CARTE NOIRE

Players Shine In One-Acts

By LAWSON TAITTE

One-acts '65, an ambitious production of five plays twice each in four nights, demonstrated the breadth of skill and dedication to work that the Rice Players can offer. The playbill listed 56 of them responsible for uniformly handsome staging as well as strong acting and directing.

The three longer plays especially were obviously in the hands of directors who knew what they wanted and got it. Beverly Wehking directed Georg Buechner's "Leonce and Lena." The translation was somewhat clumsy to work with, but Miss Wehking produced a tightly knit show distinguished by great precision and a large number of funny performances.

"No Exit," by Jean-Paul Sartre, hopefully was not a major factor in last year's Nobel Prize award. It has never seemed to me, for one, a very good play, its faults being the strainings of the plot and the stresses of its very, very emphatic speeches. These proved to be the faults of Roger Glade's production.

There is a great shortage of really good one-act plays; "No Exit" is much better than most and at least stage-worthy. But the way to do it is surely not to underline every word and add exclamation points to the few lines that do not already have them.

Yet again Glade had admirable control of his actors and possesses the most solid grasp of techniques of the five directors. Blocking was meticulously planned, and skillfully executed by the four actors.

Garcin, Bill Seward, suffered most from his director's approach; the lines are shrill in the script and the part demands restraint to make it bearable. Seward gave his all, and his all was too much.

The triple bill on March 6 and 7 again proved the wisdom of the Players' plan of training their one-acts directors by using them as assistant directors in major productions. The directors of all the plays were new at their jobs, but far more capable than that statistic seems to indicate.

It is rare in any production not to have a single crippling weakness, but each performance in all five shows was far above that level. This is largely the directors' doing, and I look forward to seeing what they could do with some experience behind them. I hope they get such an opportunity soon.

The single strongest production was that of "The Public Eye," written by Peter Schaffer and directed by Joe Parsons. Here the director's control was matched by rare discipline on the part of three capable actors. The effect was tremendous.

Dr. John E. Parrish performed wonderfully a character part that carried the play and the evening. Tom Demetrician never strayed from a well-defined character, and Gretchen Vik gave a strong, graceful performance as Belinda.