

## Alfred University play, postponed by COVID-19, will be staged under the stars in September 7/17/20



Students and faculty use a Zoom meeting to rehearse for *Annie Jump and the Library of Heaven*

ALFRED, NY – The show (and the stars) will go on.

The Alfred University Division of Performing Arts production of Reina Hardy’s play *Annie Jump and the Library of Heaven* was to be staged on the Alfred University campus in April, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, thanks to a dedicated group of students and Theatre Department faculty, the power of technology, and support from the astronomy department, four performances of the play will now be held on campus in September.

Director Eliza Beckwith, visiting instructor of theatre, and her team of actors and stage managers have been holding regular Zoom meetings since the March, when COVID-19 forced the University to adopt a virtual model of instruction. From their homes in Florida, California, Pennsylvania, and New York, students participated on weekly online rehearsals.

Originally, the play was to be staged in C.D. Smith Theatre, but to promote safety and meet social distancing guidelines, four outdoor performances will be held Sept. 16-19 at Alfred University’s Stull Observatory.

“This outdoor location is ideal for this particular play,” Beckwith commented. “It is about a thirteen-year-old science genius, who is obsessed with the stars. What better place is there than this wonderful facility here in Alfred?”

Beckwith credited members of Alfred University’s astronomy faculty, David Toot, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and David DeGraff, professor of astronomy, for supporting the production from the beginning, when it was planned for the C.D. Smith Theatre. “Little did they know that we would ultimately be performing it in their backyard,” she said.

Maureen Weiss, associate professor of Performing Arts Design and Technology, and will be leading the design team

in the task of adapting to this new and unusual venue, along with Zachary Hamm, clinical associate professor/technical director. The on-campus rehearsals and performances will follow all New York State and federal policies for safety, and the audience will be limited due to social distancing guidelines.