Mark S. Carley

'Seascape' has merit

Performances of Edward Albee's "Seascape" continue through Saturday at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. For ticket information call 471-7700.

By Mark S. Carley
special writer

Oakland Community College's Smith Theatre presents an uneven but generally insightful version of Edward Albee's comic fable "Seascape."

The story of a retired couple who encounter a pair of anthropomorphic lizards, the play examines the conflicting human desires for stimulation (adventure, learning, life) and comfort (rest, reflection, death).

Action takes place on a deserted beach where Nancy (Emily J. McSweeney) and Charlie (Robert P. Shaw) have just finished a satisfying picnic lunch. Nancy is busy painting a seascape while Charlie naps. These activities perfectly express their respective characters. Charlie, recently retired, simply wishes to rest and relax after 30 years of marriage and career.

As Charlie, Shaw effectively portrays a tired man who has spent a lifetime struggling to succeed and who sees retirement as a chance to escape. Although he is convincing, Shaw's performance becomes irritating due to a whiney delivery which is used constantly, whether appropriate to the dialogue or not.

MCSWEENEY PLAYS Nancy as a robust older woman who sees retirement as a chance to start life anew. The character's gusto is evident in McSweeney's portrayal, but the quality of dialogue suffers because she rushes her lines and confines herself to a very narrow emotional range.

Director Sandra Sutherland has taken on a difficult, metaphorical and thought-provoking piece in 'Seascape.'

The first act consists entirely of discourse between Charlie and Nancy. This material, comlex and subtle in nature, would present a challenge to seasoned professional actors. At the amateur level it is almost impossible to pull off, and sadly the action here becomes tedious.

The conversation and Act One come to an abrupt end with the appearance of two large humanoid sea creatures.

As Act Two opens, we discover that these creatures are no ordinary reptiles but rather talking lizards named Leslie and Sarah. They have crawled up onto the beach in an attempt to move up the evolutionary ladder.

As Leslie and Sarah, Terry Burns and Suzanne Rogers are terrific. They inject a new-found sense of excitement into the play, just as their characters bring a sense of awe and vitality into the lives of Nancy and Charlie.

THESE HUMAN lizards lithely slither around the stage, feeling out the human couple and gathering information on their new environment.

As the inquisitive reptiles boldly endeavor to evolve, Charlie experiences a sort of resurrection; his vigor for life is renewed by the play's end.

Albee called "Seascape" his salute to life, and its central theme is that life must be experienced to the fullest or it is no life at all.

Director Sandra Sutherland has taken on a difficult, metaphorical and thought-provoking piece in "Seascape." While the ride is somewhat rocky, she and her troupe manage to get the point across quite effectively, and they provide a reasonably entertaining evening.

Mark S. Carley is active in local community theater, both on stage and behind the scenes. He is a member of the Ridgedale Players in Troy. The Ferndale resident works as a loan officer for the Detroit Economic Growth Corp.

table talk

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Expanded dining

Addition of a new dining room has expanded seating capacity from 85 to 120 at the Clarkston Cafe. An 800-square-foot area was added when the owners purchased a two-story building adjacent to the downtown Clarkston restaurant. The new dining area is furnished to resemble an 18th century London library. This year, for the first time, the cafe will accept reservations for its traditional Mother's Day dinner served from noon to 6 p.m.

Tasting time

Taste of West Bloomfield makes its second annual Michigan week appearance Sunday, May 21. The chef's fest will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the lobby and adjoining courtyard of Henry Ford Medical Center — West Bloomfield. Twenty area restaurants, more than half of them within the township, will provide 500 tastes of one or more of their specialties. Tickets are $25 per couple, $15 per person, $7.50 per senior citizen and $5 per child under 12. For more information, call 626-3636 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays.

Food, wine

The Hyatt Regency Dearborn is hosting Pasta, Pesto, Primavera, the hotel chain's first nationwide food and wine festival. A variety of specialty pastas, fresh seafood and poultry, antipasto and Italian desserts, as well as imported wines, are being offered during lunch and dinner. Wines and specialty drinks also are available in the lounges. The event continues through Friday, June 30.

Newest Kyoto

Two months of festive Japanese culture and events are being featured at the new Kyoto Japanese Steakhouse at 21150 Haggerty Road, just north of Eight Mile Road, in Farmington Hills. One afternoon each week beginning Tuesday, May 23, Kyoto will feature a different demonstration of Japanese artistry or tradition. The demonstrations, Japanese tea and dessert are free. A free lunch will be offered to children participating in a Japanese Kite Flying Day at noon Saturday, May 27, at the Kyoto. For more information on the Japanese events, call 557-9393, or for reservations call 348-7900.

Japanese Hi Tea

An authentic Japanese Hi Tea will be held 1-3 p.m. Thursday, May 25, at Southfield Parks and Recreation. Several Japanese wives, together with Nancy Schubeck, who spent three years in Hiroshima, will serve the tea. The program includes demonstrations on Kimono Dressing, Ikebana and Origami. Tickets are available for $8 (includes a light lunch) at the Mary Thompson Cultural Center in Southfield. For more information or reservations, call 354-4717.

'Souper Bowl'

Two area chefs are among finalists in the professional chef category for the "Souper Bowl" contest sponsored by AAA Michigan Living magazine, the Michigan Restaurant Association and the Greater Michigan Foundation. They are Steven M. Allen of Southfield's Golden Mushroom and Mark Kline of the Machus Sly Fox in Birmingham. Final judging will be Monday at Lansing's new Michigan Library and Historical Center.

Lucheon hours

Home Sweet Home restaurant in Novi is now open for lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays. Its home-styled dishes and sandwiches have been especially priced for lunch. The restaurant also is introduced a Gourmet Salad Bar. Outdoor patio and veranda dining will be available at weather permits.

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