnesia, the play's lead, Claire, wakes up every morning as a "blank slate," with no recollection of past events. One morning, Claire is kidnapped by a limping, lisping man who later identifies himself as her brother, Zach, and is brought to her mother's house. She is introduced to her mother, Gertie, who speaks only gibberish as a result of a stroke, and to Zach's accomplice, Millet,

who sports a foul-mouthed puppet. When Claire's husband and dyslexic stoner son arrive to rescue her, tensions rise and comedy ensues as Claire's past is revealed and secrets are uncovered.

Although most of its strength was drawn from the second act, the production was generally well-presented and provided audiences with an abstract and enjoyable experience. At times, a lack of sincerity and over-the-top line deliveries served as a distraction, along with the loss of lines due to speed or lack of enunciation and projection. However, the second act breathed new life into the cast and production, bringing brilliant chemistry and wonderfully presented moments to the stage.

As a whole, the cast performed well. The second act brought about sincerity, charisma and depth in the characters that was not as evident in the first act. While some characters seemed to lack conviction and substance, each member of the cast had notable and memorable strengths that greatly added to the production.

Freshman Josh Reinhardt accurately portrayed the troubled teen Kenny, spouting bad language and humorously "entering altered states of consciousness" with help from a couple of fake joints. Seniors Maggie Asher and Kylee Raney also had memorable performances. Asher created laughs

as the gibberish-speaking mother with her near-indistinguishable dialogue. Raney, sporting a notably strong personality, accurately and skillfully portrayed the sassy pseudo-cop, Heidi. Sophomore Jeff Denight elicited a great deal of laughs in his role as Millet, a convict with a foul-mouthed, deep-voiced hand puppet named Hinky Binky. Denight created a forceful character and showed a strong contrast in the emotion of his character.

Although the entire cast performed well, a few members showed considerable depth and presented memorable characters that left the audience in stitches.

Senior John Hussung hilariously portrayed the "hunky dory," upbeat husband with a bad past. Hussung's strong character development helped make his character more believable and enjoyable. Junior Sam Kyker skillfully played Zach, who seemed to be one of the most complex and difficult characters. His strong personality and impeccable timing provided a large part of the show's humor.

Finally, junior Casey Scoggins gave a wonderful and memorable performance as the forgetful yet witty Claire. Scoggins' quirky, upbeat attitude and sincerity effectively brought her character to life. She also presented considerable character development, depth and contrast, capturing the emotions of the audience.

The revolving set design by professor Ron Rybkowski allowed for a swift transfer of the play's action between three separate locations. Although there were some dark spots, the lighting design by senior Ronnie Rybkowski illuminated areas of the stage effectively, creatively casting the illusions of window panes and window blinds on the stage. Costumes and make-up design by professor Joan L. Mather was also noteworthy, namely the make-up work performed for the ear deformity on Kyker's character. Freshman Danielle Schaeffer's props work was also realistic and greatly aided the show. Although overpowering at times, the sound design by graduate student J. Richard Freese creatively incorporated barking dogs and carnival music throughout the show to further pull the audience into Claire's world.

So, unless stricken by a case of psychogenic amnesia, audiences will not soon forget Truman State Theatre Department's abstract production of "Fuddy Meers."

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Facebook decreases empathy



Student deactivates Facebook seeking face to face relationships

BY MEG BURIK
Columnist

Tomorrow, "The Social Network" comes out in theatres. In anti-homage, I have deactivated my Facebook account for a month, maybe forever.

No, I'm not protesting that they still haven't added a "dislike" button. No, the daily flood of event invites in my inbox doesn't bother me. Nor am I some suffering Facebook addict like many people. I only spend about 15 to 20 minutes per day on Facebook. But I have decided I want to stop, at least for a time.

The following are my three reasons for deactivation, listed in ascending order of importance: I'm not a product, I'm worried about privacy and I'm concerned about the empathy of our generation.

Product: Like it or not, we live in a globalized world where nearly everything is up for sale. I refuse to be a product. The last thing I want up for sale is my individuality. I've inserted or excluded various informational tidbits about myself on Facebook, hoping to bolster my appearance, fearing that past, present or future employers may somehow gain access to my profile. Facebook Meg wasn't even real Meg anymore, but some shiny, euphemized version that only occasionally permitted references about frivolous debauchery on her wall.

So I gave Facebook Meg a ridiculous pseudonym, furthering the separation between myself and my Internet presence. But I still felt like just another cog in the consumption machine — changing my name wasn't enough. While interacting with my friends on Facebook, I was bombarded by advertisements, subtly begging for my support with a "like" button, acting like some kind of neglected

child. The ads were also creepily tailored to my interests, like my subconscious was spouting products at me.

Privacy: With the advent of social networking tools and the Internet as a whole, our society has become obsessed with showing personal information into the public sphere.

I realized one day that I wasn't only marketing myself to future employers, but to friends. I don't know how many times someone has asked me if we were friends on Facebook yet. Is that the ultimate signal of friendship?

Sure I can keep in contact with many people, but do I need to know the business of 600

"friends"? When Facebook would log me into my homepage and I didn't even recognize names, I felt like a stalker. I absentmindedly would scroll through recently posted pictures, then after 10 minutes, realize I'm staring at people I have no emotional connection with or haven't spoken to in years.

Although Facebook has privacy controls, I don't trust anything that is out running about on the Interwebs. Nor do I need to know what's going on with my neighborhood friend from kindergarten, with whom the only connection I have is our childhood love of playing in the mud.

Empathy: Social researchers have conducted studies that show scary results — college students are less empathetic now than they were in past decades. Compared to the 1970s, or even 1990s, college students are less likely to agree with statements

like "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me," according to sciencedaily.com and usatoday.com. They attribute these results to several factors of our modern world, but one of the bearers of blame is social networking tools.

Empathy matters because it is what binds us to each other, what gives us community, what helps us survive. Really, it's what makes us human.

Facebook detracts from social interactions, and so detracts from our ability to empathize. I went "rogue" in hope of creating real, personal connections again. Instead of looking at my friends' pictures from their ad-

ventures abroad on Facebook, I want to talk to them in person, hear their stories first hand. Someone has a birthday? Maybe I will do more than just write "Happy 21st birthday, GET WASTED!" on their wall along with the hundreds of other well-wishers.

I've decided that instead of spending my little 15 to 20

minutes per day browsing Facebook, I'm going to try to keep in contact with friends in old school ways, like actually talking face-to-face, or just calling on the phone. For those friends a bit further away, I'll write snail mail or set up Skype dates.

If you have had thoughts about deactivating, don't hesitate to do so. Facebook offers a temporary deactivation option (the one that I chose), so you can go back if you get tired of the unplugged lifestyle. All is not lost, there is still texting, e-mailing and other e-communication methods at your disposal.

Like it or not, we live in a globalized world where nearly everything is up for sale. I refuse to be a product. The last thing I want up for sale is my individuality. I've inserted or excluded various informational tidbits about myself on Facebook.

How to spend your time deactivated, yet still connected with friends:

Usage: 15 to 30 minutes a day.

That friend who always has emo song lyrics as their Facebook status? Bake them some cookies and show them that you value their friendship. Or, if your grandma is like mine, she's on Facebook (and has probably seen a few things she shouldn't). Give Grandma a call.

Usage: 30 to 45 minutes a day.

You know all those bands you've "like"-d on Facebook? Practice guitar for a few weeks, then jam with a group of friends and start your own band. Instead of Facebook stalking your long-lost freshman year roommate, call them up for coffee!

Usage: 45 minutes to one hour

All those clubs that are inviting you to their activities on Facebook — join one of them or volunteer. You'll be connecting with other generous souls like yourself and making a greater difference.

'Wall Street' remake comparatively sub-par



BY KEN DUSOLD
Staff Reviewer

Gordon Gekko is an American icon. He might not be a positive icon, but the fictional characters from director Oliver Stone's 1987 hit, "Wall Street," had an impact on both the American and international financial markets. Looking

at the real Wall Street today, one might see a world far more depressing and greedy than was depicted in the Oscar-winning film.

It seems that those who watched Stone's 1987 social commentary the closest walked away misguided and attempting to emulate Gekko.

The world's modern financial woes are what make "Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps" possible. Stone wisely does not try to recreate or match the original —

he would fail — but he does adequately shake a finger at the mindless risk of banks and investors, tastefully observing a tested romance and returning to us the master of manipulation.

The film, which takes place in 2008, focuses most of its screen time on Jake Moore (Shia LaBeouf), an ambitious young trader, who starts out at prestigious investment house Keller Zabel. His mentor and boss, Louis Zabel (Frank Langella), is treading water as the victim of a false rumor about his company's stability.

Before Moore can grasp the reality of Zabel's bankruptcy misfortune, the Federal Reserve refuses to bail them out, and Keller Zabel is bought for next to nothing by another investment

house. Embarrassed and ruined, Zabel wakes up one morning, heads to the subway and jumps in front of an oncoming train. Emotionally devastated, Jake wants revenge against the man responsible for the deadly rumor, billionaire trader Bretton James (Josh

Brolin in a terrifically slimy performance). Fortunately, his fiancé Winnie (Carey Mulligan) happens to be the daughter of Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas), so payback runs in the family.

Ignoring the warnings of Winnie, Jake seeks the advice and counsel of her father, who has a similar hatred of James and a determination to win back his daughter's love. From this point, the audience watches Jake attempt to outsmart his enemy while fighting to stay afloat in a personal relationship that is increasingly strained as money becomes more important and Gekko gets closer.

The character of Jake is all too familiar to fans of the original film, as his similarity to "Wall Street" protagonist Bud Fox (played by Charlie Sheen) is uncanny. Although LaBeouf is effective in the role, the unoriginal character development earns Stone a negative mark.

Another of the movie's weak points is the countless number of references to Lehman Brothers, Goldman Sachs and the greed of lower Manhattan. Most of the audience knows about these famous banks and understands the story's underlying theme after two hours of the original film and only 20 minutes of this sequel. There is no need to repeat it like a broken record.

Poor choices in certain



Photo courtesy of rottentomatoes.com
Jake Moore (played by Shia LaBeouf), Bretton James and Gordon Gekko's interrelationships are complicated by hidden intentions.

cinematic elements and visual metaphors do not help, either. Strange moments, like when the camera focuses in on a man in the background behind James near the end of the movie, serve no purpose, while the use of actual bubbles to represent the industry crises or skyscrapers as financial graphs with red arrows depicting the market's rises and falls are not clever ... just cheap.

What does work alongside the solid story and inner struggles faced by Jake

and, eventually, Gekko, are the performances. Not to be outdone by LaBeouf and Brolin, Mulligan once again proves her acting worth as a tortured fiancé and daughter, suffering at the hands of Wall Street. Acting veteran Langella gives an award-worthy cameo as the aging and vulnerable Louis Zabel.

Knowledgeable viewers also should enjoy the many inside jokes to both the performers and the 1987 picture which are subtly placed throughout the film. For example, Jake's ringtone is that of "The Good,

The Bad, and The Ugly." Look for the film's connection to that 1966 classic.

Of course, this film belongs to Michael Douglas, who, like his character, is an American icon. Douglas' transformation into Gekko is awesome and eerie. Gekko's evolution from 1987 to 2008 is significant. Eight years in prison and the loss of family seems to reveal his humanity.

In the end, although Gordon Gekko's redemption remains uncertain, Douglas' strength and brilliance serves as a sure thing.