

Playwright comparable to Simon

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If you like Neil Simon's plays, you'll like "Relatively Speaking," the current offering at the Firehouse Dinner Theatre at 11th and Jackson streets in Omaha's Old Market.

The play, by Alan Ayckbourn, revolves around a series of misunderstandings about relationships and interrelationships between two couples.

Theater Preview

The plot focuses on two couples: Greg and Ginney (Ray Wills and Barbara Chase) and Phillip and Sheila (Julian Barnes and Betty Jinnette.)

Greg and Ginny decide to get married. Greg then finds an address which he questions Ginny about. She tells him it's her parents' address, and Greg goes to the house to ask for their daughter's hand in marriage. But the address is really that of Phillip, Ginny's former lover. The jig could have been up — but Phillip fits the fatherly image and the confusion continues.

After the somewhat long intro-

duction the Simonish humor begins to take hold on the audience as the characters get more and more mixed up. No one on stage seems to know what's going on or who's who. Each character is relatively helpless. All are confused and pretend everything is "normal." Part of the story's success is that the audience feels somewhat superior, watching the stumbling on stage.

Playwright Ayckbourn, who's nicknamed the "Neil Simon of Great Britain" makes little attempt at analyzing lives or providing insights which makes for a light evening.

"I wrote this play simply to make people laugh," Ayckbourn wrote.

The only problem with the comedy is that it requires a lot of concentration. The settings and costuming change very little and speeches are conversational and indirect.

However, after the audience members become oriented to the play's humor and style, the entanglements are intriguing and hold the viewers' interest right up to the ending, which comes surprisingly quickly.

All four actors bring impressive credentials to the Omaha stage, and set the proper tone for the "Simonish" scenes and action. Ray Wills, currently living in Omaha, is from Los Angeles. His credits include P.M. Magazine. Barbara Chase, a New York native, has acted in "The Brady Bunch," "Ryan's Hope," "Nine-

To-Five" and "General Hospital."

Julian Barnes, from London, has acted in Shakespeare's "Richard the Second" and in Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Indians," among others.

Betty Jinnette, of the Waltons, has also made soap opera appearances and has starred in roles in regional theaters throughout the country.

Although all the actors fit the play, Jinnette was probably the most intrigued of the quartet and the most sympathetic character. Jinnette previously played "Sheila" in a Los Angeles production of "Relatively Speaking."

All four adopted fairly convincing English accents, and seemed to retain that English pomposity Americans expect to see, even in the ridiculous situations.

"Relatively Speaking" will be featured at the Firehouse through May 4. Ticket prices vary for different times and nights.

As usual, the Firehouse Brigade did a fine job of putting the audience in the right mood for the main event.

The Firehouse theatre setting, which is arranged on three sides of the stage, provides the proper intimate atmosphere.

Dessert and drinks also complement the show. We lose our hearts to the "Amaretto Pie."



Courtesy of Firehouse Dinner Theatre
Jinnette

Prof. Pudwitz by Ron Jelinek



Disintegration comes easily; the problem is reintegration

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herence about fires in the sky over Kansas, E and MC squared and spiritual apocalypse.

Donahue's moderate housewife approach would make them wish they were floating in the stratosphere in a million pieces just like the cat.

We wonder a lot on the subjects of what's become of art, the "real" paint-

ers, the old songs, the great symphonies, the big bands and movies like "Casablanca." Where are the Beethovens, we ask, and the Bachs and the Keats' and the Shelleys and Byrons and Michelangelos.

And like Lot's wife we can't turn around because of the blaze of technicolor in our wake.

If Beethoven were alive today, he'd be writing songs for Black Flag. "Casablanca" is pretty, but "Halloween" has

our paranoia down for posterity.

The bomb is the hockey mask waiting in the back seat of the car with a scythe. The bomb is a Black Flag song. We're sweating under the tension of something here. We accuse the toy makers and the violent cartoons. We accuse the music and this secret society of witches in our high schools.

We'll disintegrate perfectly. It's the reintegration that's a bitch. Go ask Andre.



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Professor gives recital

Harvey Hinshaw, UNL professor of harpsichord and piano, will present a faculty recital tonight at 8 p.m. in the Wick Alumni Center, 1520 R Street.

Hinshaw, who has studied with Igor Kipnis and other renowned harpsichordists, instituted the harpsichord program at UNL in 1975.

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