

Avon's 'Rumors' has lots of laughs

Performances of the Avon Players production of "Rumors" continue through Jan. 23 at the playhouse in Rochester Hills. For ticket information call the box office at 375-1390.



SALLY DUBATS

The Avon Players' production of Neil Simon's clever farce, "Rumors," is a funny and quick-witted look at an evening's mischief for the upper middle class. But just as many vintage musicals were written around previously written songs, "Rumors" was written around Simon's previously written one-liners.

Whose from page 7C

Farces are notorious for blend-

ing a mix of high and low comedy with ridiculous story line, and the story line for "Rumors" is ridiculous, but misses the fast-paced style of the farceur fancier. Director Joyce Contrucci blends quirky characters, timing and pace for a fun evening of Simon antics.

The "Rumors" begin on the eve of a party at the meticulously decorated New York suburb home of Charley and Myra Brock. Unfortunately, Charley has shot himself in the ear while boasting which party wife with one another like pro. Frederick is funny, but could have played her character better with traditional deadpan

Simon sarcasm rather than the stereotypical dirty female with a squeaky voice. Katz gives a laudable performance as Ken.

The host and hostess are misangels as are the domestic help, but guests keep arriving nonetheless. Kim Montross gives a splendid performance as Lenny Ganz, and it is the highlight of the show with his confident comedic timing. He is hilarious delivering lines such as, "I'm only a sheet-and-a-half left on the toilet paper. It's sloppy, but not a scandal."

Linda Shepherd plays his wife, Claire Ganz, with flair and interesting detail. Most people drop names to be chic; Claire drops names to be charitable which charity she has attended.

Cookie Cusack (Sue Warner) and her husband Ernie (Jim Warner) are duped into preparing the evening fare. Sue Warner's facial facial expressions make her a perfect fit for the part of Cookie.

Cookie's bad back makes it difficult for her to "sit, stand or

walk," but dancing is good for her. Jim Warner plays well the confused psychiatrist.

The last of the guests are Glenn Cooper, played by a capable Mark Stanger, and Cassie Cooper portrayed well by Natasha Monchek. Cooper doesn't want to mess up his political career with a scandalous earlobe injury, and Cassie is more interested in the rumors about her husband's infidelity with a bimbo.

Technically, Doug Patterson's set design is flawless as the set functions perfectly for the needs of the show. Set decoration by Jean MacVey and Lisha MacNeill is beautiful and filled with pizzazz. The design and decoration combination is dazzling.

"Rumors" has a shaky premise without much plot. Farce depends upon plots within plots, mixed identities and lots of fun confusion. The many doors required for the set were misused in the writing. Simon would have done better to call it a comedy. The Avon Players' production is a valid comedy.

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The Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra and music director Felix Rostek will take the stage 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 24, at Temple Beth El, 14 Mile and Telegraph, Birmingham with a "Lite Classical" concert.

Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 students under 19, available at

the door, or in advance by calling 645-2270.

Experience the BBSO's "Symphonic Fireworks," with Dvorak's "Carnival Overture," Ravel's "Pavane pour une infante defunte," Gershwin's "An American in Paris," excerpts from Stravinsky's "Firebird," Rodgers' "Slughter on 10th Avenue," and the "1812 Overture" by Tchaikovsky.

the doctor's final helpful acts believable.

Linda Pelliccioli is too beautiful to play Dr. Joan Scott. Dr. Scott's deeply complex shifts of emotion, and her basic sympathy with Harrison need to be stronger. Dr. Scott's likability and physical attraction to a paralyzed man come through, but her defiant acts — withdrawing medication against her superior's advice, dating the patient's lawyer — are strangely muted.

Jim Rink looks every inch the lawyer who decides to plead Harrison's case. As Phillip Hill, Rink exudes a troubled, yet meticulous sense of a man struggling to do the right thing in a "cloudy universe" a world of difficult decisions. Jack Abella as Peter Kershaw, his colleague, is fast on his feet.

Jerry Brader, a bear of a man, plays Dr. Paul Travers, the hospi-

tal psychiatrist. Brader is effective in his single scene, trying in vain to prove Harrison is insane, then going for help.

Jacqueline Saltz, as Dr. Barr, "the help" that arrives from Bellowue, turns out to be the voice of "outside objectivity." She doesn't believe Harrison is too devious, and Saltz efficiently plays the formidable Dr. Barr.

Lori Jacobs does fine in a cameo as Andrea Edon, the hospital representative, and Hal Safon is excellent as Mr. Justice Millhouse, the thoughtful, kindly "hanging judge" of whom so much is asked. Kudos to Leo Wolkowicz for the fine set.

Helen Zucker has many years' experience reviewing for newspapers and magazines in Michigan, New York and Massachusetts.

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