

# Time is of the essence: SIU theater department begins rehearsals for Tuck Everlasting

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SIU theater department's "Tuck Everlasting" started in-person rehearsals Sept. 21. The production normally takes six weeks to rehearse, but will now have a six-month production process due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Stephen G. Tabor, a third-year MFA directing student, and director of "Tuck Everlasting," said the theater department is trying to move forward with their production while keeping in mind the safety of the student but also to their production staff as well.

The process of how things were typically done in the department shifted.

"The costume shop and the tech shop have had to make adjustments for social distancing. Each department has been dealing with its own ways of navigating that," Tabor said.

SIU's faculty costume shop manager Jane Pivovarnik said her biggest issue was being able to social distance and sanitize their area. Most of the time they use as much space as they can in the shop, but Pivovarnik had to rearrange the costume shop completely.

"I've had to get rid of some furniture like my personal desk so that way we could separate," Pivovarnik said.

Now the theater department is finding ways to be as safe as possible during a time of COVID-19.

"[It's] a new ballgame with singing with a mask on. I know for me I have a pretty broad voice and I take a lot of heavy breaths. Learning how to do that is a lot of fun. It almost teaches you how to control yourself a little bit more." Jakob Sommers, a senior B.F.A. in musical theater, who plays the role of Miles Tuck in "Tuck Everlasting" said.

Sommers suggested the musical for the shortlist of the SIU theatre department and it was the one selected.

Auditions for the musicals took place in August in the form of video submissions. Actors who received callbacks, met with casting on Zoom.

"None of it is really our favorite," Grace Nowak, a senior B.F.A. musical theater, who plays the role of Mae Tuck in "Tuck Everlasting" said, "It's a lot harder because you have to produce the energy in the room. It's not a live performance."

Tabor said that this is a sixteen person cast and it was about dicing up how they all would normally rehearse. He said it was basically like taking a tiny jigsaw puzzle and rehearsing with those pieces and then eventually bringing those pieces to the McCloud Stage.

The SIU Theater Department is working with who they have both on cast and

crew to solve any problems that may arise.

"How do you communicate things with a mask on? It's a new layer. I hope we go back to the normal art form, but there is nothing wrong with them gathering these tools to enhance their careers," Tabor said.

"Tuck Everlasting" is tentatively set for late February and to go live for an audience, but plans have already been made if COVID-19 situation is still the same as it is currently. The SIU theater department plans on working with the SIU film department to create a recording of the show.

"Our normal job is that there is nothing routine. Theatre prepares you for problem-solving," Pivovarnik said. "Every show presents their own unique challenges and that things are constantly evolving."

The theater department was planning ahead of time before rehearsals started on what their theatrical season would even look like. Tabor and Pivovarnik both said that they were happy that the department had plans on producing "Tuck Everlasting" as many college theaters across the country aren't doing anything at all.

"Really it already is a six-month process of planning," Pivovarnik said, "We start our design process at least six

months out."

Tabor said it has also given the SIU Theater Department the chance to give as many students the opportunities within the production. So, every character has an understudy or a swing [understudy that learns multiple parts just in case anything happens]. He said it has given new experiences and resume credits for the theater department's students.

While the SIU Theater Department is giving students opportunities to be a part of the show in different types of ways during this semester they are trying to create a meaning to their audience that comes to see the show.

"I hope the audience sees that they have a lot of opportunity in a short amount of time," Sommers said.

The musical, "Tuck Everlasting" is about a young girl and how she incidentally meets a family that lives forever in time.

"One of the most beautiful things about this show is that it's not how long you live but how you live your life." Nowak said.

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Carter Reed, playing Jesse Tuck, and Amriela D-Alessandro, playing Winnie Foster, rehearses for Tuck Everlasting, September 24, 2020, at SIU, Carbondale. Ana Luiza Jacome | @aluizaphotography