



Jessie Poole/Index

Tilly's therapist Lorenzo (senior Cameron Jones) holds Tilly (senior Katrina Godfrey) close after professing his love for her.

# Abstract play offers insight and laughs

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Abstract is a word that accurately describes the Truman State theatre department's current production of "Melancholy Play," which shows 7 p.m. tonight through Saturday in the James G. Severns Theatre.

Abstract productions seem to be director Dana Smith's forte as she thoughtfully puts together the first mainstage of the 2011-2012 season. Written by Sarah Ruhl, "Melancholy Play" follows a severely melancholy woman named Tilly and, well, her melancholy. Her intense sadness causes cheerful Illinois residents, such as her tailor, her therapist and a lesbian couple, to fall in love with her and her gloom. When Tilly unexpectedly becomes happy, however, her admirers become melancholy.

This 90-minute farce humorously takes a stab at themes of happiness, attraction and, unsurprisingly, melancholy. While some productions make it possible to "zone out" for a moment, then fill in the gaps — this is not one of them. The script bounces

about sporadically but surprisingly smoothly, interacting with the audience at times and breaking into song at others.

With a cast of six, including a cellist playing appropriately gloomy music, and various technical aspects, this production lives and breathes teamwork and timing.

The show's farcical design almost makes over-the-top a requirement, especially with characters like Lorenzo, Tilly's therapist from an unspecified European country with an unspecified European accent, played by senior Cameron Jones.

For the most part, the cast performed well and created strong characters. Senior Katrina Godfrey sported the perfect "Debbie Downer" façade as Tilly, with a longing gaze and an expression of despair that produce laughs and sincerity. Juniors Paige Hackworth and Fallyn Lee shine in their strongly contrasting yet perfectly connecting roles as the lesbian couple. Lee easily provided a majority of the humor to the production with her believable character, while Hackworth displayed strong

emotional contrast along with sophomore James Mellish.

The technical aspects of the production were one of its strong points. The lighting, designed by Hackworth, was notably strong. The lighting managed to add humor, quickly changing colors to show Tilly's descent into a melancholy. Lighting also set the mood and location, making clever use of backlights and colors.

The set by theatre professor Ron Rybkowski consists mostly of assorted windows hanging above the stage and works well with the script and the abstract approach to the show.

Last, but certainly not least, is the production's use of music, provided by Brian Sammons on cello. Sammons provided beautiful accompaniment to the production and adds a sound that matches the melancholy actions and words.

While this might not be a production for everyone, it has the potential to entertain and inspire thought for a large portion of the audience. If you're looking for a well done, abstract show and a nice way to spend an evening, "Melancholy Play" is for you.



# Student learns while teaching

BY BLAISE HART-SCHMIDT  
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To all the professors whose classes I've skipped, I apologize. To all of you who have seen my head bobbing in a light slumber during your lecture, I'm sorry. To that one communication professor (I'll keep you anonymous) who saw me try to sneak into your class multiple times, still in my pajamas after oversleeping by an hour, I ask for your forgiveness.

This semester, I'm teaching a Student Initiated Course about photojournalism. And while I've learned a lot about the subject, one of the most important lessons I've learned is this: Being a teacher is difficult.

When a student comes into a 50-minute class 40 minutes late, it's distracting. It's difficult to concentrate on my Powerpoint, and I start fumbling — mentally and verbally. When a third of my students are absent, my feelings are hurt, and I lament all the effort I put into my lesson plan and the students who are missing it. I've walked a mile in another's shoes, and my feet are blistered.

I now understand why my professor sends me an email when I've been missing class — I'm sending her a message

that I'm too good for what she's teaching. I now understand the "no late work" policy upheld by so many professors. It's not their way of being mean, but creating rules and order.

This isn't a column to make students feel guilty. My attendance record this year is tarnished with a few absences and I'll never be a fabulous student. Teaching this course has shown me the flipside of the coin, the mystical land of reading essays and writing assignment rubrics. It's a side

a lot of us don't often consider, and I think we should.

For the faculty reading this, you are not spared. I'll say the same for you — think back to those long-forgotten years when you sat on the other side of the projector, not presenting about the newest theories

of relativity, but taking notes instead.

Remember your heavy course load and crappy job working nights at Burgers R Us. Show a little empathy when our eyelids suddenly weigh three tons in the middle of class or we don't have a hard copy of our final because our printer didn't work.

A little empathy between students and teachers would go a long way. If we take a few moments to consider our actions and the effects on others, Truman State might just be a little better of a place.

▮ I now understand why my professor sends me an email when I've been missing class — I'm sending her a message that I'm too good for what she's teaching. ▮

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