Townsend's British comedy fares well in the Colonies

WOMBERANG

Harry G. Gorman, Susan Downing '86, Lee Higgins W '87, and Nicola Morris W '87

GROPING FOR WORDS

Sue G. O'Barry, Rachel G. Reedy, Charlotte Feud, Julie Thottor '87, and Brian Pierce.

Presented by the MIT Dramashop. Both plays were written by Ayckbourn. Both plays directed by Graham Watkins. At the Lyric Stage Theatre. May 14, 3, 7, & 8:00.

By JULIAN WEST

S he Townsend, by now notorious in Britain as the creator of the pu
terly British comic farce, is a born-again feminist before lib-

tarianism. Her plays are filled with character
easpects that are recognizable without being clichéd, situations of
temporary relevance, and British turns of phrase.

Yet they play just fine on the North American stage, as Dramashop has discov-

ered by presenting two one-acts, both No title. The former, Round & Round the Garden,

characteristically small for opening night, nevertheless widely appreciative of the

farce genre, and as well as being hysterically funny, each play packs its

share of character type. The first, Round & Round the Garden, is

about best-friends Annie and Ruth, who arrive. And now, "Round

and "Round and Round the Garden" is pure

British comedy: dry, nasty humor and ab-

surd non-sequiters. Playwright Alan Ayckbourn's

"Round and Round the Garden" plays at the

Lyric Stage Theater until June 14.

By BARBRA MASI

A re you ready? Isn't another prob-

lem set getting you down? Are you

wondering where all the fun in your

life has gone? Are you looking for the perfect two hour fra-
tasia out of the blue? May I suggest "The Nor-

man Conquests." And, in place of the usu-

al story which the combination of words

 might bring to mind, think of the Lyric Stage's current

production.

Playwright Alan Ayckbourn has reviv-

ed his interpretation. As far as Ayckbourn is concerned, Norman (Ron

Ricke) is a middle-aged librarian living

somewhere in the suburbs of deepest Eng-

land in the mid-20th century. His con-

quests? Women. Sounds trite and sexist, but "Conquests" is anything but that. You

just have to meet Norman. Envision a

frumpy, bearded man who could easily pass for your grandpa's appearance and personal-

ality. Ayckbourn must have liked Norman as much as we will because he shaped "Conquests" as a trilogy of three plays. Briefly: Norman and his woman friends to talk about

in. Taking place in the family home of Norman (played by Renee Miller) and her hus-

band, Arthur Barlas (played by Peter Parnassa), Ayckbourn twits his characters around one another in ever silier, ever more complex situations of misunderstandings and lack of

satisfaction. Luckily, Ayckbourn's hu-

mane side is as much as well enough to sus-

tain three plays worth of Norman.

In the pleasant world of "Round and

Round the Garden" which opened at the Lyric Stage Theatre on Wednesday night. At the play's beginning, we find Annie (Kate Moynihan) working in the garden of

the family home where she still lives taking

care of her sick, demanding mother. Annie

appears before us as a sad but independ-

ent woman, never having a reason to

express her emotions, or perhaps has no

endurance to express. Miller played Sarah

with biting wit, a woman who is very mat-

terialistic and self-centered. Her timing and delivery are spot

Ones. The other actors, playing off his huge

energy, gave strong performances. Barlas'

stereotypically British Reg was wonderful,

and radiant on stage?) But she is just as

unwaveringly comical as always.) But she is just as

unwaveringly comical as always. (Why is it that all

British comedy contains a barrage of hilarious lines

coming away about his car while Norman and

Annie roll around the garden in a mad

eczma. The Lyric Stage's production, in
director Polly Hogan's hands, was so finely

tuned, the comic timing so deftly con-

trolled, that the evening sped away. And

then there was the superb ensemble acting
by the cast of "Garden," although Rich-

chell's Norman clearly carried the play. Ruth's sister, Annie. In her frustration with Trott, has agreed. But in

walks Annie's literary British brother, Reg (Arthur Barlas), and his right-hand

prissy wife, Sarah (Renee Miller). They

are brave enough to do the pieces in

British idioms are out of key ("I have a

English accent, but has a very expressive face and

unfortunately for veterinarian Tom

(played by Arthur Barlas), he has learned to cope with his illiter-

acy by lying a lot, and manages to hold

up his own in a convincing fit of the giggles. Her

husband, Peter Farnazie '70, seems permanent-

ly on the edge of erupting, but keeps him-

self under control.

Lo Higgins W '87, not only sounds like

a pensioner from Sheffield, she looks like

one too, doddering about the stage in a

pajamas. Norman is on the verge (always

of going off for a weekend)

pajamas. Norman is on the verge (always

of going off for a weekend)

in the trenchcoat sneaking into the garden

and radiant on stage?) But she is just as

unwaveringly comical as always. (Why is it that all

British comedy contains a barrage of hilarious lines

and delivery of a barrage of hilarious lines

makes him a treat to watch, but he is as

his best during the occasional scuffles. Ju-

lie Theriot '88, as a d syley lover whose

erotic suppressions is affected and whose

Kensington address comes only

in a convincing fit of the giggles. Her

London accent is so sharp, and with her

British accent, a woman punctilious

in a convincing fit of the giggles. Her

London accent is so sharp, and with her

British accent, a woman punctilious

in a convincing fit of the giggles. Her

London accent is so sharp, and with her

British accent, a woman punctilious

in a convincing fit of the giggles. Her

London accent is so sharp, and with her

British accent, a woman punctilious

in a convincing fit of the giggles. Her

London accent is so sharp, and with her

British accent, a woman punctilious