

'Arsenic and Old Lace' a timeless family comedy
Anna Watson

Nowhere near outdated, "Arsenic and Old Lace" beautifully expresses the theme of loving your family despite their ridiculousness. Piedmont College's production of "Arsenic and Old Lace" was performed Feb. 13-16. The plot is circled around two old aunties, Martha and Abby, who can't help but be charitable to everyone they meet. However, they are ignorant of the danger it could cause. Their story is messily entangled with Mortimer's, their nephew who wised up to the family business and got caught up in ensuring their safety.

Set in the 1940s, the stage was well decorated with old furniture, doilies, lace curtains, a stainless steel tea set and a two-piece telephone. Alluding to the aunties' homemade Elderberry wine, the walls are painted a dark wine red, setting the tone for what's to come. The costumes were perfectly set to each character regarding personality and age. Martha and Abby had quaint ankle-length skirts with shirts to match, along with over-the-top funeral dresses paired with hats. Elaine is dressed in a fur coat with an elegant white hat adorned with a feather sticking out, emphasizing her brazen personality and sheer sass.

In stage theater, so much more goes on than what you see on stage. Students made the entire set: the walls, doors and staircase that Teddy charges up. True to the experience, the set extended to the walls of the theater--past the curtain--and truly enveloped the audience in the Brewster living area. Backlit with haunting blue lights, the windows make it look like night time when the stage crew comes in the dark to rearrange the props or whenever the characters climb through the window. Despite having set troubles, the cast worked professionally and went with the flow without blinking an eye. Instead of breaking the fourth wall or character, the actors and actresses persevered and delivered an incredible performance.

The Christian ladies were meaningful and proper in everything they did. Whether it be caring for Teddy, their nephew, or strangers, Martha and Abby were simple and sweet; who would question what they did? Playing the aunties, Mikayla Walters and Kaitlin Conner gave a genuine performance, honing their future grandmother selves. Mortimer, played by Tyler Vandiver, was the funniest character for sure. He had the greatest reactions on stage and provided true sass, empathy and fear. As comic relief in a comedy, Teddy thought he was President Roosevelt and was working on the Panama Canal in the basement. Teddy, played by Hunter Blackburn, filled holes in the plot and assisted with the dramatic irony. Garrett Smith, in the role of Einstein, (not that doctor Einstein) had to use a German accent for the entire show - and didn't slip once. Plus, Preston Welborne played the role of being the dead bodies under the window seat - imagine taking a nap and missing your cue.

"Arsenic and Old Lace" is a timeless piece that will continue to reach a mass audience when Elaine and Mortimer have grandchildren of their own. All seriousness aside, this show will help you relax and forget about your angst for the next two and a half hours. The humor flows throughout the character interaction and contains seamless and dramatic irony in all the right

places. With characters like Elaine, the priest's daughter who is frisky with Mortimer, and Jonathan, the outcast son who has anger issues, there are no overdramatized jokes - they just fit. While you missed this show, be sure to catch the next one and steer clear of the Brewster wine.