

Bunbury's 'Luv' A Zany, SAT JAN 12 2002 High-Energy Presentation

By **ROBERT W. PLYLER**

Imagine a marriage of the comedy styles of Woody Allen and Jerry Lewis, and you have some idea of the production of Murray Schisgal's *Luv*, now running at the **Bunbury Theatre Co.**

The play has only three characters, and all three are nuts.

All are urban neurotics, who have read too many books, and seen too many psychiatrists. They have tics. They can't resist one-upmanship with one another, even if it's trying to have had a more miserable childhood than the others.

The play is set on a bridge, somewhere in New York City. Harry Berlin has come to this bridge to end it all.

Instead he encounters Milt Manville, a friend from college whom he hasn't seen in 10 years. Harry sees in Milt the ideals and possibilities he once had in college. Milt sees in Harry someone to romance Milt's wife, in hopes she'll agree to a divorce and set him free for the woman of his dreams. All three have an image of love which is so grandiose and unlikely that all are doomed to pine in dismay, no matter what happens to them.

Ellen Manville is one of those women who can tell you who got the third hit in the fourth game of the 1929 World Series, but she can't decide what would make her happy.

IN REVIEW

Director Bryan S. Higby has staged a very physical production. The heroically structured Len Barry, who plays Milt, twirls and tosses the more compact Matthew J. Kraft, who plays Harry, like a baton. So does the statuesque Melissa N. Biesele, as Ellen. All three are attractive and have wonderful stage presence, and all easily dominate our attention.

The exaggerated clowning begins to get tiring shortly after the second act begins, and the frequent scatology is an acquired taste, but overall it's a full evening of fun.

No set designer is credited in the program, but the set is a jewel, fitting perfectly into the makeshift basement setting, despite a lack of fly space or wing space on stage right.

It's high energy zaniness from curtain to curtain call. I laughed until I hurt.

Luv repeats at 8 p.m. today and 5 p.m. Sunday, and again at 8 p.m. Jan. 17 to 19.

The Bunbury Theatre Co. performs in the basement of Covenant Manor, at the corner of Second and Cherry streets in downtown Jamestown.

To find the theater, walk up Cherry Street from the corner of Second Street and turn right into the first lighted door to which you come.