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9-13-2011

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# Mark Twain's Farcical Comedy "Is He Dead?" Opens Soon at Gardner-Webb University

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Office of University Communications

September 13, 2011

*Cast Led by Tony-Nominated Guest Director, Dr. William Martin*



Watch Video At: [https://youtu.be/4LOJJZhy\\_m\\_k](https://youtu.be/4LOJJZhy_m_k)

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— The Gardner-Webb University Theatre Program is proud to present its fall production, "Is He Dead?" the recently rediscovered farcical comedy by Mark Twain. The cast is led by Tony-nominated guest director Dr. William Martin. The show will run Oct. 4-8, with performances each evening at 7:30 p.m. in the Dover Theatre, located in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center.

Originally written in 1898 but first published in 2003, "Is He Dead?" is a zany farce focused on the French painter Jean-Francois Millet. The show centers on the notion that for artists to be considered truly great—and more importantly, to make enough money to eat—they must first be dead.

Millet and a group of struggling artists therefore decide to fake Millet's death in order to increase the value of his work. But when Millet's cloistered new life leads to claustrophobia, he reenters society disguised as his imaginary twin sister, and hilarity ensues.

The show recently enjoyed a successful run on Broadway, and director Martin expects the audience will "have as much fun as the cast is having" in producing it.

"I selected this show because I love farces, and Gardner-Webb has done a lot of serious stuff in the recent past. I thought it was time we all had some fun," Martin said. "The show is full of all the late 19th century stock comic figures, and it's very fast-paced, very over-the-top. There are pratfalls and chases, misdirections and confusions, and we hope the audience laughs along with us."

GWU student Justin Humphries stars as Millet, leading a cast of 17 actors from the Gardner-Webb community.

Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for students and senior adults, \$4 for children under 12, and free with Gardner-Webb ID card. For more information or to purchase tickets, call 704-406-4656.

Director William Martin has nearly 300 productions to his credit, including several on Broadway. His Broadway premier, "The Lieutenant," was nominated for five Tony Awards including "Best Musical," and Martin received a Drama Desk Award nomination for "Best Director." He holds the Ph.D. in Theatre History, and has served as visiting scholar and guest director at numerous colleges and universities throughout his career.

 is he dead

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University seeks a higher ground in higher education – one that embraces faith and intellectual freedom, balances conviction with compassion, and inspires in students a love of learning, service, and leadership.*