

Avon Players do top-notch job with dull comedy

By NANCY MAZZARA

Review

"Bob Randall's comedy in two acts, '6 Rms Riv Vu,'" bears a remarkable similarity to something that could have been written by Neil Simon. But it somehow misses the charming yet pointed effect that a play of Simon's would have.

"The performance given on Friday, Dec. 8 by 14 Avon Players of Avon Township was close to perfect, considering the material they were working with. The play was well-cast, well-staged, and enjoyed by its large audience.

Anne Miller as played by Sue Vanovermeer is insecure in her marriage to Richard, who is an architect and has "sagging pecorals." But she is even more unsettled by the idea of having an affair with Paul Friedman, whom she "hardly knows." But then she would probably never know any man well enough to have an affair with him. Anne is a devoted housewife, mother and wife who somehow feels a lack of excitement in her life. She toys with the idea of having an affair, but when push comes to shove, can't bring herself to do it.

Ms. Vanovermeer is a skilled actress in this role. She expresses Anne's indecision extremely well. Paul, the "struggling young would-be author," is played by Joe Nicolini. Paul is really a middle-aged advertising copywriter, but doesn't want anyone to think of him that way. He still

pictures himself as young, handsome, and able to get any woman he wants.

He tries to get to Anne every way he knows how, but she doesn't fall for tales of his sexual prowess and the many (imaginary) conquests he's made.

NICOLINI is perfect for the role. He presents Paul as loud, bragging and somewhat overwhelming. In his portrayal, the character is a stereotypical image of the New York adman, but Paul does have human attributes also. He has a wife who is not just a feminist but a women's libber, and who has her group over to talk about planned sit-ins and bombings while Paul plays hostess.

He is therefore lonely for the usual type of female companionship and when he meets Anne, he assumes she is as discontent in her marriage as he is in his.

When the super of the apartment—that she and Paul simultaneously come to see—removes the inside doorknob and shuts the door, trapping them inside, Anne's first reaction is panic. Paul half-heartedly helps her in her frantic attempts to escape, but then starts talking in such deep philosophical terms about the boredom of his and Anne's generation, that she

finally asks him if he took the doorknob in order to talk to her.

The talk between them goes on for such a long time the viewer begins to feel some of the same boredom that Paul is talking about. The conversation develops from comparisons of each others' spouses, to compliments of each other. Paul asks Anne out to dinner at 7:30—a picnic on the floor of the empty apartment. Anne, horrified, refuses and leaves, only to poke her head back in the door and say that she can't possibly make it before 8.

There are a few very witty lines in the play. When Anne is analyzing why she feels so uncomfortable with Paul, she realizes that it's because Paul is the first man in seven years she's been alone with besides Richard. She says it makes her feel young and adds, "The last time I felt young, Grover Cleve-

land was in office!"

By and large, though, the play drags, through no fault of the cast. The main point, that Anne and Paul are attracted to each other and don't want to admit it, is rephrased and repeated several times, not always very creatively.

OTHER MEMBERS OF the cast do a fine job. Anne's husband Richard, played by Frank Harris, is exactly as Anne has described him. Paul's wife Janet, played by Kat Le Rose, is adequate but leaves the viewer trying to discover what happened to her marriage.

The woman in 4A, a neighbor at the apartment in the play, is a true study in American kitsch. Played by Dorothy Nothelner, her voice outdoes chalk scratching on a blackboard and her costume is straight out of Miami

Beach during tourist season. Reg Brown as the building super is the three monkeys—See-no-evil, Hear-no-evil, and Speak-no-evil—all rolled into one. He just goes about his business while bothering no one, and lets nothing bother or distract him.

The Pregnant Woman and the Expectant Father, played by Linda J. Held and Tom Beaman, appear early in the play and are also prospective tenants of the apartment. It turns out that they get the apartment after all, and they put on a good show of bustling around measuring the place while ignoring the drama unfolding between Anne and Paul.

"6 Rms Riv Vu" is directed by Mattie Wolf and produced by Wynn Stuenkel. Hank Liese is assistant director and Pat Disbrow is assistant producer.

The best of the effects was the lighting, supervised by Max Wolf, Mike Brooks, and Bob Palmeter. Especially good were the moonlight and lightning effects during the picnic scene.

Organized by Mary Ann Smothers, costumes for the most part were ordinary modern street wear. High points were the woman in 4A and Anne's long green gown in the picnic scene. The set, designed by Jim Carlisle was realistic with muted aqua paint and a cream carpet. No furniture was included, nor was any needed, since the apartment was unoccupied throughout the play.

"6 Rms Riv Vu" continues Friday and Saturday at the playhouse on Washington Road in Avon Township. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. for both performances.

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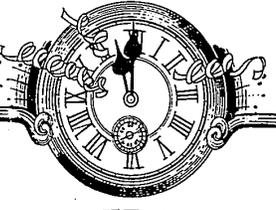
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