

A Review

Simon's 'Chapter Two' Not All Laughs

By Licia Jackson
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Laughs come quickly in the Springer Theatre Company's production of "Chapter Two," which opened Thursday night at the Springer Opera House.

But the seriousness in the second act leaves the audience with some weightier things to think about, too.

This is Neil Simon's autobiographical play about his second marriage — to actress Marsha Mason. Playing Jennie Malone as the second wife is Ethelyn Riley, whose matchless comic timing is rivaled only by her superb performance in the emotional soliloquy in the second act.

Roger Pretto is George Schneider, a novelist who hasn't

had sufficient time to get over the death of his beloved first wife before he begins the relationship with Jennie. Pretto does well as the warm, sensitive, humorous but hurting George. He also drew favorable attention from the women in the audience. The audience seemed to have trouble hearing him at first, but this problem was resolved in the second act.

Only two others round out the cast of this very romantic comedy. They are George's brother Leo (played by Gene Petro) and Jennie's best friend Faye Medwick (Vicki Bergman-Marks). Both are extremely funny in their roles. Their hilarious attempt at having an affair (a little dispassionate passion, as Leo calls it) in

Jennie's apartment in the second act gives relief from the intensity of Jennie and George's problems.

The show is ably directed by Neal Fenter, whose familiarity with Simon's work is evident in the play's pacing. The set in two parts — George's traditional apartment on one side, Jennie's upscale version on the other — has just the right touches of realism.

The play continues at 8 p.m. through Saturday and April 2-6 with a matinee at 2:30 p.m. Sunday. Ticket prices are \$7.50 general admission, \$6 senior citizens 62 and older, and \$3.75 students 21 and younger. For reservations, call 327-3688.