

'IRS' spoof offers many happy returns

By KITTY MONTGOMERY
Reviewer

KINGSTON — Second only to that interview with St. Peter at the Pearly Gates, there's nothing a God-fearing American dreads more than a visit from the tax man. Who among us, in the overview of life's accounts by angel of IRS agent, is without sin? Let him refuse the first glass of scotch.

Floyd Spinner, the agent come to check out the living arrangements of an odd couple of joint-return filers named Jon and Leslie in William Van Zandt and Jane Milmore's giddy play, "Sex, Love and the IRS," does not defy this amber spirit. He knocks back a whole bottle of hooch (at the satisfactory conclusion of business, of course) which transforms him from an intimidating minotaur to a rambunctious satyr whose underlying humanity is proved by his own tax deductions, seven non-existent kiddies.

It is, however, neither the

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playwright's nor the presenting Coach House Players' intent to prove the commonality of man's semi-larcenous bonds. What their collaboration creates in this production directed by Rich Crist is a situation of credibly ridiculous chaos, where not one of the characters is diminished by the portraying actor's conscious knowledge that he's being funny.

For this reason, the show carries as great comedy, as wonderful as the stuff sent up by Carroll O'Connor and Jean Stapleton in "All in the Family" — not that Archie Bunker ever engaged in cross-dressing for purposes of tax-fraud.

There are no bit parts in this production, just terrific actors who hold the stage for the duration of their interaction.

Kenneth O'Connor's befuddled wino-justice from the subway, prevailed upon to perform a double wedding ceremony

when the love and sex get sorted out, vies with Joe Felece's let-it-all-hang-out nosy landlord from hell, as best supporting actor.

Your classic portrait of a nervous Jewish mother played by Barbara Surowitz — first poor Vivian Trachtman is faced with a son she perceives as living in sin with two woman, then with a man who cross dresses — steals best actress from ingenues Renee Duvernoy-O'Donnell and Sara Thompsen, whose Kate and Connie get the guys — Jon (Nicholas Tutora) and Leslie (Thomas Webb),

Tutora's Jon, whose money-saving plan happily causes a play to be born, is the sweetest of men and natural as water. Webb's Leslie is nervous as Kate's seducer, but a gas when he's all pumped up and wearing a red wig.

Best loved actor — an award category conceived for Coach House, goes to Tom Rowland for his bearish, affable incarna-

tion as tax man Spinner. Just meeting him with his hair and his suspenders let down will make sending your check to the IRS this month almost a pleasure.

This super fun and truly excellent production is performed on a stage built into the company's funky-elegant and historic rehearsal space, the 150-year-old Coykendall Coach House. The dormered two story brick edifice is awesome and its own show, but be wary as you enter, avid Players have been known to Shanghai folks and put them to work, screwing together their new, padded seats.

Additional performances of "Love, Sex and the IRS" are scheduled for 8 p.m. today through Saturday at the Coykendall Coach House, 12 Augusta St., Kingston. Tickets are \$15 general admission, \$12 for senior citizens and children younger than 12, and may be reserved by calling (845) 331-2476.