

# FINDING AN AUDIENCE

New director Carolyne Haycraft wants UW-Rock County's theater troupe to connect with the community. See Page 5.



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Bill Olmsted/Gazette Staff

Carolayne Haycraft, the new director at UW-Rock County, listens to a read-through of 'Picnic,' her first production with University Theatre.

# It's no 'Picnic'

New director says revamping UW-Rock County's theater troupe will be a challenge

By Shelly Birkelo  
Gazette Staff

**T**he theater department at UW-Rock County has moved into a different stage.

Taking the lead role is Carolayne Haycraft, new theater director and lecturer to the Communication and Theatre Arts Department.

Her supporting casts are the university students and audience.

Along with a new leader comes a new name. The former U-Rock Players became University Theatre in August when Haycraft replaced professor Mark Weinberg. The name change was made, she said, to more clearly identify the group.

Other changes also are planned.

Haycraft will stage different types of shows than in the past, which often focused on controversial subjects such as date rape or abortion. She chose "Picnic," a summer romance, for her first production, which opens Oct. 18.

"'Picnic' was done 20 years ago. It was Kirk Denmark's second production," Haycraft said. "It's perfect for Janesville and an American classic. It's moving and entertaining and appealing to the students and audience."

As the story unfolds, Hal Carter, a former

## Just the facts

**What:** "Picnic" produced by University Theatre.

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Oct. 18-19 and 24-26 and at 2 p.m. Sundays, Oct. 20 and 27.

**Where:** Kirk Denmark Theatre, UW-Rock County, 2909 Kellogg Ave., Janesville.

**Tickets:** \$5 for adults and \$3 for children.

**Cast:** Callie Johnson, Kristen laquinta, Jamie Mathison, Ryan Boggs, Holie Vance, Amber Page, Sherry Anderson, Melissa Lust, Lisa LaChance-Kirchner, Nnanna Egbujiobi, Kyle Adams and Stacey Peter.

**Crew:** Carolayne Haycraft, director; Eleanor Moriarty, stage manager; Matthew Kerr, set and lighting/technical director; Dorthy Evans, house manager; Jared Amundson, sound; Nick French, dramaturg; Nora Frankovich, costume design; Jennifer Langer, publicity; Callie Johnson, choreographer; Mel Lebaron, props; Ryan Huggard, set crew; Kristen laquinta, fight choreographer.

college athlete, and Madge Owens, the town's beauty queen, fall in love. The Pulitzer Prize-winning play celebrates small-town America and the lives of ordinary people, said Haycraft.

She chose to stage playwright William Inge's original show instead of the Broadway version.

"To do the Broadway version does a huge disservice because the play was revised for a 1950s audience," Haycraft said. "It's not as powerful and goes way beyond censoring."

Haycraft is confident with her choice.

"The students told me I chose the right play, and it will appeal to the audience as well," she said. "It's about love and growing up in a small town. It's also about the human condition—romantic, funny with music and dance. They can identify with the strong, powerful message, and it's entertaining."

Haycraft added more cast members—dancers, and cast a black man in what has usually been a role for a white man, plus hired a lighting and set designer.

"They add other elements to the show," she said.

Haycraft also is involving the university's English department by having a student act as a dramaturg, the research person who takes care of the play from the literal point of view. In the future, she will tap into the school's music department.

"By incorporating departments, we get more of a sense of community on campus," Haycraft said. "We'll start within our building and work our way out by getting in contact with the high schools."

Extra dancers to the all-student cast were added to imply harmony and the concept of unification, she said.

"When the lovers unite, the rest of the world does, too," Haycraft said.

Haycraft came to Janesville after moving from jobs in New York City to Milwaukee, Chicago and finally Madison. With each move, her husband changed professions. Today he is a chef, and the two teach taekwon do to low-income students.

"I couldn't move him again. This is his time. A friend called and said I might want to apply for this job."

She did and was hired.

"I like a challenge. That certainly is here," she said.

Haycraft brings with her 20 years of acting

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experience. She also has directed for five years and has always taught.

Catering and teaching English as a Second Language classes also have prepared her for the new position, she said.

Haycraft is emphasizing the significance of community involvement for herself and students in the theater department.

"It's important for me to have a voice and presence in the community," said Haycraft, who has become a member of the United Arts Alliance's Performing Arts Committee. This nonprofit organiza-

tion is dedicated to enhancing the arts in Rock County.

Haycraft also is making a concerted effort to connect with the audience to find out where the theater fits in.

"I have to consider who my audience is and what they want," Haycraft said. "There is no theater without an audience."

To accomplish this, Haycraft may place an evaluation form in the play's program.

The second and final University Theatre show of the 2002-03 season will be Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Nights Dream."

"Not a lot of Shakespeare has been done in Janesville," Haycraft said, "or even on campus."