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# Oh Dad: Crisp If Not Exciti

By D. M. ROSENBERG

It is easy to be too serious about "Poor Dad." That is a trap built into the play. One has the uneasy sense that something about life is being said, what with all the symbols, apparent sexual frankness, epigrams, and free-flight monologues. But at the same time one squirms at the thought that we are all being conned.

The symbols, primarily of a phallic if not faggish nature, are all too easy and sophomoric; the aphoristic repartee, though seeming to have the sharpness of true wit, is in fact wisecrack or empty cuteness; and the speeches of Madame Rosepettle in the last act, while smacking of cynical bitterness, are not very much when considered, but interminably long and tedious harangues that numb with their intellectual and emotional deadweight.

Perhaps we have been cheated after all.

We have surrendered our senses and nervous system to this bitter frolic, and what we get in exchange is a razzamatazz Oedipal comic strip which is more concerned with effect than meaning ("What is the meaning of this?" cries Madame

Rosepettle at the final blackout); it has Camp's "too much" quality presented in sweetly poisonous semi-parody, always using as a face-saving defense that we're really being "put on" and no one could really take this seriously.

Very well. I do not take it seriously. And as parody, let us say of Williams and Albee, it is characterized by a chilly cuteness and nervous frivolity, with scenes too frequently having the tendency to shock and then to bore.

The production itself has pleasurable moments. The set is lollipop bright and the theatrical gimmickry called for such as the Venus fly-traps and pet fish are like sadistic toys with the right touch of whimsy and menace. The pace and tempo of the action is generally crisp if not exciting.

The first two acts display the imaginative directoral skill of Stephen Coy and there is plenty of comic choreography evoking memories of the Marx Brothers movies.

The third act, however, slows down to inertia when Madame Rosepettle, played perhaps a little too much in one key, delivers a combination Phyllis Diller night club routine and pretention of worldliness. But after that, some show biz stops are pulled out; we are treated with visual cotton candy such as the mother's moving bed, the Daddy in the closet, and a seduction scene, that for all its inherent theatricality, descends into strident lewdness and finally becomes a crashing bore.

Gloria Danetra's Madame Rosepettle, though at times monotonous, is appropriately threatening as Tiny Alice's somewhat suburban sister. Jack Weinstein plays the ponderous Commodore with a kind of Weinerschnitzel charm and warmth, and Beth Hamilton's Rosalie is somewhat quite funny in her low-comedy caricature of the seductress but limited in other moods.

Benjamin Moore as Jonathan has some exceptional moments on stage; the character's stammering inarticulateness communicates much of the rage and desperation that runs through the play, but here it is not dipped in spurious rhetoric; at times Moore's performance ticks like a time bomb in Kopet's elegant but empty world.



HANOVER PLAY — Gloria Danetra of Lyme, as Madame Rosepettle and '67, as Commodore Roseabove, in "Oh Dad, Poor Dad" now at the Studios Center.