‘Wife’ a success

By JOHN HAMILTON
Thresher Writer

Two Rice Players, Beverly Wehking and Fred Roberts, and their director, Roger Glade, presented a brief Brecht play Saturday for late evening coffee lovers at the Last Drop.

“The Jewish Wife” is a scene about the Jewish wife of a Third Reich German intellectual. Community pressure against Jews is being felt in intellectual circles and both husband and wife are aware that the wife’s religion compromises the husband’s position and career.

Leaves Husband

Despite her husband’s liberalism the Jewish wife realizes that they cannot continue unaffected by political pressure. The scene shows her preparing to go to Holland on the hollow pretense of a short visit with non-existent friends in order to leave her husband free.

Bev Wehking as the wife carries fifteen of the play’s twenty minutes alone. The part is difficult and Miss Wehking did not completely find herself in the role of bourgeois housewife.

The wife does not comprehend how she became the victim of the prejudice which is ruining her life. Her attitude is tinged with anger against her husband and community, but is less resentful than pathetic. Still her flight is not blind or simply sacrificial. She is grimly realistic about her future in Germany. Miss Wehking understood her role, but had difficulty portraying such a woman, especially her age and mannerisms.

Play Lends Insight

Mr. Roberts had a less demanding role and played the husband with stolid German inexpressiveness. Inexpressiveness is appropriate to the role for it is the mask the husband wears to hide his guilt at accepting so easily his wife’s sacrifice and at his acquiescence to the current anti-Semitism.

Both actors betrayed their brief preparation with uneasy gestures and incomplete characterizations, but the play was nonetheless gripping and rewarding. Brecht wrote “The Jewish Wife” in 1939. Less didactic and more dramatic than later Brecht, the play is interesting for his accurate insight into the trend of German society and the silence of the German intellectuals.

Autry’s First Play

The play appeared in English translation during the War in a cycle of playlets called “The Private Life of the Master Race.”

Director Glade and his cast worked with an improvised set at one end of the Autry House hall which is converted on Friday and Saturday nights into a coffee house. The coffee house was originated by the campus Joint Christian Ministry and is maintained by students. Free entertainment is a regular feature, but this is the first attempt at theatre. Large crowds indicate that other short plays may be offered.