

ARTS & LEISURE

Play review: "Red Hot Lovers" delivers questionable message

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Capital Times Staff

Imagine a date with a nymphomaniac, a compulsive liar, and a hopeless depressant. It's enough to send anyone running back to their wife.

Thursday, October 19, The Alpha-Omega Players presented Neil Simon's "Last Of The Red Hot Lovers" in the auditorium of Penn State Harrisburg.

The play itself is a cat-and-mouse chase comedy which centers around Barney Cashman (Jerry Baggot), a New York restaurant manager, in mid-life crisis, who mourns his youth, lost because he married his high-school sweetheart.

From here, he arranges a secret rendezvous with three different women in his mother's apartment, setting up a series of comic situations.

Barney evolves from an unhip innocent, dressed in a blue suit, to a grey suited gentleman, to a smiling open-shirted charmer.

Originally, Neil Simon drew inspiration for this play by the sexual revolution of the 60's. It makes fun of blurred roles and questions society's values.

However, this play does not have the same impact today as it did in 1969. We've seen variations of the themes many time on TV and on film.

For example, in the movie "The Graduate," Dustin Hoffman plays a naive young man who is seduced by an older

women.

And in "10," Dudley Moore is turned off when Bo Derrick explains, "I make love because it gives me pleasure."

We can also tune into television's "Three's Company" and watch Jack Tripper chase the girls, or get chased, around the couch.

But the play is funny. Things happen to Barney and around him, and by the second act the theater goer forgets this is a man cheating on his wife and sympathizes with him and laughs at each obstacle. Positive energy flows across the open stage.

The comedy is most entertaining by its use of everyday props, (such as a pillow or a purse) and the mating dance between characters.

The blue sofa, doilies, and family picture album clue his dates and the audience that we are not in a bachelor's apartment.

Though there is a minimum amount of scenery and no overt social message, the play achieves a sense of history.

Director Drexel H. Riley fades and opens scenes to the song, "What the World Needs Now is Love Sweet Love," and groovy '60s instrumentals.

The ending was less than moving. Barney gains experience and a renewed appreciation of his wife, as a "decent truly loving person." He picks up the phone and calls her.

This happy go lucky resolution supports the theory that an affair can save or improve a marriage.



photo by Richard Chlavetta

Cast of "Red Hot Lovers" prepare to take a bow.



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