Theater season opener

By Jocelyn Syrstad
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MENOMONIE — The UW-Stout Theatre Department is opening its 2014-15 season with a non-traditional show.

Paul Calenberg, the department chair, chose to put on “The Good Doctor,” a play made up of a series of short tales told through the eyes of a writer, who is meant to represent Russian author Anton Chekhov. The majority of the actors in the show had never heard of the production prior to auditions, but once immersed in the script they realized it is a show worth experiencing.

“People should come see this show because it’s hilarious,” said Kyle Basom, who plays the narrator/writer. “If you want to, you could take away some social commentary from the show, but if not, you will just have a good time. I’m telling everyone I know to come see this show and I don’t normally do that. It’s that good.”

“The Good Doctor” follows the narrator, Basom, as he comes up with ideas for short stories. The audiences will see these short stories acted out as the narrator writes them.

The show was written by Neil Simon and has plenty of laughable moments.
Some of the stories include “A Defenseless Creature,” where a woman with a nervous disorder harasses a banker to extort money for her injured husband, and “The Sneeze,” where a general is disdainful of a government worker who constantly annoys him and that annoyance grows when the worker sneezes on the general and is overly apologetic about it.

But one of the favorites of the cast is “The Drowned Man,” where a homeless man, played by Blaine Davidson, tries to swindle the narrator into giving the tramp money to watch him drown.

“The type of humor varies from story to story,” Davidson said. “There’s a lot of slapstick and there’s a lot of dark humor. No matter the type, the humor is always very good and very relevant.”

Even though the stories vary drastically from one to the next, the cast thinks the audience will enjoy the format of the show. There are nine stories displayed throughout the play and each one lasts about five to 10 minutes, Davidson estimated.

Because of the ever-changing stories, the cast said the audience’s attention will never sway from the stage. And “The Good Doctor” keeps the cast on its toes because most members play a different character in each short story, “I saw a show with a similar format to this last year, and, as an audience member, it kept me interested the whole time,” Davidson said. “This is a really easy play to watch.

“For us as actors, it’s refreshing to be in a show like this because we’re not doing the same thing the whole time. We’re energized the whole show because we’re constantly shifting gears and portraying different characters.”

The rest of the cast is made up of Maggie Creel, Marley Hermann, Jason Lasee, Meghan Olson, Kevin Pelzel and Maria Pozharsky — all students at UW-Stout.

“The Good Doctor” runs from Wednesday through Saturday at the Mabel Tainter Center for the Arts. And the cast is certain this is a show audiences aren’t going to want to miss.

“The show is all about situational comedy,” Basom said. “People are put into extraordinary circumstances, and we show how they might respond to that. The audience will be laughing along because we’ve been rehearsing for a few weeks and we still laugh. It’s a really funny show.”