

Play begins season well

BY JOHN O'BRIEN

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Among puberty, a naggy mother, dreams of playing baseball for the New York Yankees and steaming platefuls of chopped liver and cabbage, Eugene Morris Jerome has a lot on his plate.

This weekend, audiences can witness Eugene's struggles and experiences firsthand in the Truman State theatre department's production of Brighton Beach Memoirs at 8 p.m. tonight through Saturday in the James G. Severns Theatre.

Director Randy Bame has outdone himself once again with his current production of Brighton Beach Memoirs, an impressive task given the high caliber of his past productions such as last February's Dancing at Lughnasa, one of the year's strongest and most sincere theatrical productions.

The first in a three-play trilogy, Brighton Beach Memoirs is a semi-autobiographical show written by Neil Simon. Set in Brooklyn in 1937, the play tells the story of Eugene Morris Jerome. In many ways Eugene is a modern-day all-American boy, and the only things he likes more than ice cream and baseball is women, particularly his beautiful, blossoming 16-year-old cousin Nora. In addition to his recent sexual awakening, Eugene must learn to cope with living with his parents, brother, Aunt Blanche and two cousins, Nora and Laurie, in their home in New York.

The skillfully crafted script effortlessly shows the highs and lows of the lives of the family members who struggle to make ends meet. Presented in a narrative form by Eugene, the production seems to be both a comedy and a drama.

Thanks to the character development and actors' passion, Brighton Beach Memoirs presents some of the most realistic, sincere and talented acting of the year. Each cast member created a distinct and thoroughly developed character. The only problem that seemed to plague several cast members, and the production as a whole, was mastering the New York accent. However, this was rarely a distraction based on the remaining strengths of the play.

Playing the role of Eugene, freshman Christian Wacker



Rose Sparks/Index

Freshman Elizabeth Kouba, left, talks to senior Fallyn Lee as senior Paige Hackworth sits and looks on with senior Kristen Lilley standing behind her. The cast's development and passion combined to make the production a strong start for the theatre season.

presented an impressive and hilarious performance. Wacker portrays an overly dramatic, goofy teen quite well. His energy and humor was second to none. Playing Eugene's mother, Kate, senior Paige Hackworth commanded the stage with one of the most believable and developed performances of the year. With a sassy scowl and a distinguished confidence, Hackworth proved to be one of the most perfectly casted in the production, bringing hilarity to her role as the mother who is always two steps ahead.

The remainder of the cast, including senior Cameron Jones, Fallyn Lee, Kristen Lilley and Nathan Crall and freshman Elizabeth Kouba, also presented strong performances. Lee skillful-

ly portrayed the soft-spoken and indecisive role of Aunt Blanche. Kouba's energy in the role of Nora, Blanche's oldest daughter, created nice contrast between the mother-daughter relationship.

While the work of the individuals was strong, it was the cohesive ensemble that really helped the production succeed. There was clear chemistry between characters, making the production all the more believable. The relationships between characters, notably

Eugene and his brother Stanley played by Jones, was genuine and sincere.

In addition to the strong acting, this production proved to be aesthetically pleasing. The set designed by theatre professor Ron Rybkowski was easily the most beautiful and best put-

together technical aspect of the production. Rybkowski worked well building a multi-roomed set in the limited space of the Severns stage.

Serving as the main clue to

time period, the costumes by assistant theater professor Joan Mather along with the hair and makeup by Sophomore Rene Robscheau were skillfully put together. Finally, the lighting by Hackworth was well focused and helped set the tone and location, making clever use of coloring focus to help distinguish between the indoors and outdoors.

With an excellent cast, a gorgeous set and an enjoyable story, Truman State theatre department's current production of Brighton Beach Memoirs is easily the strongest production of the season. This is a hilarious, sincere and well-directed show you do not want to miss.

This review was based on a dress rehearsal Feb. 14.

Brighton Beach Memoirs
Wednesday - Saturday 8 p.m.
James G. Severns Theatre

Living and dying online



BY JACKIE KINEALY

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If you're like me, you have three to five secrets you're planning to reveal on your deathbed. And if you are like me, you worry about unexpectedly dying without the chance to reveal them. How will you get the attention you deserve?

We all can finally stop worrying about that thanks to Deathswitch.com, an online service that sends a mass email to your friends and family to notify them of your death — and any unspoken secrets — if you fail to log in for a pre-set amount of time, anywhere from one day to one year.

Seriously, Internet? This is like Facebook assuming you're dead if you don't update your status for a week. It's like saying to yourself, "If I cannot access the Internet, I am very likely dead. I finally can confess via email that I cheated to pass my life-guarding test during 2007."

The website suggests seven "common" uses for its service. At the top of the list are computer passwords. Passing along computer passwords is the first use mentioned on the deathswitch home page. Other common uses, according to the website, include financial advice, final wishes, unspeakable secrets and the last word in an argument. The last one seems particularly cheap and annoying.

I am 99 percent sure this service is

serious, but you can go to the website and decide for yourself. It makes me wonder who is paying \$20 a year for such a bizarre insurance policy? And how many people are signed up for a once-a-day death check? There must be at least one weirdo. Somewhere out there, a cable company executive is drinking his morning coffee at his desk, confirming he has not died during the last 24 hours after he checks his email and before he secretly opens Farmville in another browser.

Deathswitch kind of makes sense the more I think about it. The Internet has become a central part of life. Maybe it's inevitable that it becomes a part of death.

It's easy to see the ridiculous side of sending an automatic email notice of death, especially for people like me who respond to sad things with inappropriate, unfunny jokes.

The reality is sometimes people die without saying the things they wanted to say. Anyone who has lost a loved one unexpectedly, including me, wishes for the luxury of their last words — a goodbye, a sense of closure and most importantly, their computer passwords.

Death switch might be a good idea after all. I'm too nervous that I would forget to check in if I signed up for one, so I'm not going to. Plus, it costs \$20. But if I did, it would include the following:

1) My password to everything is "password" except my Truman password which is "passwordddddddd" because I have to change it every 4 weeks.

2) If I die, I want all my outfits made into scarecrows.

3) Jamie Barbaglia, I know we decided to bury the hatchet years ago for the sake of our friendship, but I will never agree with you that trees have feelings. They don't. They can't. They don't have brains.

4) If global warming is real, that is going to suck for all of you. My "Planet Earth" DVDs are in my red bookcase, and anyone can watch them to feel better during those difficult years.

Take life one day at a time



BY BRITTANY KEELING

Copy Chief

My daily planner, which is filled with notes, appointments and to-do lists, keeps me sane. But no matter how organized, constant adjustments must be made to include unplanned obstacles. If you adjust to the obstacles instead of stress, everything still can be completed.

My mother is the master of handling disrupted schedules well. Despite being a single parent of five children, she managed to work full-time while feeding us home-cooked meals, attending every dance performance and baseball game, and being there whenever we needed her. Her to-do list was endless, but everything was checked off. Her strategy was deceptively simple: don't sweat the small stuff. She didn't waste time complaining when we told her the night before that we needed 24 cupcakes for school in the morning. She just started mixing batter and changed her schedule accordingly.

When I stress about having too much on my plate, she gives me the same advice. Life is supposed to challenge us with obstacles that ruin our careful plans and make us adjust. It can't be helped. Success comes by only worrying about what we can handle, and simply accepting the rest.

Taking this advice is especially dif-

icult for Truman State students. On a daily basis, we try to balance work, classes, homework, extracurriculars, relationships and a social life, all while needing to eat well and sleep enough to battle the war again the next day. The clock doesn't stop ticking no matter how long the to-do list.

Being a senior in a residence hall creates this problem on a regular basis. I plan my day carefully, fitting in specific times I need to do schoolwork. When those are after 10 p.m., finding a study room is like searching for a needle in a haystack — irritating and impossible. Instead of becoming angry and more stressed, I take my mom's advice. I just accept the situation and find somewhere else. I can't change the situation, so I adjust.

Sickness is the most irritating of the unplanned annoyances. Your planner already is packed, but you somehow have to fit in a Student Health Center appointment and the 30 minutes afterward at the pharmacy. The time you wasted then hangs over your head like a black cloud, reminding you about the readings, homework and paper due tomorrow despite the little time left to complete them. This mindset is wrong. The wasted time is the hours you spent complaining about how awful you felt and how you didn't have time to be sick. Make an appointment, get the care you need and then work. You can stay on track if you adjust to the problem and do what needs to be done.

You might feel like you're drowning in work, but the only time you have too much to handle is when you allow the stress to weigh you down. If you can't change it, let it go. It only wastes unnecessary energy and time that could be devoted to the real work. Do what you need to do and, despite the little problems, you'll build the strength to handle almost anything.

Essentially, it's one day at a time. Each day is a success story. You made it and the world didn't end because you did this when you planned that. Choose your battles wisely and you will always survive.