

“Constellations” explores alternate realities this weekend



Amelia Darling '20 plays Jackie in the Theater Department's production of "Constellations" that opened this Thursday. Photo by Jeff Li.

Teresa Fleming

flemingt17@grinnell.edu

In Lesley Delmenico's production of "Constellations," parallel universes play out simultaneously onstage as a couple's relationship unfolds through a series of disconnected scenes. The show opened on Thursday, and performance continue tonight and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

The play follows a beekeeper, Jack, and a quantum physicist, Morgan, as they meet and fall in and out of love. But as the play

progresses, their stories split off into four separate timelines. Scenes are played and replayed in different iterations that diverge from one another, only to return to familiar conversations. In an oft-repeated line, Morgan argues “I have to have a choice ... control,” but as the consequences of both characters’ decisions play out across multiple universes, it seems unclear whether choice can guarantee consequences.

Emily Howe ’17 reflected on making changes to the original script that called for only two actors.

“Traditionally this play is just a cast of two people, but, in a college setting, that’s just way too hard to do,” Howe said. “We cast it with four different couples, and it’s really, really fascinating. I think that also gets at the complexity of emotions and feelings and experiences, because no two people experience things the same way – or experience things the same way twice, even.”

Howe described an intensive, hands-on rehearsal process with the cast that ranged from discussions of grief and trauma, to tasting different types of honey as part of character research. As a chemistry major, Howe drew from her interdisciplinary experience to examine the intersections between science and human relationships.

“One of the characters, Morgan, talks a lot about time and how time is symmetrical – it’s recurring and we always have time. And for me that’s so valuable. We always have this time and it’s always going to be there,” Howe said. “These experiences are always going to exist. I mean, the traumatic things are very traumatic, but there are also beautiful moments that are always going to be there and are always going to exist.”

For Delmenico, the adaptations made to the script’s original couple seem particularly timely.

“It’s about love, so let’s have straight couples and gay couples and lesbian couples. And it’s about these people that find each other and lose each other and find each other again and love each other,” Delmenico said. “In what I’ve seen in the actors, it just played through different actors’ bodies and quirks and ways of working, these wonderful expressions of love that are sometimes prickly and ... sometimes frustrating, but always it’s based on caring. I think we need a little bit of that, lately. I didn’t think of the play as making a political statement in the way that I adapted it, but I do now.”

Tickets for “Constellations” are available now in the box office in Bucksbaum.