

'Lovers' Best Done By Amateurs

By TIM RICHARD

Two paradoxical things about "Lovers and Other Strangers":

- It's an excellent play (rather, four one-acts) with virtually no memorable lines.
- It's probably better to see it done by semi-pros and amateurs of the Livonia-Redford Theater Guild than by New York Broadway types.

Renee Taylor and Joseph Bologna have written four tales about four couples with problems that are solved in long conversations. Poring over the script, it's hard to pinpoint a turning spot—a line, a sentence, a speech—then underline and memorize it, the way you did in Shakespeare class.

"In a time of stress," says the mother to a son who is on the outs with his wife, "a family has to come together and open their hearts to each other and try to overcome whatever it is that's making people act crazy."

That's what "Lovers and Other Strangers" is all about—the coming together process rather than any great formula for ideal sex and marriage.

The LRTG players, our neighbors, are probably more believable in these

roles than Broadway actors would be. The intimacy of the tiny playhouse on Beechdale south of Five Mile allows the spectators to sit in a corner of the living room, in effect, and Director J. Craig Collicott seems to have told some of the players to pick out individual members of the audience when delivering certain lines.

"Lovers" has 10 players and 10 good parts, and since it doesn't need a super star,

it's an ideal vehicle for a community theater group.

Brenda (a breezy Susan Chapman) is a mod-ish bi-blophile who is the object of the expectations of Jerry (a quiet-voiced Perry Lewis), who never quite understands why what he says is right or wrong.

Johany and Wilma (a real-life married couple, David and Rosemary Tuckey) are a couple in their early 40s with a sex problem. I think I

would have been uncomfortable if anything but a married couple had played this hilarious scene.

Mike (a demonstrative Mark Galdon) is a nervous bridegroom-to-be who is calmed in a few inappropriate sentences by Susan. The fiancé is played by Jud and Judy Trambly—the sloppily written program spells it both ways.

Frank (Ed Morehead) and Bea (Esther Melton) are an Archie and Edith Bunker sort of couple whose son Richie (a rational and restrained Chas. Gerdan) is planning a divorce from Joan (appel-cheeked Alice Mas-son).

If you see the play either May 4-6 or 11-12, I hope the audience is as good as the one last Saturday, because the audience is half the fun. (Call Pam Nelson, 30742 Ann Arbor Trail, Westland, or Mrs. Roger Packard, 14350 Stout, Detroit, to make your reservations). The women particularly appreciated the way Wilma chewed out her husband over the lack of sex. On the right aisle, there was a woman in her mid-20s who was absolutely poker-faced at a line that cracked up everyone else; I wondered what she and her escort talked about afterwards.

Me, I split when Wilma addressed Johnny as "head." Wanna know why?

Players Seek (And Get) Advice

By BETTY MASSON

If I were asked to give the Southfield Community Players some advice (and I was, so here goes), I would first suggest they get themselves out of that gymnasium with a stage they perform in.

The Civic Center location is handy, but the lighting is awful, the distractions (door bangings), uninviting, and the seats, very uncomfortable.

The players are presently staging three one-acts, which I saw over the weekend, and nowhere are the lighting and sound inadequacies more apparent than in the first play, "The Monkey's Paw."

Without the proper staging effects, instead of being chilling, it is pretty flat.

The one-acts are a valiant effort to provide variety, and to give a lot of people an opportunity to perform. Unfortunately, the second, "The Hungerers" by William Saroyan, was a very bad choice. Others have said the

same thing (about alienation) much better.

The third one-act, "The Flattering Word," was the best of the three. It is a little dated, but still carries a universal message. "Everyone's a ham at heart."

And everyone who has anything to do with a stage mother, can identify with Eugene Tsch the actor (played by Steven Barnaby), when he tells one, "If your daughter lives, she has a future."

Right now, the Southfield Players are not in the same league with some of their neighboring communities.

But there are indications they could be. These include the performance by Joe Kay, Chris Scheiva, Denise Bale, Barnaby, and Jackie Rice (who was a riot as the stage mother). And there are a lot more good actors in Southfield. They go to Wil-O-Way, to Greenfield Village and the Jewish Community Center.

There's also the willingness to ask for advice. And it amounts to this:

• Go to your community for support. Shame the city fathers into helping you, if you have to. Get some organization which is looking for a worthy cause to help you.

• Beg, borrow, steal (or even pay) good directors.

• Find a place of your own, even if it's an abandoned store. Every player should know how to be a carpenter and a painter.

• Pick plays that are current, that are challenging to your members and a little challenging to the audience.

• Be prepared for a lot of heartache and hard work.

• And talk to members of other groups. They'll have lots more advice...better than mine.

The three one-acts can be seen this weekend, in the center, at 101 1/2 Mile and Evergreen. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 4 and 5, and tickets will be sold at the door.

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