



Neil Simon Comedy

Lucy Alpaugh and Marvin Boskin star in the current Little Theatre of Jamestown production of the Neil Simon comedy, "Prisoner of Second Avenue," which opened last night and will continue this weekend and next.

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By WILLIAM M. FLYNN

Neil Simon, the glib, prolific Broadway playwright, can't do anything wrong. Even when he does something that by all rights should be irretrievably wrong, the elements conspire in his favor to make it turn out gloriously right.

The case in point is "The Prisoner Of Second Avenue," a comedy that began an eight-evening run last night at Little Theatre of Jamestown. The play is about a middle aged Manhattan executive who loses his job to the recession, certainly a topical issue when the show hit

Broadway and, as the main character moans, unemployment stood at 6.7 per cent. Now that the play is available to community theater groups, the recession occupies even more public attention and this topical comedy is even more topical, if perhaps somewhat less comic.

Unemployment and its effects — in this case a total mental collapse by the principal character — certainly make a curious basis for an evening of comedy but it all struck a responsive chord for most members of the opening night audience. There is value to gallows humor, even when it is the slightly blunted Simon variety.

But Simon, the too often praised playwright, does not deserve all of the credit for the substantial success of the Little Theatre production. The laugh lines may be pure gifts from author to performer but in this case they are delivered with sure timing and thoughtful feeling for character by two exceptional amateur actors.

Marvin Boskin plays Meï Edison, the 46-year-old executive who finds himself wandering distractedly about his fashionable upper east side apartment in between distracted wanderings in Central Park and on to the unemployment office. For a Simon play this is a rich character, raging at the insults that New York City daily hurls at its inhabitants and yet showing frailty and sensitivity.

Mr. Boskin plays both extremes of the character and at