



Catching 'Hay Fever' – Students in SIU Carbondale's School of Theater and Dance take a break from the upcoming production, "Hay Fever," Dec. 2-5 in McLeod Theater. From left are cast members Mitchell Brandon, Carter Reed, Jeremy Osinga, Grace Brown, Amanda Talor, Gillian Corpuz and Aubree Jean. Other cast members not pictured are Uriel Achilleus and Julia Cicero. (Photo provided)

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## 'Hay Fever' brings drama, hilarity to McLeod Theater stage

by Pete Rosenbery

CARBONDALE, Ill. — Be prepared to take a trip back in time and discover that not much has changed between family lifestyles from the mid-1920s and a century later when "Hay Fever" hits the McLeod Theater stage in early December.



The four-day production, Dec. 2-5, features students in Southern Illinois University Carbondale's School of Theater and Dance within the College of Arts and Media. The performances are at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 2-4, with a 2 p.m. matinee on Dec. 5.

Tickets are available [online at the SIU Ticket Office](#), in person at the [McLeod Theater box office or Banterra Center ticket window](#), or by calling 618-453-6000 or 877-725-8547.

SIU is committed to protecting the community, so all those attending must follow current campus and state pandemic [safety protocols](#) and wear masks in shared indoor spaces.

### A quiet weekend gone awry

Written in 1924 by English playwright Noël Coward, the story centers on a hoped-for quiet weekend for novelist David Bliss and his wife, Judith, a retired actress. Drama, misunderstandings, tempers and hilarity follow as the couples' children, Simon and Sorel, also arrive with guests.

Directing Coward's play "has been an enlightening journey and experience," said C. Rion Towery, an MFA graduate candidate in directing. Bringing the fast-paced, farcical comedy to life in a way that resonates with audiences today, both young and old, has been a challenge, he said.

"In light of the last couple of years and what we have all experienced due to a global pandemic and the political climate, my vision for "Hay Fever," is one of unity," he said. "Like the Bliss family, we all participate in the playing of games, either with our immediate family, our friends, those with whom we want to be friends, or all the above. My vision is not to create a divide amongst people, but to attempt to bring people together by revealing that we all play games. Now more than ever I believe we could all use a laugh, and a laugh at our own expense."

## **Families that play together, stay together**

The play “brings to life on stage, to varying degrees, all of us, and it’s watching our own lives on stage that invites us, together, to laugh at ourselves,” Towery said.

The production is largely student-driven, with the cast, crew and designers consisting of both graduate and undergraduate students. The set, costumes, props and most everything audiences will see on the stage was designed and built, in-house, by students in the theater and dance program, Towery said.

“It is amazing to see what the students here at SIU are capable of, while at the same time learning and growing in the fields of expertise,” Towery said. “I have been blessed with such an amazing team of young actors, designers and theater practitioners. It has been an honor collaborating with everyone involved with this production, and most of all learning. If it wasn’t for the many hours of hard work, sweat, and tears, shared in both the shop and in rehearsal, this production would not be possible.”

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