

Thursday, December 10, 2020

Theatre UAF slays monsters — and the pandemic stage — with its first virtual performance

The COVID-19 pandemic isolates us from family and friends, and also from the strangers that we regularly meet on stage at the theater.

While we still have to wait a bit longer for live theater to return, it was heartwarming to see so many Fairbanks regulars perform on computer in UAF Theatre and Film's opening production for the 2020-2021 season, "She Kills Monsters — Virtual Realms," written by Qui Nguyen. Nguyen updated his 2011 play for the pandemic. The outdated 90's references have been replaced with more currently outdated references ("Game of Thrones" is sooo 2019). Nguyen also wisely made all the characters of high school age, and the play is better for these updates.

Director Tom Robenolt and company have perfectly blended live theater and film with a video conference platform. What remains is a touching story of working through grief and how a role-playing game can teach us what we didn't know about lost loved ones. And of course, how cool it is to use magic and kill monsters.

"She Kills Monsters" tells the story of Agnes Evans (Josie Adasiak), a senior cheerleader in Athens, Ohio. She discovers the diary of her recently deceased sister, Tilly Evans (Emily Ross), a self-proclaimed geek.