

On Stage

Enid Nemy

Road to 'Cahoots'

James DeMarse was talked into a role in a high-school play in his hometown, Rochester, and what happened then offstage changed his life.

"I liked the people: I had never met kids like that, or felt such camaraderie and tremendous warmth," he recalled. So when he arrived in New York some 20 years ago, it seemed logical to head for a theater, where he got a job immediately — cleaning, working in the box office and helping the crew.

Mr. DeMarse, now appearing in "Cahoots" at the South Street Theater as a frustrated architect who is provoked into murdering a friend, eventually read for an understudy role. He discovered only then that "everything I did was angry." He was advised to take acting lessons, which, he said, led him to understand the reason for the anger.

"I was a kid who was not allowed to express himself emotionally," he said. "There was something freeing about acting."

Since then, Mr. DeMarse has appeared in many plays and television commercials and has written plays. Three of his one-acters are scheduled for the Quaigh Theater in mid-April.

He has also had what is perhaps a unique theater experience. Some years ago, he played in a 400-seat theater on Martha's Vineyard with only one couple in the audience, a couple who won their tickets in a radio contest. The sparse attendance was due to a run that had been extended because the producer was in love with the actress in the two-character show and wanted to keep her around.

"We decided to go on and I had a wonderful time," Mr. DeMarse recalled. "The husband particularly laughed his heart out, and we did a curtain call and everything."



James DeMarse in "Cahoots": "I was a kid who was not allowed to express himself emotionally. There was something freeing about acting."