

Dinner theater serves up fine, serious production

By BARBARA MICHALS

Review

"Two for the Seesaw" leaves one with a bittersweet taste. The current production by Theater of the Arts is competent and entertaining, but the William Gibson play is considerably more serious than the usual light-hearted fare served up at most dinner theaters in the area.

"Seesaw" is being presented on Saturday evenings in a dinner theater format at Alvaro's in Royal Oak. The show follows a pleasant sit-down dinner featuring a choice of two entrees. Ticket information is available by calling 649-8903. The drama is about two lonely people

who drift together out of mutual need and then ride the seesaw of love until one eventually climbs off. "Seesaw" is not without humor, though. Its many comic moments are interspersed throughout and smoothly integrated into the whole.

The opening scenes are particularly funny and warm as the two characters make tentative moves toward each other like moths drawn to the flame but fearful of getting burned.

GITTLE is a kooky Bronx waif with a generous heart and a fine job as GITTLE, con-

veying both her toughness and her vulnerability. She's endearing and amusing but never so kooky that one forgets to take her seriously. A touch of a Bronx accent sounds very natural.

In the final scene, those are real tears Miss LaRose sheds, and her eyes look red and sore though they were normal just a few minutes before. It's an impressive achievement.

Hal Christiansen is a competent Jerry. His cynicism doesn't come across very well, possibly because Christiansen simply looks like a fellow to ever turn cynical. His delivery is always smooth.

Director D. Neil Howison keeps the dialogue well-paced and

utilizes the small stage as skillfully as possible. Scene changes sometimes seem slow and a bit awkward, but the stage limitations may have much to do with this.

DINNER INCLUDES entree, baked potato, vegetable, salad, rolls, sherbet and coffee. Diners may choose between a hefty New York strip steak and a tasty stuffed flounder. While the meal is very satisfying, one wishes Alvaro's wouldn't stint on salad dressing and rolls, especially since their rolls are outstanding.

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Audience delights in outmoded show

By GAY ZIEGLER

It is hard to believe, in this age of disco, Kiss and Kinsey, that people would find "I Do, I Do" even vaguely amusing.

But they do, they do, as was very much evident at the Paradise Dinner Theater, which is presenting the Nancy Garwin production of the musical version of "The Fourposter."

Despite the fact that this is not one of your more subtle comedies, that it is filled with every sight gag and cliché concerning the sexes, that the dialogue is oh-so standard, the audience responded enthusiastically, often applauding, murmuring in agreement, sometimes vocalizing thoughts.

It was a very affable affair. The room itself was intimate and colorful, done mostly in reds, blacks and golds. The tables were set with cloths and candles. The service was warm and personal.

THE MEAL, though undistinguished, was palatable. The menu offered a choice of chicken, fish, or veal cutlet. Noteworthy were the breadsticks, salad, and a marvelous appetizer of spaghetti. The green beans and rice were bland.

The show carried the cast's two stars through 50 years of marriage. The feeling of affinity for Nancy Garwin and Lindsay Barr was immediate. They could do no wrong in the audience's eyes.

Ms. Garwin has a winning presence. She commands attention. Her movements are natural, her projection to be envied. She shows a comedic sense. Her voice has a slight earthy quality which summons images of blues-singing and sleepy piano bars.

Review

Barr relied heavily on the physical and visual. He often bugged his eyes and employed exaggerated arm motions. He is, however, clearly a polished baritone who knows how to relate to the audience.

Sometimes their on-stage bickering was as annoying as the kind one would find at home, but the pain couldn't really be faulted. The level of technical competence was high.

THERE WERE two show-stoppers: Ms. Garwin and her grandly low-down shimmy in "Flamingo Agnes" and the duo making plans for "When the Kids Get Married." Both numbers elicited a sympathetic response.

A few other selections consisted of merely ordinary language put to music, rather like, "Say, I just got up and brushed my teeth." In one real breach of poetic license, Barr intones, "I'll do what I please. Even read 'War and Peace.'"

Throughout there was an undercurrent of talent, which unfortunately was sometimes submerged by the predictable prattle of the script. The play is based on the premise that audiences will find humor in big jokes and references to brassieres. It seems to be so.

For devotees of drama, this will appear insipid. But even those who demand their comedy straight would appreciate the earnestness and verve of the two players. They put zest and vigor into every line.

They were backed, most admirably, by a fine trio composed of Martin Mandelbaum on piano, Ted Mueller on percussion and Dale Anderson on bass. "I Do, I Do," directed by Edgar A. Guest III, continues every Friday and Saturday at the Paradise in Detroit.

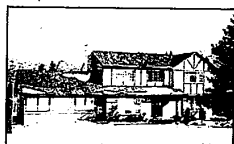
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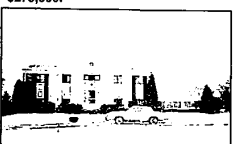
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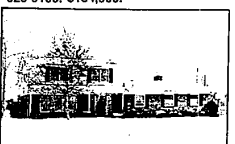
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