Players Try Experimental Theater
In Production Of ‘Telemachus Clay’

By BEVERLY WEHKING

The Rice Players will open second semester with a venture into experimental theatre. The production, to run the first week in March, will be of John Carlin’s “Telemachus Clay,” which the author describes as “a college for sounds and voices.”

Try-outs for this highly unusual show will be tonight and tomorrow night, January 6 and 7, at 7:30 pm in Anderson Hall. Rehearsals will begin in February.

“Telemachus” is the story of a journey — the journey of a young man with ideals and dreams through an un-ideal world. Yet, as Carlin observes, we do not observe the journey, we take it.

Awake and Sleep
“We are exposed to the thoughts of people awake and sleeping. We are partners to their weakest and strongest moments.” The author achieves this union of audience and characters through his technique; the cast achieves it through method of delivery and through a wholly unique method of staging.

The work was written “con-trapuntally.” On one hand, there are scenes which are highly naturalistic, while, at the same time, there are impressionistic compressions of images, sounds and events that bind these scenes together in a progressive narrative.

In one scene, a director and an actress argue over a piece of costuming; in another, billboards shout aloud their messages. In one scene, lovers say goodbye; in another, people speak in the midst of their dreams.

Ninety Roles
To complicate matters further, their are ninety roles in the show to be played by eleven actors, so all but two of the actors take numerous parts, sometimes shifting back and forth among their roles.

Because of the expressionistic scenes, and because of the emotion of the story which must flow through the audience, the players face the audience at all times. And, rather than the traditional staging of spatial interaction between characters, they are seated on stools and do not move throughout the performance.

Twelfth Man
However, despite this seeming immobility, the effect is far from static. Sound and light almost play the part of a twelfth actor, changing kaleidoscopic—

ly and effecting movement and meaning.

The nature of the show, then, requires people competent in technical work, as well as strong actors. Although sets and props are absent, the strength of the words, played against a starkly simple background, produces an electric effect.

Director Neil Havens stated that he is “very excited” about producing “Telemachus Clay.” This show,” he said, “demands everything an actor can give. It will give us a chance to buckle down and really gain some valuable acting experience.”

The cast includes seven men and four women. All interested members of the Rice community are urged to attend try-outs.