## 'A Walk in the Woods' fulfills playgoer's dream

The Michigan premiere en-gagement of "A Walk in the Woods" continues through Sun-day, Feb. 25, at Meadow Brook Theutre on the Oakland Universi-ty campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information call 377-3300.

By Mark Carley special writer

Meadow Brook Theatre's produc-tion of "A Walk in the Woods" pro-vides that experience for which playgoers yearn, but so rarely get — a fast-paced, well-acted drama of-fering not only entertainment, but substance

fering not only entertainment, but substance.

On its surface, Lee Blessing's Pul-lizer-Prize-nominated play is a sim-ple dialogue between two arms con-rol negolitators – hardy stimulat-ing stuff for non-political science majors. But under the direction of Stephen Kanee, actors Arthur J. Beer and Michael James Laird infuse their discourse with enough passion, humor and charm to keep the audience transfixed throughout the performance.

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Andrey Bolvinnik, played by Beer, is a seasoned veteran of the Soviet diplomatic corps. John Honsyman (London) and the season of the Soviet Corps. In the season of the season of the season of the large single the first engoliating team. In order to escape the pressures and attentions of the bargaining table, the two take regular walks through the picturesque woods surrounding Geneva, Switzerland. Botvinnik is amiable, gib and ut-clipt charming. He is known in diplomatic circles for having 100 different, quality pleasant ways of saying "no." Beer's portrayal of the grand-therly Russian is magnificent. He exudes warmth, humer and compassion for both his own character and for the American.

JOIN HONEYMAN is deadly se-

for the American.

JOIN HONEYMAN is deadly serfous, somewhat hyperactive and painfully eager to do well in his first negotiation. Laird's performance, especially in the opening scene, is interesting to the control of the control of



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At this point the audience might think it is witnessing yet another and American distribe—the paranoid, hawkish American refusing all peace initialwes from the arnable and well-meaning Soviet. But "Walk in the Woods" is not a political statement of this or any other kind. Rather, it is an exploration of human relationships and how they might have the house of the world most contained that the late of the world most contained that the late of the world refuse the heat of the heat of the heat of heat of heat of the heat of hea

THROUGH THE COURSE of the play, Laird does a masterful job of swinging audience empathy his way. He does this with a courageously honest portrayal of the frustrations

the world is Honeyman's tragge raw.

An even sadder case is that of Botvinnik, the charmer who seems to
take nothing seriously. His flaw is
the inability to see true hope in the
world. Perhaps the two men are metaphors for their respective cultures.

As usual, Mendow Brook has done a fine job with the technical aspects of the play. The set is a simple but beautiful knoll in the woods. For once, it does not overwhelm the ac-

Many playgoers will miss "A Walk in the Woods," thinking either, "talky two-person plays are a bore," or, "what could be duller than a play about arms control?" These people will make a big mistake.

Mark S. Carley is active in local andres, carry is active in decide community theater, both onstage and behind the scenes. He is a member of the Birmingham Vil-lage Players and Ridgedale Play-ers in Troy.



Woods," drams about a meeting between two Arthur Beer (left) is the Russian and Michael James Laird is the American in "A Walk in the

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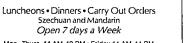
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