

## ENTERTAINMENT



Members of the cast of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* gawk at pictures of nude women provided by Randle McMurphy. Cast members are (from left) Bob Abear, Khalid Baum, Jeff Meads, Shaunell McMillian, Alan Alexander, and Joel Parker. Eugene O'Neal photo

## Players 'score big' with fall production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

by Tiffany Newell

The University Players have done it again. The season premiere, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, was a smash hit.

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is a comedy-drama by Dale Wasserman adapted from the novel by Ken Kesey. It is centered around the character of Randle P. McMurphy, a high-strung gambling convict who tries to serve a short sentence in a mental institution rather than do jail time.

With solid performances from the veteran actors and newcomers, the production was destined to score big.

Shaunell McMillian as the charming rogue, Randle P. McMurphy, gave a stellar performance, as usual. It was hard to distinguish whether McMillian was acting or if he really was as twisted as the character. His skill was especially evident in Act Two, when McMurphy and Chief Bromden were pushed on stage in straight jackets. His actions, gestures and facial expressions drew a fine line between sanity and

insanity. McMurphy and Bromden were laughing and joking while awaiting their fate.

McMillian has won audiences' adoration in several University Players productions, including *Of Mice and Men* and *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Marsha Lynn Williams gave a fine characterization of head nurse Ratched, who is engaged in a constant battle with McMurphy. This becomes apparent in Act Two when McMurphy and Ratched go head-to-head after Billy Bibbit commits suicide.

Although he had very little to say, Lamar Fraiser more than made up for it in his exceptional portrayal of the "deaf and dumb" Chief Bromden. In the opening of the play, Chief Bromden is subdued and child-like and Fraiser does a great job of making the transformation from the "deaf and dumb" child to the strong man he was before he was institutionalized.

The supporting roles of Jeff Meads as Dale Harding, Bob Abear as Charles

Cheswick and Alan B. Alexander as Frank Scanlon, gave the play seasoning. These characters were the "acutes" of the mental ward. Their constant bickering elicited many laughs from the audience.

Stacy Brock, an ECSU freshman, did a superb job in her acting debut as the timid Catholic Nurse Flinn. In Act One, Scene Two, Brock races to the nurse's station to avoid McMurphy's sexual innuendoes.

Felicia Best, who played McMurphy's "lady friend", Candy Starr, has come a long way since her acting debut in *Dearly Departed*, in which she portrayed a distraught house wife. Best, who no longer seems as if she's reciting memorized lines, brings her character to life in this play.

Joel L. Parker's portrayal of the stuttering Billy Bibbit touched the audience's hearts. Some members of the audience couldn't hold back their tears when Bibbit commits suicide in the last scene.

Khalid K. Baum as the hallucinating Anthony Maritini provided comic relief in the play. He makes the audience laugh with his ridiculous clothing and his imaginary basketball teammate.

Samuel Norman as Ruckley was a constant reminder that the play was set in a mental institution and foreshadows the fate of McMurphy. In the first scene Ruckley is sitting on a book shelf with his arms spread as if he was Jesus on the cross.

Although the acting was strong, the performance was marred by some minor flaws with lighting. The audience may have been distracted by the failure to fade the lights for Chief Bromden's flashbacks.

Despite the lack of a scene shop, the staging of the play was impressive and realistic.

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was performed on Nov. 5, 6, 7, and 9. The production was directed by Shawn Smith, a professor in the Department of Language, Literature & Communication.