

Cocktail without fizz

Performances of the Trinity House Theatre production of "The Cocktail Party" continue through Saturday, May 20, in Livonia. For ticket information call 464-8302.

By Victoria Diaz
special writer



book break Victoria Diaz

For its final production of the 1988-89 season, Livonia's Trinity House Theatre has chosen to do T.S. Eliot's "The Cocktail Party." Though able cast members struggle gamely with Eliot's long and talky play, ultimately it never seems to come to life.

It's hard to describe "The Cocktail Party." Written in 1949, and set in post-war London, it's based on Euripides' "Alceste," in which the wife of the mythological King Admetos offers herself to Death, when he comes to take away her husband. Eliot's play, though, is often rather like a drawing room comedy. Even farcical at times, it's also part drama, part social satire, part philosophical/religious statement — with plenty of symbolism and literary allusion built in.

Directed here by Mark Barrera, "The Cocktail Party" opens shortly after Edward Chamberlayne (Nick Sotter) discovers that Lavinia (Robin Sullivan), his wife of five years, has left him. Unfortunately, Lavinia hasn't warned him of her imminent departure, and he is left to host a long-planned cocktail party at his home, because he didn't have time to

cancel all the invitations. At the party are Alex (Jim Floyd), who loves to cook; Julia (Joy Dreifuss), who loves to snoop; Celia (Nancy K. Hawker), who is in love; Peter (Michael McCafferty), who is also in love; and a mysterious, unidentified guest (H. Edward Anderson), who has a tendency to slurp his tea. Soon, it's apparent that the business of unrequited love is at work here, and therein hangs the tale — sort of.

THIS "PARTY" is not buzzing with a lot of small talk. Much of what is said here is weighty and complicated — so complicated, in fact, that it's often baffling. There's a lot about making choice in life, and a lot about what is real vs. what is imagined or dreamed of or wished for.

The well-dressed cast is to be especially commended for the convincing English accents they maintain throughout the play. Apparently, they worked long and hard on this aspect of their performances, and it's paid off impressively. Another special commendation: the amount of dialogue handled by some of the

actors is mind-boggling, but all of it is delivered with hardly a bobble, and most of it with generous amounts of on-stage presence and grace.

Set design by Brian Heernink and Barrera is appropriate and imaginative. Costuming, done by Terri Tower Thomson and Gary Brda, works well. Lighting by Dave Denis is effective.

Still, this production of Eliot's play never really reaches out and takes the audience up in it. In the end, it feels more like a lengthy, wordy statement on the human condition than like a play.

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia-based freelancer, who specializes in arts and entertainment articles in the metro area.



SHARON LE MIEUX

R. Edward Anderson (left) as Sir Henry Harcourt-Bell, Jim Floyd as Alexander MacColl, Gino Gibbs and Joy Dreyfuss as Julia Men. Shuttlothwaite toast their wedding in others'

business, in "The Cocktail Party," at Trinity House Theatre. Gary Brda, works well. Lighting by Dave Denis is effective. Shuttlothwaite toast their wedding in others'

Nagler to lead workshop

Monte Nagler, photographer, teacher and columnist, will conduct a Cranbrook P.M. photography workshop and seminar, beginning at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 18. During the first session Nagler will explore depth-of-field and exposure. Then, 12:30-5 p.m. Saturday, May 20, he will lead an outdoor workshop. Students are asked to bring camera with cable release, tripod, daylight

film, assorted lenses and close up equipment and to wear appropriate outdoor clothing. A final critiquing session at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 18, will provide opportunities for questions. Photographs from the outdoor session will be analyzed. Fee for the workshop and seminar is \$45. Enrollment is limited. For information, call Cranbrook P.M. 645-3635.



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