‘Table Manners’ succeeds with style

By John Healey

If it were possible to give new meaning to the phrase “for better or for worse,” the university theater department’s latest production, “Table Manners,” would succeed with style.

This beautifully funny production directed by William Hutson vividly reveals marriage as an institution that can and does work—albeit as long as all parties involved are slightly confused.

The play involves Reg, (Gerry Lauber), an easy going real estate man who is married to Sarah, (Tammy Medinger), a prudish and often neurotic housewife. The two spend a highly amusing weekend with Reg’s sister Ruth, (Heather Winterer), and her gigolo husband Norman, (David Ceci.)

With this already clashing group of personalities is added Annie, (Delia Haller) a naive but well meaning veterinarian friend Tom, (David Musel.) Much to Annie’s frustration, the two are just friends, with no hope of a romantic relationship due to Tom’s blind dedication to ailing horses.

The result is a wild blend of comedy and romance that allows the audience, especially if they’re “in love” to laugh at themselves without really caring.

What made the production so entertaining were the strong performances by the entire cast. I usually choose one or two “noteworthy” performers with university plays. I can’t even attempt that with “Table Manners”. The six cast members relied so heavily on each other’s performances that the slightest character weakness would disrupt the flow of laughs. There was definitely no such weakness.

I couldn’t help noticing that the theater had too many empty seats for a Saturday evening performance. What’s important here is that the play productions are undertaken by students for the entertainment of fellow students. It is unfortunate that this fact is taken for granted.

Final performances of “Table Manners” are Friday and Saturday evening at 8 p.m.