

Resident Legit Reviews

(Continued from page 80)

Papa

Play in two acts by John DeGroot, presented by the author and The Miami Beach Development Corp. Staged by Philip M. Church. Setting, Dean Kennedy. Incidental music, Dorothy E. Hindman. Opened Oct. 1, 1987 at the Colony Theater, Miami Beach. \$15.75 top.

Ernest Hemingway William Hindman

Miami Beach — As 1-man shows go, John DeGroot's "Papa" appears to be an out-of-the-box vehicle ripe for a variety of production situations. The presentation of Ernest Hemingway just past the emotional peak of the Nobel Prize has

the literary quality to make it a natural for the college circuit and regional situations, and more than enough snap for serious commercial consideration.

The author's unofficial subtitle is "the legendary lives of Ernest Hemingway," referring to Hemingway's penchant for exaggeration and storytelling. The portrait's exterior is largely of Hemingway as he saw himself, though beneath it "Papa" shows the emotional deterioration that eventually led to Hemingway's suicide.

The setting is Hemingway's home in Havana, Cuba in 1957 — a year before the writer moved to his final stop in Ketchum, Idaho. Hemingway arrives home to find unexpected guests — the audience. He proceeds to entertain the visitors as if he'd run into a gang of cronies at a local pub.

DeGroot, a veteran newsman who won the Pulitzer Prize as the head of a Knight Newspapers team that covered the Kent State college "massacre" during the '60s, has a knack for handling the conventions of a 1-man show. Transitions between some of the colorful tales occasionally lack suitable bridge material or dramatic device and come off a bit contrived, as does the character's tendency to become confrontational with the audience. But neither problem appears insurmountable.

Direction by Philip M. Church accents the character's human, as opposed to literary, personality. The performance by William Hindman in the script's first full staging is brisk and lively for the most part, yet reveals the inner turmoil DeGroot seeks to illustrate.

Hemingway gets gassed up during the course of the evening; it's a gimmick that lends easy plausibility to the man's frustrations at life, at his upbringing and at success itself.

To avoid the appearance of a monolog, DeGroot injects several offstage incidents and interruptions that effectively shift attention. Most take place outside a large window frame, hung semi-abstractly and the focus of most of the production's lighting cues. It's a nice touch, as are the macho images of a series of large stuffed trophies (including a huge water buffalo) hanging around the room's imaginary periphery by designer Dean Kennedy.

Incidental music by the actor's daughter, Dorothy E. Hindman, should travel as easily as the script.

The initial production was assumed by the author, director and actor along with Colony Theater management after the original sponsor, a local regional theater organization, yanked its season from the theater in favor of another location.

— Zink.