The Weather Vane

By Noelle Selb
Staff Writer

After more than 16 years of service to EMU as a faculty member, volleyball coach and student advisor, and most recently Vice President of Student Life, Patty Helton is leaving EMU for a position as academic provost for campus life at Denver University.

Helton came to EMU first as a guidance counselor in the 1980s. She later became assistant for Student Life, says Du. Before she starts her transition to low co-workers shower her with expertise in those areas.

Departments and they have a lot of high focus mainly on their work. Helton said, “Part of being a vice president is that I know a little about all those departments, but I'm not an expert in any of them. I am the big picture person who has to look at how everything has to come together. [Directors and co-workers] focus mainly on their departments and they have a lot more expertise in those areas.”

Vice presidents have been set up. They were setting up. She was always a huge help to SGA as we were setting up. She has been a huge help to SGA as well. Helton will come and back work one week at EMU and I’ll follow the same schedule: “DU and EMU have worked out a hectic traveling plan that places her at both universities every month.

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By Rachel Swartzendruber
Layout Editor

While most students are readjusting to being back at school and getting used to odd sleeping hours, 15 members of the student body are preparing for a different kind of event. They have joined together to perform EMU’s spring production, “The World is a Comedy.”

Paul Hildebrand, associate professor of theater, adapted the script and will direct what he calls an “absurdist, comic romance.” The play, new to many, was written by legendary Egyptian playwright Tawfiq Al-Hakim, who is known in Arabic circles as the “man who managed to master all models of both literary and intellectual arts.”

David Rohrer will star as Khalad, an office clerk frustrated with the lack of responsibility given to him. Khalad sits at his empty desk day after day, hoping for a file to come his way. His pleas for work fall on the deaf ear of Rashad, his supervisor, whose desk is consequently piled high with files. Rashad, played by Christie Benner insists that Khalad must learn the ways of the company before he is given any task to accomplish.

Rachel Shrocks plays Khalad’s co-worker Ms. Olweya, the shy secretary who knits all day, every day. Due to mundane hours spent in the office, Khalad purchases Transmigration of Souls, thinking that it is a murder mystery. As irony would have it the book turns out to be a dull, boring read and Khalad falls asleep while reading.

The play revolves around the series of dreams, or various lifetimes, that Khalad and Ms. Olweya journey through over the course of the night. The pair becomes a variety of characters, including Romeo and Juliet to mad scientist and skeptical secretary to Antony and Cleopatra. The stage alternates between the dreams and conversations between two primary characters – God (the registrar of Heaven) and the Grim Reaper. Much like Scrooge’s visit from the Ghosts of Christmas in the classic Dickens tale A Christmas Story, these experiences will serve to educate Khalad and Ms. Olweya about their life calling.

This play fits perfectly into the yearlong Cross-Cultural Celebration,” said Hildebrand. “EMU promotes and teaches global perspective as one of its educational hallmarks . . . as we will in the West focus on better understanding the culture of our Middle Eastern brothers and sisters, this play of peace . . . could not be more timely.”

The topic of peace, especially important in the Mennonite faith, is a central theme of this play, which speaks to Khalad’s obsession with war and death. "Believe it or not, it really is a comedy, but the end will cause the audience to say, 'hmm.'" said Hildebrand.

"(But) when we really think about it, when do we teach war? We teach it to our children with video games and toy guns. That’s when we teach war." The play, opening February 14, 2003, will serve to educate, challenge and "entertain with a theatrical look into the art, history and people of Egypt." Tickets can be reserved by calling the EMU box office at (540)-432-4582. Admission to the play is $8 for EMU students, $10 for non-EMU students.

“Absurdist Comic Romance” Starts Production

By Rachel Swartzendruber
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