

Gay Night at The Ritz

by Tom Wear

Check into **The Ritz** for the funniest collection of crackpots ever seen at Fordham. The Mimes and Mummies have really scored with this farce by Terrence McNally about one wild night in a gay bathhouse in NYC. An inspired cast, excellent direction, and top-notch production combine to provide a night of entertainment which has not been and may not be topped for a long time.

All the action of the play takes place in a beautifully constructed two-level set consisting of three rooms on the lower level and two rooms and a steam room (a running joke) on the upper. As each guest checks into the bathhouse he is assigned to a room.

In room 196 is Gaetano Proclo, a "sanitary engineer" from Cleveland who checked into the Ritz to try to escape his brother-in-law Carmine Vespucci, who out to kill him. Proclo is at first unaware that the Ritz is "one of those places." "You can catch athlete's foot in a place like this," he protests when not given a pair of slippers like at Jack Lalaine's in Cleveland.

Joe Prolli is good as the hunted Gaetano, although that role while it is the main one,

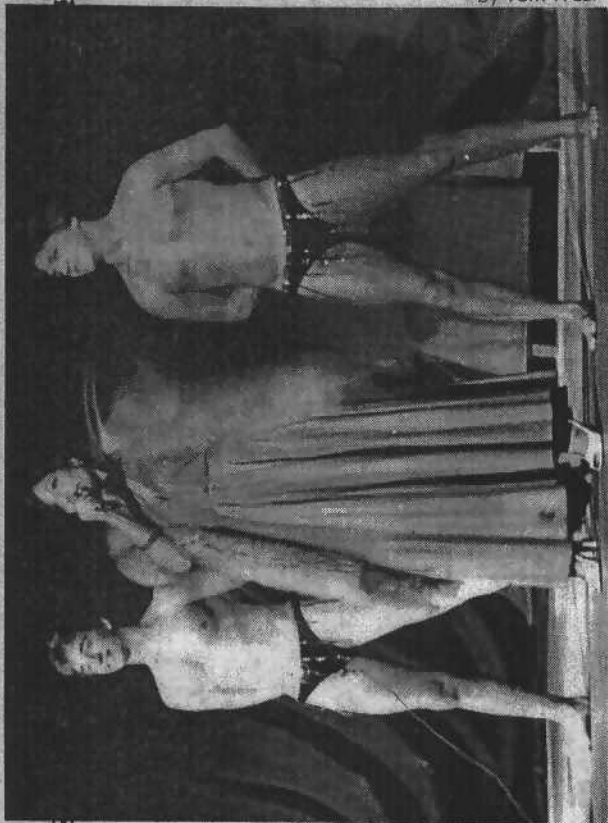
must remain steady and a bit limited as the more colorful crazies revolve around it. Michael Bolton, as novice detective Michael Brick, occupies room 101. Brick has been hired by Vespucci to tail and seduce Proclo, but this is Brick's first job as a detective, he doesn't know what Proclo looks like and he isn't gay. Bolton gives a fine performance combining an expression of blank innocence and a classic voice into a perfect portrayal of Brick.

Across the hall in room 102 lurks Carmine Vespucci himself, villainously played by Vincent Marano. Carmine wants to catch his brother-in-law in the embraces of Detective Brick and kill him in a "delitto di passione" a crime of passion. Vespucci hates Proclo for what he imagines he has done to his sister Vivian. "She's a martyr and she doesn't even know it," he cries. If these guys sound weird, you should see what's upstairs.

Up in room 205 is Michael Chimenti as Claude Perkins. Claude is what's known as a "chubby chaser" - he only likes 'em if they're well over 200 pounds. Chimenti plays Claude just right as a greasy little squirt who's mostly humorous but just a little bit revolting.

And reigning in room 240 is Chris, who

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Googie and two of the boys

just cruised in. To say that Chris is horny would be an understatement. "If I don't get laid at least twice a day I go home and beat my dog," he announces. Chris is played brilliantly by Steve Love who never drops out of his "sweet" character for a moment and who can raise howls of laughter with just a flutter of his eyelashes or a purse of his lips.

Also staying at the Ritz is Googie Gomez, a Latin bombshell, who's English is only a little better than her singing. Susan Mondarulli has a great part to work with in Googie, and she makes the most of it, displaying incredible energy and talent bursting out from the untalented but eternally optimistic Googie. Miss Mondarulli sets the entire stage on fire with her presence (the red bathrobe helps) and is certainly the brightest star in the stellar cast.

Good in more minor roles are Louise D'Arcy as Proclo's wife Vivian and Justin Ford and Scott Henson as Tiger and Duff, two employees of the Ritz who "have been lovers for three years" now. We think that's pretty good. And finally mention must be made of Jose

Gonzalez as Sheldon, whose burlesque routine is itself worth the price of admission.

Director Larry Smith deserves huge congratulations for a magnificent piece of work. Much of the humor in **The Ritz** depends on comic timing, and in every scene Smith has the timing down perfectly. This is especially noticeable when several scenes proceed at the same time and in the "Don't Cry For Me Argentina" number, which is also one of Susan Mondarulli's show-stoppers.

Production manager Richard Mayoora has done an excellent job on the set. He has produced possibly the finest Mimes and Mummies work in recent years.

Acknowledgement should also be given to the clever poltergeist which haunts Collins Auditorium and makes cookie tins roll perfectly down several flights of stairs, and stage curtains rip into a "V" for Victory at appropriate moments.

The Ritz continues its run this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. To miss it would be to miss out on a lot of fun. Don't do it.