

CAST

(in order of appearance)

MYRTLE MAE SIMMONS..... Kathi Haig
 VETA LOUISE SIMMONS..... Jeannie Westwood
 ELWOOD P. DOWD..... James Farrell
 MRS. ETHEL CHAUVENET..... Eleanor Holliday Cross
 RUTH KELLY R.N..... Gerri Joesting
 DUANE WILSON..... Steve Smith
 LYMAN SANDERSON M.D... Dennis Murray (WCBM,
 WBAL-TV)
 WILLIAM CHUMLEY M.D. . . . Jim Lyons (WBAL-TV)
 BETTY CHUMLEY Susan White (WMAR-FM)
 MISS DUNPHY..... Terry Crane
 JUDGE OMAR GAFFNEY... John Richardson | Free lance
 Radio-TV)
 E. J. LOFGREN. Wiley Daniels (WJZ-TV)
 Bob Pivec (Balto Radio & TV)

Hunt Valley Dinner Theatre

The new Hunt Valley Dinner Theatre has chosen as its initial offering Mary Chase's delightful comedy, "Harvey," which demonstrates better than any other play we can think of the thesis that normal people are a sad lot.

"Harvey" premiered Sunday, October 17, in the ballroom of the Hunt Valley Inn to a capacity audience. The launching of a new theatrical venture is always a gay and frenetic affair and this was especially true of the Hunt Valley opening.

Leaders in all walks of life, including Mayor and Mrs. Thomas D'Alesandro, III, who returned from a European jaunt in time to attend the "Harvey" premiere, made up a large part of the opening night audience.

Taking the audience's reaction as a guide, this first production at the area's newest dinner theatre is a winner.

"Harvey" is the story of Elwood P. Dowd, a friendly man in his forties who likes everybody but whose bosom buddy is an imaginary six foot, one-and-a-half-inch-tall rabbit who gives this play its title.

Elwood's relationship with the big bunny eventually unnerves

his sister to such an extent that she enlists the assistance of a judge, a family friend, to have Elwood committed to Chumley's Rest, a private funny farm.

The ironical aspect of this play

and the one that contributes most to making it the Broadway and Hollywood hit it has become is that Elwood is the nicest and only completely decent person of the lot.

James Farrell is ideal as Elwood. He gets a firm grip on one's affection the moment he steps on stage and holds it tight throughout the course of the play.

Mr. Farrell has tremendous stage presence and his characterization is letter-perfect. His timing is right on the mark and his every gesture and mannerism is just right.

This amazes us, for we have been told that this is Mr. Farrell's first performance as an actor. Other than singing with a barbershop quartet, he has heretofore not performed in public.

And, we are further informed Mr. Farrell steps into the role of Elwood P. Dowd and performs like a professional after only three months of studying with Peggy Lynne and Ethel Rocklin, local teachers of dance, speech and drama.

The cast of this Lynne-Rocklin production is an unusual mixture of "unknowns" and local TV and radio personalities. We assume before seeing the show, that the use of television and broadcast people was simply a gimmick—perhaps to attract patrons who might want to see the disc jockeys and pitchmen in person. We must report that the TV and radio people acquit themselves well in this production.

Elwood's conniving sister

portrayed by Jeannie Westwood; Kathi Haig is his man-crazy young niece; Eleanor Holliday Cross is the town's social leader; Gerri Joesting is a nurse at Chumley's Rest; Duane Wilson is an orderly at the Institution; Dennis Murray, of WCBM and WBAL-TV, is a young psychiatrist who makes the nurse's heart go pitty-pat; Jim Lyons, of WBAL-TV, is the operator of the rest home; Susan White, of WMAR-FM, is his wife; Terry Crane is a female attendant at the rest home; John Richardson is the judge; and Bob Pivec plays a cab driver.

R. H. Gardner

Another dinner Erich Segal a

In line with my practice of covering the openings of new dinner theaters, I paid a visit early this week to the Hunt Valley Inn where, for six consecutive Sunday nights, Ethel Rocklin and Peggy Lynne are presenting "Harvey" as the final course of a buffet-style meal.

I had a very good time.

Most dinner theaters, I have discovered, serve the same thing—roast beef, seafood of some sort and various kinds of salad, vegetables, etc. But it seemed to me that the quality of the Hunt Valley's selection was a cut above the average. The surroundings are nice, too, lying just off Interstate 83, not far from Cockeysville.

For her production, Miss Rocklin, a teacher of speech and drama, has assembled a company made up of local radio and TV personalities, namely Dennis Murray (WCBM, WBAL-TV), Jim Lyons (WBAL-TV), Susan White (WMAR-FM), John Richardson (Free-lance) and Wiley Daniels (WJZ), whose role, as a philosophical cab driver, was played on opening night by Bob Pivec. None, I gather, are professional actors, but their performances impressed me as being no worse than some I have seen at other dinner theaters organized along Equity lines.

Actually, performance is not a key factor in "Harvey." The play is so indestructible that all that is needed is an actor in the central role capable of understanding a man addicted to seeing a 6-foot rabbit all the time. James Farrell, who plays the part—quite well, in fact—in the current production, obviously is capable of such understanding.

DINNER THEATER

Hunt Valley Inn

HOSTS

the

LYNNE-ROCKLIN PRODUCTION

of

HARVEY

BY MARY CHASE

Directed by

ETHEL ROCKLIN

Produced by

PEGGY LYNNE