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## New Steven Dietz comedy a fun ride



Petronella Ytsma

When a socially-inept millionaire (Christopher Denton, center) falls for Becky (Virginia Burke) at first sight, her life begins to take some unexpected turns, much to the dismay of her husband Joe (Bob Davis).

Flashy and well-acted, "Becky's New Car" veers toward intelligent farce and a happy ending.

Last update: September 21, 2009 - 10:39 AM

"Becky's New Car" is a glittering little comedy fueled by the adrenaline of risk. Becky Foster takes us along on her ride to midlife fantasy, and playwright Steven Dietz

keeps his hand on the brake when the car starts swerving. With a few serious themes about loss, the search for a soulmate and how slippery the truth can get, Dietz gives just enough weight to this vehicle to make it worthwhile.

Director Peter Moore has matched Dietz's penchant for whimsy with a well-acted and brisk production at Park Square Theatre.

Virginia Burke is a playful Becky, friendly and unafraid of life as she skips across Michael Hoover's oddly effective space-age set. She's content in her modest job at a car dealer and in her comfortable marriage to Joe. Played by Bob Davis, her husband has the blunt deadpan directness of a man who doesn't let life faze him. He's a roofer, he points out. He covers things up.

One night at the dealership, Walter Flood (a purposely awkward and stilted Christopher Denton) stops by to ask if he may buy nine cars. He is a multimillionaire, a widower and clueless enough to assume that Becky, too, has lost her spouse. Perhaps because she's flustered at the prospect of selling nine new cars, she does not disabuse him of this notion when he invites her to dinner at his estate.

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It's one of several spots in which Dietz plays his hand for farce with elliptical dialogue, and improbability. What makes it work is our own eagerness for escape. And, we're allowed to imagine our own fantasy as Becky -- through Burke's self-confident curiosity -- decides she's game to step outside her hoi polloi existence.

Once in Walter's world, though, Becky's adventure starts to unravel. Dietz's plot digs several more potholes (Becky's son has a new girlfriend who turns out to be Walter's daughter, for example) but even after a few close calls, the playwright opts for a fairly antiseptic conclusion that avoids any serious wreckage. There's no sense in going all Tennessee Williams on us.

Supporting players provide much of the liveliness. John Middleton gives a blank-faced, perfectly pitched portrayal of a sad-sack colleague of Becky's. He's lost his wife and seems to have replaced her with a deadly dull passion for environmental causes. Sid Solomon is Chris, Becky and Joe's son. A slacker grad student, he enunciates pop psychology theories with such investment that he makes Woody Allen's name flash through the mind.

Indeed, Dietz's script seems aimed at

serendipity, things not explained by pure science or logic. It is slight play, driven by dialogue with lightweight characters who nonetheless have enough framework to make them interesting. It's built for entertainment and a fast ride.

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