



'An Inspector Calls'

Murder and a Mystery Address the Class Struggle

An inspector has called upon the Birling family, and his prying into the death of a young working-class girl is revealing secrets that family members might rather keep buried. How they deal with her death — and each other — is the crux of “An Inspector Calls,” Theatre UAF’s fall production, opening tonight in the Lee H. Salisbury Theatre.

The play, written by J.B. Priestly and first performed in 1945, is your classic English murder mystery tinged with hints of modern-day social justice activism. Think “Downton Abbey” meets Robert Altman’s “Gosford Park” merged with upper-middle class versus working class interactions all brought to light by the death of a young mill worker, and you’ve an insight into what director Brian Cook calls “the mystery tradition of British plays with a social commentary twist.”

“I think the main theme of the play is we need to take care of each other with whatever we do or whatever choices we make in life,” he said. “We’re part of one community and have a responsibility to make sure everyone is taken care of.”

Marley Horner, a senior theater major from Haines, leads the inquisition in his role as Inspector Goole, the man who arrives at the Birling home and immediately delves into the family’s relationships with the young girl. It’s a big role for Horner, as he’s centering his thesis around Goole and the performance.

“It’s a lot more time researching it and 100 times more in-depth with it,” Horner said of using the role as his thesis. “It’s research on the time and the author and his analysis and what turns that character into that character. It’s the whole academic side to it. There is lots of mystery around Goole from the character and script standpoint.”

The production is performed in the round, meaning audience members will be surrounding the stage at all times, giving them up-close interaction with the actors. That’s part of the learning experience for the students, director Cook said. “The play is set all in one room, and it’s nice having the audience make up the walls of the room. The audience is watching the actors and themselves, which mirrors themes in the play.”



Theatre UAF presents “An Inspector Calls,” opening tonight. From left are Ian Hendren, Marley Horner and Katrina Kuharich. Kade Mendelowitz, Theatre UAF Photos

With its setting in a British industrial city in 1912, Associated Professor of Performance Carrie Baker spent time teaching the cast British dialects ranging from standard British to Cockney, something used in the play to emphasize class distinction.

“Economic standing or class is a significant subject in the play,” Baker stated in a Theatre UAF release. “Acting with a dialect is a significant challenge for an actor and a great opportunity for our actors to be having as part of their undergraduate education. Professional actors are often required to use dialects, so exposing our students to this process is invaluable in developing their ability to incorporate a dialect into their character work.”

IF YOU GO

WHAT: “An Inspector Calls,” written by J.B. Priestly, directed by Brian Cook

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. tonight and Saturday; 7:30 p.m. Nov. 14; 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Nov. 15; and 2 p.m. Nov. 16

WHERE: Lee H. Salisbury Theatre in the fine arts complex at the University of Alaska Fairbanks

COST: Tickets are \$16 adults; \$12 seniors and military; and \$8 students if purchased ahead of time online at www.uaf.edu/theatrefilm or by calling the box office at 474-7751. At the door, tickets are an additional \$2.



Marley Horner is seen in his role of Inspector Goole

CAST AND CREW

Rachel Blackwell as Mrs. Birling

Ian Hendren as Gerald Croft

Marley Horner as Inspector Goole

Katrina Kuharich as Sheila Birling

Nancy Nguyen as Edna

Nolan Raapana as Mr. Birling

Mallory Smith as Eric Birling

Director — Brian Cook

Costume and scenic designer — Bethany Marx

Lighting designer — Adam Gillette

British dialect coach — Carrie Baker