Players Draw Applause

By JOEL HOCHMAN

All the beneficiaries of the latest Player production will probably concur with me in thanking Richard Sheridan, Armstrong Prescott, and the Rice Players for a delightful evening's entertainment.

In the most accomplished non-Shakespearean production at Rice in the last five years, "The Rivals" exemplified the highest possibilities of a non-professional presentation. From dialogue, projection, costuming, and characterization, to the niceties of staging and continuity, the play was impressively polished.

MOST REMARKABLE, however, was the consistency with which one's interest and involvement was maintained. Despite its three-hour length there were very few points at which the entertainment lagged. And these lags were clearly the responsibility of the playwright and not the players.

The accomplishments of the cast were so balanced that it is difficult to single out approbations. Mrs. Malaprop did not surrender to the temptations of over-acting, but rather was a marvelously effective character. Sir Anthony Absolute convinced the audience immediately and did not lose identity.

BOB ABSOLUTE was dashing without a false swagger. Faulkland and Acres were distinct and substantial personae, and thus successful in filling out the play's structure.

Lydia and Julia were indeed convincing as young ladies of the 18th century. And all the rest, Fag, Thomas, Lucy, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, wonderfully constructed their portions of this Sheridan comedy.