



KANATA
THEATRE

EDWARD ALBEE'S

EVERYTHING IN THE GARDEN

From the play by GILES COOPER

10th - 13th
January

tenth season
1978 - 1979



Fallen woman

Anything goes in pursuit of good life in the suburbs

Journal Review
By Julian Walker
The entanglements of the dollar by members of the suburban middle class were amusingly portrayed Wednesday night by the Kanata Theatre players in an adaptation of

Giles Cooper's *Everything in the Garden*. The amateur cast clearly had good fun with the light comedy and the production deserves a larger audience than the 140 present for opening night. The play is being presented until Saturday at

Earl of March High School in Kanata. Set in suburban time in the early 1950s, the play centres on the problems of happily married Jenny and Richard, keeping up with Jenny.

The plot is born of the concern about the lack of social respect of them as power money comes to the fore. Years ago, Jenny had a poor marriage and a husband who was not her own.

The plot, though, is a listless affair, played by the excellent 140 members of the amateur cast. The ultimate solution to their financial worries is to sign a city plan.

Pleased with her results, but still not happy at the methods, Jenny signs the plan. Her husband, played admirably by Earl of March, provides for some of the

best comedy but also leads to a dramatic transformation of his character as he tries desperately to understand the actions of his "fallen" wife.

The plot takes several twists, bringing their neighbors in on the action, and finally leaves the audience with the inevitable conclusion that greed, in the end, doesn't really pay.

Unfortunately, the play peaks too soon, reaching its dramatic impact at the end of the first act as the anguished husband rants against the threat to his suburban respectability.

When the intended climax comes towards the end of the second act, things have gone flat and the production drags.

The hand of directors Dewi and Eufon Williams seems clearly in the number of actors on stage is kept to two or three, but in the second act when the stage is crowded the effect is uneven.

The actors gave the impression of being in a bit of a traffic jam, having to dart in and out with the lines.

The set is good, but there is little in it or the costumes to convey the intended time and place for the action. Perhaps the difficulty in staging the play is an era only indicates that not much has changed in middle-class values since the fifties.

The production could have been tailored more for the local audience with a few more items of local color, such as the Ashbury College blazer worn by the perplexed son (Brent Edwards) who returns from private school to find the house in chaos.

Knight captured the role of the wife well and she and Kenford managed to convey the growth of the central characters.

Knight's shrill voice is probably right for the part but it grew tiresome by the end of the evening.

Peter Jefferson appeared nervous at first in his role of the independent, wealthy neighbor but was not really more relaxed in the second act.

Some of the production's traffic jams, and hesitations in the delivery of lines can no doubt be easily corrected in later performances.

Among the several minor roles of note, most impressive was the slightly evil but practical madame, Liane Freedman, who has long since discovered how money can be used to bring a reluctant heart into an unsavory business.



Free by The Ottawa Journal, Thursday, January 11, 1979

Kanata Theatre plays black comedy well

By Betty Swinnings
Theater critic and drama editor
The Kanata Theatre Company deserves a lot of credit for its production of Edward Albee's black comedy *Everything in the Garden*.

Albee's reworking of Galsworthy's play is a favorite vehicle for amateur producers, but rarely does it come off with the sense of style and credibility that the Kanata company gave it on Wednesday night at the Earl of March high school.

The play is not Albee at his best and is definitely not in the same class as his *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, but it does have a certain satirical hu-

mor about it and makes some rather pointed observations on hypocrisy and the pursuit of keeping up with the Joneses.

It has to do with a middle-class suburban couple struggling to keep up appearances. The husband doesn't want the wife to work, but the bills are piling up, so she decides to help out by selling herself four days a week at a high-priced brothel in the city.

When the husband finds out, just as the couple is about to have a cocktail party, he is furious and throws a temper tantrum. Then, to his consternation, he discovers that the wives

of all the guests are working in the same part-time occupation with their husbands' approval. After a while he adjusts to their way of thinking to the point that he would go the limit to keep a friend from exposing the secret.

Directors Dewi and Eufon Williams have managed to keep *Everything in the Garden* in a nice perspective. They used a low-key approach to what could have become an hysterical and meaningless jumble of words, words, words.

The bitchy, often witty lines were delivered smartly and effectively by the small, competent cast. An

occasional tendency to over-act was quickly brought under control and even the occasional memory lapse was covered adroitly without marring the sense of the moment.

And although they were a tightly knit group, working together naturally and comfortably with well-schooled discipline, there was an extra brightness about Gwen Knight and Brooke Kenford as they played the pivotal roles of Jenny and Richard.

There was a strong "married couple" aura about them as they quarrelled, made up and quarrelled again. At times it was almost embarrassing

to listen to them, as if we were eavesdropping on a private argument. They developed each role carefully and fully, giving them depth and realism.

Liane Freedman's portrayal of Mrs. Toothe, on the other hand, lacked the strong sense of evil necessary in the part. She looked beautifully groomed, moved elegantly and with an air of sophistication, but the thoroughly unpleasant side of the character and the mystery dy-

were missing, and they are needed.

Young Brent Edwards gave up a good account of himself as the son, Roger, and served as a good foil

for the battling parents, and John Perry's hand-some, well-thought-out set was a fitting background for *Everything in the Garden*.

This Kanata Theatre production is a good many notches above any of the presentations of the play to be staged in the city in the past few years, and although it's not one of my favorite plays, I enjoyed Kanata's fine interpretation of the comedy.

Everything in the Garden continues at the Earl of March High School to night until Saturday with himself as the son, Roger, and served as a good foil



















