

## Theater Review:

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### SCR taking some hilarious “Steps”

Of all the various genres in theater, perhaps the most difficult to perfect is farce. The demands of timing, delivery and pure physical energy are ever present, but when these elements all are in alignment, the results can be joyous.

There are few exemplary farces, from “Room Service” to “Noises Off.” But South Coast Repertory has added another with its outlandishly hilarious production of Alan Ayckbourn’s madcap melange “Taking Steps.”

Written in 1979, “Taking Steps” is thrust back into the 1970s by director Art Manke, complete with the go-go dancer, a leisure suit and the wildest disco-powered curtain call you’re ever likely to see from the show’s super-charged six-member cast.

The real star of the production, however, is its setting — a three-story house sprawled over one level of the stage. Actors simulate ascending and descending up an imaginary flight of stairs and a faux spiral staircase, often crossing paths on “different” floors of the home.

All six performers in Manke’s wildly funny rendition are excellent, but first among equals is Rob Nagle as the prospective homeowner, a burly, glad-handing chap who’s made a fortune in the bucket business. Nagle has some of the play’s most outrageous moments and he carries them out with laugh-out-loud physicality.

As Nagle’s character is preparing to buy the house, his wife is secretly packing to leave him. Kirsten Potter beautifully enacts this role, a dancer who’s warming up loudly when she’s not packing or unpacking — or mistakenly seducing a guest while attempting a reconciliation.

Bill Brochtrup as her excitable brother, who needs Nagle’s financial assistance, frets and worries up a storm while pursuing a lost love and hiding her in the attic. He’s also noteworthy for his unique talent — of lulling listeners (including, eventually, himself) to sleep as he drones on about his problems.