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By **ALI STANTON**

It may be ironical that while we are worrying about fuel, the current play of the Frank Silvera Writer' Workshop is Valerie Harris' abstract "Ice Game." Her concern, however, is not with the generosity or greed of OPEC. She, like the worn fabric of life as we shiver with its approaching, chilling reality.

With a superb cast: George Lee Miles, Aric James, Bob Molock, Cynthia MacPherson, Yvonne Warden and Chuck Wise, Miss Harris has us pondering if all of life is a stage, are these six players waiting for a violent role of life or death? Critic Alice Richardson said this is the

difficulty of abstraction, communicating with the audience.

Harris has written an intriguing drama which is as profound as a decision of the Elders and as mysterious as a witch's potion or a priest's ritual.

A brilliant showpiece for the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop opener at the handsome, new Leonard Davis Center for the Performing Arts, within the stark simplicity of Abdul Sanchai's set, the figures of Harris' tragicomedy are choreographed into attractive, graceful groupings. In fact, the author deliberately manipulates them — a melange of characters drawn from the traumatic Tarot — like a



The cast of "Ice Game" is (l to r) Chuck Wise, Bob Molock, Cynthia MacPherson, Aric James, Yvonne Warden and George Lee Miles. (Bert Andrews Photo)

fortune-teller. They are impressive in their colorful costumes and convincing because they are the skin and scheme of a kind of Medieval masquerade.

This cluster of strolling players are the varied voices of society.

Gutter gripes

But despite the costumes, we discover in sev-

eral speeches by the haughty His Holiness (Bob Molock), the vacuous Temperance (Cynthia MacPherson), the vacillating Empress that they are hurling today's gutter gripes at each other, belying the period garb of the picturesque Middle Ages. If there is a weakness in the play, these abrupt intrusions in the poetic context are it.

Twisting and turning the language, as well as their onstage movements, the players are like rattlesnakes in a snakepit, squirming menacingly but futilely. These dramatic warning rattles are both defiant challenges to life and conversation with death.

Significant, of course, is that this initial offering of the FSWW, whose purpose

is to expand the opportunities for Black playwrights and actors to show their wares, does not even flirt with the Black Experience. "Ice Game" is a universal work that can be peopled with performers as varied as the rainbow.

Valerie Harris' script, though occasionally wordy, is exciting in its insinuating, enigmatic way. Unencumbered by ethnic demands, the players can imitate "Ice Game's" defiant Pierrot, who, "naked . . . skated away." With a curl of a lip, the raising of an eyebrow, a gesture or a deliberate intonation, these six sensational thespians do some fancy, dramatic figure-skating and show they know all of the rules of the "Ice Game." Skate over to Aaron Davis Hall, 134th St. and Convent Ave., and see it. The performances are at 8 p.m., Jan. 31, Feb. 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7.