

## 'XYZ' attempts to answer life's meaning

by Frances Moody

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Similar to galaxies colliding in the depths of the universe, Another Language Performing Arts Company presents "XYZ," a cinematic experience created to highlight the personalities of four transcendental characters working to mesh the individual with the universal.

"XYZ" displays four "ghosts," bobbing across a 3-D space, spouting lines meant to sculpt an array of questions that undertake what seems to be an unanswerable subject — the meaning of life.

Whether it is in one's dreams, in the intensity of a panic attack or in the course of deep thinking, most people ask questions of existence, hoping their human existence is significant to the workings of the ever-expansive and mysterious universe.



Another Language Performing Arts Company presents "XYZ," at VisLab Black Box Theatre on Feb. 22-24 and March 1-3. Another Language Performing Arts will also be streaming the film online.

Photo Courtesy Elizabeth Ann Miklavcic

Another Language's four ghosts represent four galaxies dubbed the "Fantastic Four." Like the four galaxies traveling through paths on different intergalactic highways, each ethereal character represents separate courses in life.

Among the essential players is Colored-by-Numbers, played by Hanelle Miklavcic, who is much younger than her co-actors. Her face that hovers on the screen is painted with a series of numbers. Each number represents different experiences in life lived out by her character.

However, the painted numbers on Hanelle's skin are few, taking on the symbolism that young people have many encounters yet to be lived.

Joining Colored-by-Numbers are three other spirits — Ghost, performed by Lexie Levitt, wears makeup that produces a pale and translucent look. Marooned, played by Jimmy Miklavcic, signifies a feeling of isolation. While Rose, performed by Elizabeth Miklavcic, takes on an array of meanings surrounding the growth of all life.

Eventually all ghosts travel to one coordinate in an artistic movie-like occurrence.

"And we waltz together in an XYZ of some kind of reality, some kind of connection," Levitt's character Ghost says. "I reach out for you. Are you ready to hold my hand? The choice is yours."

Each of the ghosts' lines are spoken in poetic prose. Mirroring the style of older playwrights, actor and writer Elizabeth Miklavcic utilizes a more abstract formation of words meant to push audience members to ask themselves questions.

"Are we all wrestling with the same questions? ... Not just here on earth, but in the broader since of existence itself," Elizabeth Miklavcic said.

Similar to the form of other plays, “XYZ” utilizes stage terminology. For instance, the four ghosts might be on stage left or stage right.

Nevertheless, “XYZ” is not an on-stage performance. It uses the ultimate cinematic experience to illustrate the story line’s overwhelming subject matter.

All the key players were filmed in front of a green screen. By using a green screen, “XYZ” is capable of presenting settings that portray galaxies and nebulas. It also allows the ghosts to fly across the screen, which is something only possible in dreams.

“XYZ” can be viewed at the VisLab Black Box Theatre, where all viewers are given a pair of 3-D glasses.

“The 3-D space is defined by X (horizontal), Y (vertical) and Z (depth),” Elizabeth Miklavcic said. “It made sense to call the next project XYZ, since that is our artistic space.”

Like other artistic devices such as paint or pencils, Elizabeth Miklavcic believes Another Language Performing Arts Company has discovered a different kind of artistic medium with electronic bytes.

“Just as an artist works with paint or clay, electronic bytes are something to mold,” she said.

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Contact Frances Moody at [f.moody@chronicle.utah.edu](mailto:f.moody@chronicle.utah.edu)

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