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The Sweet Bye And Bye

From the opening bars of the country fiddle music announcing that the play is about to begin to the family gathered around the piano soaring through a favorite old song, "In The Sweet Bye And Bye" entertains and delights.

Written and originally directed by Donald Driver, (who had to turn over the reins to Allan Miller when confronted with previous commitments) the play introduces the audience to as rambunctious a collection of small town characters as will be encountered all year!

Rue McClanahan (remembered as Vivian in the television series, "Maude") is featured as Jessie who has developed the custom of jumping into graves at funerals. Her husband, Hagen, infuriated by her excesses, forbids her attendance at any further funerals. Fiddle-playin' unemployed, foistering Hagen is very capably portrayed by John Anderson.

Jessie and Hagan's marriage has long ago lost any meaning and Hagan is busily pursuing a romantic entanglement with Jessie's widowed sister, Neva (K. Callan). It is a highly restricted arrangement, however; they can only get



Rue McClanahan

together Wednesday evenings when Jessie attends prayer meetings. is excellent as a small town character, Lamar Shooler.

An alcoholic son, Bill Leland (Christopher Murray), has broken his arm in an accident, and is brought home by his compassionate nurse, Carmel (Rebecca Gilcrest). Carmel forms a friendly alliance with Jessie (who, heaven knows, can use a friend). The warmth is catching. The audiences are having a wonderful time. It will continue Thursday to Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. - at the Back Alley Theatre, 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys, until August 18. For info - call Gene Ross (818) 780-2240.