Players offer an enigmatic 'Alice' to scrutiny of valiant theatregoers

By CLARK CHAMBERLAIN

The upcoming Rice Players' production of Edward Albee's play "Tiny Alice" promises to bring to the Rice community all of the controversy that has marked its New York performances.

This odyssey of a man who seeks a faith which has deserted him despite his efforts to remain faithful has been alternately praised, deprecated, and psychoanalyzed—but the argument of what Albee REALLY means (if anything) goes on.

Albee vs. Critics

Albee himself, and his director and New York cast, feel that the meaning is apparent, but the symbolism (which critics complain is too obscure) and Albee's difficult prose style make final conclusions a matter for the individual.

The Players' cast includes Tom Scratchin as Julian, a Lay Brother, Connie Brown as Miss Alice (who is definitely—or at least hopefully—not the same as Tiny Alice), Bennett Falk as the Lawyer (a mephitopriestly role reminiscent of Doctor Fainus), Jack Egan as Butler the Butler, and Joe Caruthers as the Cardinal.

All are putting their best into this production, and the difficulties of Albee's "truncated" sentences and his use (mis-use... use) of symbolism, easily the most pressing problems with Tiny Alice, are being tackled with both imagination and patience.

Doll's House

Albee weaves an involved plot in which Tiny Alice, who lives in a dollhouse on stage (or maybe in the dollhouse inside the dollhouse), never ap-

pears, but is impersonated by Miss Alice.

Julian, a lay brother appointed by the Cardinal to collect a multi-million dollar grant from Tiny Alice, is a martyr-seeker who is (critics) or is not (Albee) also a Christ figure. The plot consists of tension between various juxtaposed figures: Church and state, faith and despair, religious and sexual ecstasy.

In short, Edward Albee has written a play with no little significance to the critical audience. Moreover, the Rice Players seem to have latched onto this one with unusual vigor.