

FILL IN THE BLANK

David Ives' short plays, ably directed by Daniel Henning, James Kerwin and Darin Anthony, take a light-hearted look at contemporary cultural icons and quirky urban folkways. Ives is more clever than profound, and his satire is too good-humored to cut deep, but the plays are fun to watch. In "The Mystery at Twicknam Vicarage," a spoof of for(among other things) having carnal knowledge of a sofa. "Mere Mortals" concerns a construction worker (Bill Dempsey) who claims to be the long-lost Lindbergh baby, and "Captive Audience" focuses on a couple (Gregory Thirloway and Lee D'Angelo) whose lives are taken over by their TV set. "Seven Menus" is a sexual roundelay about unstable relationships and constantly changing partners. In "Speed the Play," MC Julie Cohen conducts a hilariously loony trip through the plays, obsessions and macho mannerisms of David Mamet, and in "Degas, C'est Moi," a man (Richard Kline) imagines he's French painter Edgar Degas. Harry Murphy, Johanna McKay, Dempsey and Cohen stand out in a lively ensemble of 14, and John Altieri's sets and costumes combine colorful elegance with Spartan simplicity. Blank Theater Company at the Second Stage Theater, 6500 Santa Monica Blvd., Hlywd.; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; mats Sun., 2 p.m.; thru March 30. (323) 661-9827. Written 3/6/03 (Neal Weaver)