Antohin’s daring imagination takes final bow at UAF

By Michael Welsh

After 20 years of writing, directing and teaching, Anatoly Antohin retired from Theatre UAF in spring 2009. His final production, *Caligari: Alaska*, was an adaptation of the 1920 silent German film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

Antohin received a master of fine arts degree from the Institute of Cinematography in Moscow, USSR, in 1975. In 1981 he came to the U.S. as a visiting professor to teach at the University of Connecticut.

“I’ll never forget the advice Anatoly gave me the first time we worked together. ... He helped me to channel the massive physical strength and power of ... the miniature schnauzer. As absurd as it was, it taught me a valuable lesson: in theater, everything counts, and nothing is inconceivable.”

— Joe Alloway, ’07, ’08, theatre major

“It was the first main stage production I’ve been in, so I didn’t have a lot of expectations, but I’d heard things about Anatoly — he’s a genius, brilliant, mad scientist, crazy, and I really wanted to be in it because it was going to be his last.”

— Tricia Bates played Caligari’s mother and one of the prostitutes
One of my favorite quotes from Anatoly was when he thought the witches were taking too long to deliver a certain moment and he told us: ‘Guys, guys, we are creating a comedy about horror, not tragedy. If you take so long no one will be scared — they will be asleep!’

— Anna Gagne-Hawes played one of the witches in Caligari: Alaska
He followed that with stints at New York University, Norwich University and Hollins College in Virginia.

In 1989 Antohin began a two-decade run at UAF. During his tenure at UAF, he guided the production of dozens of stage plays, more than a few of which he also wrote. A consistent hallmark of Antohin’s work has been his daring imagination and ability to inspire. “Anatoly always pushed us,” says a grinning former student, “to joyfully risk looking like a fool before the world’s eyes.”

Antohin’s theory about theater often linked the performer’s art with a personal spiritual quest. “Of all the performing arts, theater may be our last link to what we used to get from church, our last refuge from the universal alienation that seems total and final. In the theater, there is the chance to have a shared public experience that moves us inside,” he said.

Although retiring from UAF, Antohin will not be taking it easy. The next stage in his adventure will be in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where his wife, Esther, was born. He will take on a new project: establishing the Ethiopia American Theatre, where he is already planning a production of Chekov’s *Farces*.

Michael Welsh is a graduate student in the College of Liberal Arts.

Watch interviews with the cast and crew at [www.uaf.edu/aurora/](http://www.uaf.edu/aurora/).
“I have worked with this ‘mad genius’ for 16 years, on many different productions, and Anatoly’s interpretations of scripts and directorial concepts have helped me grow as a designer … his warm charm and charismatic presence will be sorely missed.”

—Kade Mendelowitz, Theatre Department chair, professor and lighting designer

and the show goes on ...