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Regional Reviews: Phoenix

All in the Timing

Mesa Community College

Review by [Gil Benbrook](#) | [Season Schedule](#)

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David Ives' *All in the Timing* is a collection of short plays that all relate to the themes of time, language, the choices we make, and the power of words. Ives' well composed skits provide Mesa Community College's Theatre and Film Arts program students a chance to exhibit their comical skills in this well designed and astutely directed production.

Ives wrote the six shorts in the late 1980s and added several more to the collection over the next few years so they now total 14. It should be noted that Ives doesn't specify which shorts a company should use, or in which order they should be presented. MCC's production features the six original pieces that first premiered in 1987. All have elements of humor and are occasionally provoking in their message. However, as interesting as they are, some run on a bit too long and there isn't anything that ties them all together or a big message that the last piece delivers. Knowing that going in will most likely increase your enjoyment of the production. The MCC cast is good and consistent throughout.



Samantha Hanna and Seamus McSherry

Photo Courtesy of Angela Salazar / Mesa Community College

The first play, "Sure Thing," focuses on two strangers in a cafe who keep making missteps in their conversation. Fortunately, they get numerous chances to replay their conversation. Zane Rodriguez and Taylor Shepard do well with the rapid fire and repetitive dialogue. The theory that if you lock up a monkey alone in a room with a typewriter it will eventually write *Hamlet* is the focus of "Words, Words, Words." Annalynn Watson, Samantha

Haire and Chance Bond are funny as these paranoid chimps. In the best of the bunch, Brittney Watson and Ethan Doe deliver exceptional performances as two lost souls finding they share a "Universal Language."

Act two opens with the musical motif "Philip Glass buys a loaf of Bread," which is fun and allows for repetitive rhythms to pay homage to Glass' style of composition, but it isn't quite up to the level of the other pieces. "The Philadelphia" finds three characters stuck in a universe where things desired aren't achievable unless one asks for the opposite of what they want. Brandon Caraco and Zachary Fagan display appropriate levels ranging from cool and assured to frantic and crazed when they realize the state (or in this case the "city") they are in. Lily Gastelum adds pops of humor to "The Philadelphia" as a roller-skating waitress. Samantha Hanna always does exceptional work at MCC and in "Variations on the Death of Trotsky" she is hilarious as Mrs. Trotsky who, upon finding a future encyclopedia, discovers that her husband is about to die. As Trotsky, Seamus McSherry matches Hanna with his strong comic abilities as together they ponder the various explanations for the timing of his death, and why exactly he has a large ice pick sticking out of the back of his head.

Kevin Dressler's direction plays up the humor in these pieces without sacrificing the importance of the language and the comic timing. Angela Salazar's set design, which includes several movable set pieces set against a large stationary railing with glowing balls that resemble, somewhat, the planets, and a floor that comes alive in the darkened scene changes, plays into the universal theme of the impact of language.

All in the Timing is less about the sum of the six short pieces delivering a larger message than the beauty of what the individual pieces stand for and how the importance of words and timing relate across a broad spectrum of scenarios. While it could prove a challenge to both the actors and the audience, MCC's production is engaging and entertaining with a cast that delivers on the humorous aspects, as well as a rich appreciation for Ives' language which makes the challenge that much more rewarding.

The Mesa Community College production of *All in the Timing* runs through October 22nd, 2016, with performances at the MCC Southern & Dobson Campus at 1833 W. Southern Avenue in Mesa. Information for upcoming productions can be found at www.mesacc.edu/

Written by David Ives
 Directed by Kevin Dressler
 Scenic Design: Angela Salazar
 Lighting Design: Harrison Hayes
 Costume Design: Laurence Lilagan
 Sound Design: Ryan Marcham
 Hair and Make Up Design: Gina Hoyt
 Properties Designer: Dolores Mendoza

Cast:

Sure Thing

Bill: Zane Rodriguez

Betty: Taylor Shepard

"Words, Words, Words"

Kafka: Annalynn Watson

Milton: Samantha Haire

Swift: Chance Bond

"Universal Language"

Dawn: Brittney Watson

Don: Ethan Doe

Young Woman: Liesl Hall

"Philip Glass buys a loaf of Bread"

Philip Glass: Steven May

Baker: David Westlake

Woman 1- Emily McAtee

Woman 2- Natalie Payan

"Philadelphia"

Al: Brandon Caraco

Mark: Zachary Fagan

Waitress: Lily Gastelum

"Variations on the Death of Trotsky"

Trotsky: Seamus McSherry

Mrs. Trotsky: Samantha Hanna

Ramon: Emilio Castro

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