

p r o v i n c e t o w n

REP

*Provincetown Repertory Theatre
at the Pilgrim Monument
and Provincetown Museum*

Subscribe



SAND: A Trio
of Plays



by Edward Albee
Directed by Glyn O'Malley
July 17—
Opening Night Gala
July 18-August 3

lonely **PLANET**

by Steven Dietz,
Directed by Seth Barrish
August 12-24

the children's
HOUR

by Lillian Hellman
Directed by José Quintero
August 29-September 14



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Hot Summer Shows

■ Popular "Riverdance" is scheduled to return to Boston on Aug. 20 and run through Sept. 7 at the Wang Center for the Performing Arts.



■ Tom Bosley, center, of TV's "Happy Days," plays Capt'n Andy in a scene from the musical "Show Boat," which will open Tuesday at the Wang.



A Theatrical Feast

Albee, Quintero to visit; 140 productions scheduled

By KATHI SCRIZZI DRISCOLL
STAFF WRITER

SOME leading figures of the American stage will bring their talents to Cape Cod this summer, headlining the busiest theater season in recent memory.

Local playwright Kevin Rice talks about Provincetown as "a pretty happening place" these days, and it's true, with six companies hosting full seasons. But that description could just as well apply to the rest of the Cape and islands: More than 140 shows will be produced here between now and September.

It'll be harder to choose what to miss than what to see.

Top draws include some exciting guests. Legendary playwright Edward Albee will lecture June 28 for Provincetown Repertory Theatre Company. The troupe will follow up with "Albee's Men," a workshop premiere of a new Albee play directed by longtime collaborator Glyn O'Malley, plus a short run of "Albee by the Sea," three one-acts directed by O'Malley.

Tony-winning director Jose Quintero will return to Provincetown Rep to stage "The Children's Hour," the first time he has taken on a Lillian Hellman play.

Evening with Herman

Broadway composer Jerry Herman ("Hello, Dolly," "Mame") will showcase his career in August's "An Evening With Jerry Herman" at Cape Playhouse in Dennis. Other celebrities appearing there include Anne Meara — bringing her off-Broadway hit "After Play," with husband/comedian Jerry Stiller and Jane Powell — as well as Pat Carroll, Bonnie Franklin, Gavin MacLeod and Millicent Martin. The season features recent New York successes "Moon Over Buffalo" and "Grace and Glorie."

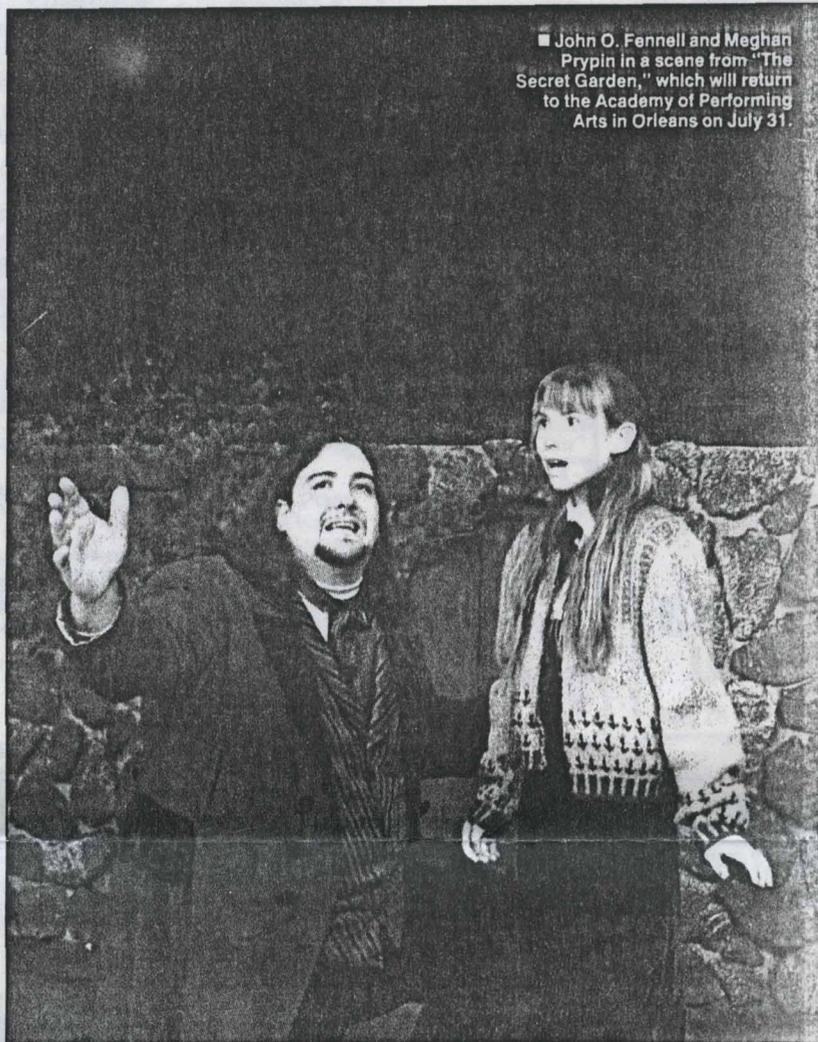
The Reduced Shakespeare Company will bring its zany "Complete History of



■ Acclaimed playwright Edward Albee will speak on June 28 at Unitarian Universalist Meeting House in Provincetown.



■ Director Jose Quintero will direct Lillian Hellman's "The Children's Hour" for Provincetown Repertory Theater.



■ John O. Fennell and Meghan Pryplin in a scene from "The Secret Garden," which will return to the Academy of Performing Arts in Orleans on July 31.

BANNER

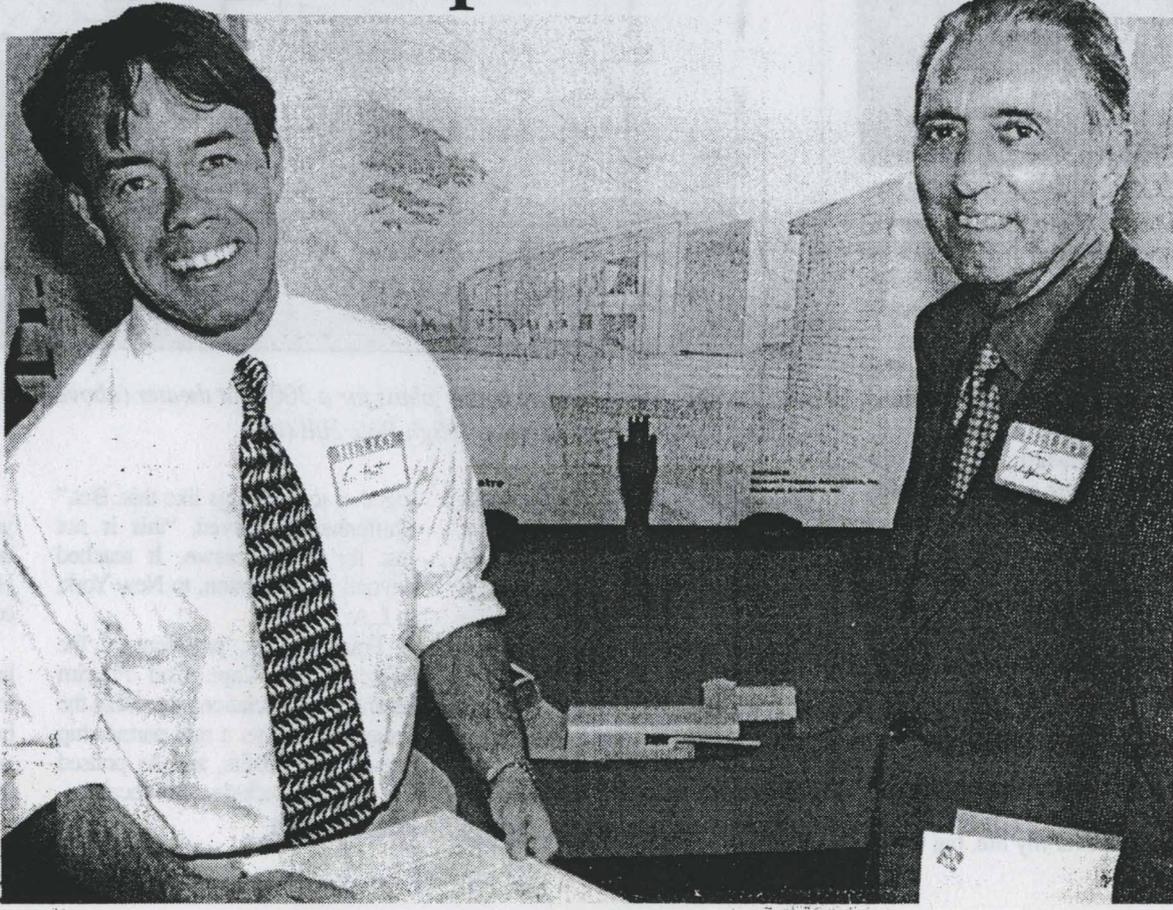


Volume Two, Number Fifty Two

Seventy-Five Cents

Thursday, May 15, 1997

PRT unveils plans for theater at Monument



By Hamilton Kahn
BANNER STAFF

The long-awaited return of a permanent professional theater to Provincetown took a giant step toward realization last week with the unveiling of the Provincetown Repertory Theatre's plans for a \$2 million, 300-seat theater to be built adjacent to the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum atop High Pole Hill.

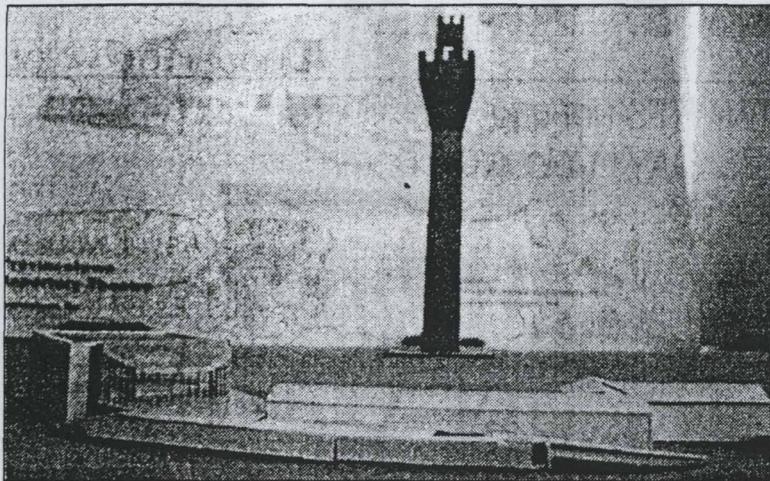
The company hopes to reach the mid-way point of its capital fundraising campaign within the next month or so, and construction of the theater could begin sometime next year.

Designed by architects Michael Prodanou and David McMahon, both of whom are summer residents, the theater would be a three-level rectangular structure with a glass atrium entrance to be located on the east side of the existing museum on land owned by the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association, the non-profit organization that owns and op-

Photo Hamilton Kahn

Provincetown Repertory Theatre artistic director Ken Hoyt and board president Anton Shiffenhaus at last week's unveiling of plans for a permanent theater adjacent to the Pilgrim Monument.

continued on page 27



Theater continued from page 1

erates the monument and museum. As first reported by the Banner last November, that organization and PRT have formally agreed to pursue construction of what would be Provincetown's first permanent professional theater since the fire that destroyed the Provincetown Playhouse-on-the-Wharf in 1977.

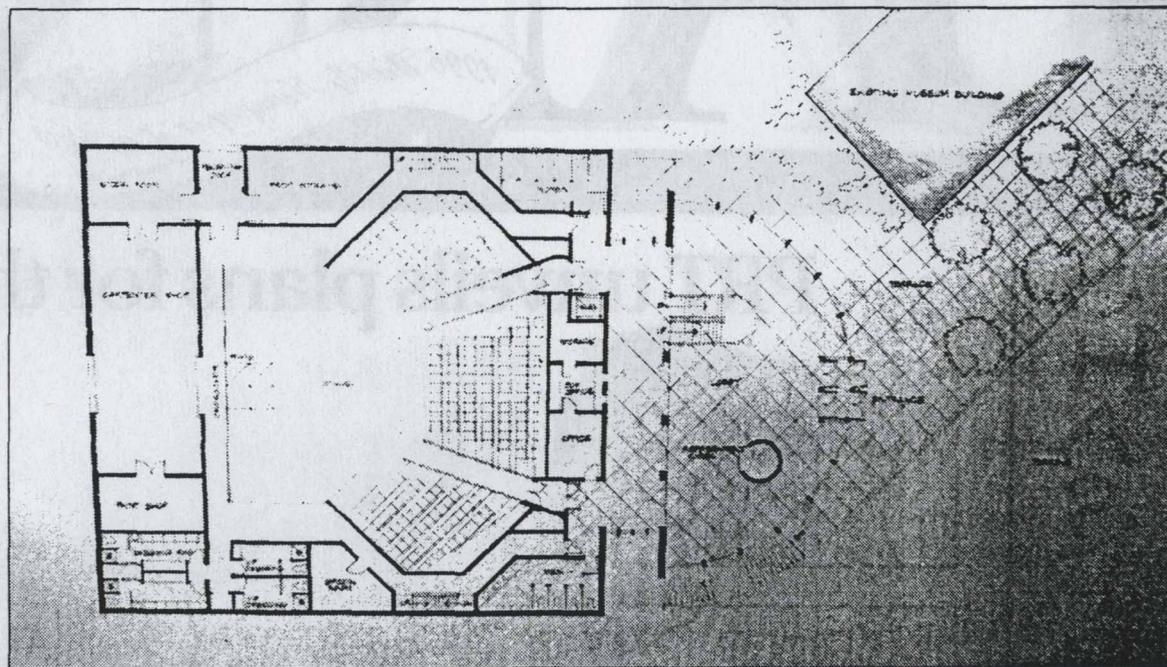
In a well-received nod to local theatrical interests, the plans also include storage space for community theater groups (including the 34-year-old Provincetown Theater Company) and a 100-seat "black box" theater in the basement, where smaller scale productions and other events could be held in the off-season. And in a step designed to counter another obstacle, it was also announced that PRT has purchased

the Monument House on Bradford Street, which will be used as housing for the company, with revenue from leasing the street-level retail space (formerly Eddie's Bakery) to be used to offset the company's expenses.

The company's third season this summer includes the return of famed director Jose Quintero and a visit by playwright Edward Albee, along with a production of an Albee play never performed anywhere else.

At last Thursday's announcement at the Lobster Pot restaurant, PRT artistic director Ken Hoyt commented that the theater project "has taken on mythical proportions," and hoped that the unveiling of the plans might "bring the project down from the clouds."

PRT president Anton Shiffenhaus described the project as something "that's taken over my life, big time,"



Photos Hamilton Kahn

Unveiled last week were architects' plans for a 300-seat theater (above), along with a scale model of the building planned for property on High Pole Hill (left).

and said that he is determined to see it through to completion. "Why is it that we ought to have a theater in Provincetown?" Shiffenhaus asked rhetorically. "It's inconceivable that the place that was the birthplace of American drama has no theater. ... My commitment is that we would build a theater brick by brick, stone by stone, and it will be done."

Provincetown "is one of those special places that brings people

together to do things like this. But," Shiffenhaus observed, "this is not just for Provincetown. It reached beyond us, to Boston, to New York, to L.A."

Frank Hogan, president of the board of the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association, noted that the project represents a rare partnership between nonprofits, and he praised the efforts to include other local theater companies.

"It's very important to have a year-round theater, not only for PRT but also for other interested groups," Hogan said. "This should serve the community, even beyond theater."

Hogan said a formal contract between his organization and PRT is in its second draft and is expected to be signed very soon. "I sense it's a very fast-moving train," Hogan said of the project.

THE ADVOCATE



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Vol. CXXVIII, No. 30 One Dollar

PROVINCETOWN EDITION

Thursday, July 24, 1997

\$2.5 million theater to be built at the base of the Monument

Provincetown Repertory Theatre leases a half-acre

By Marilyn Miller

\$1 million said to be pledged
already

The Provincetown Repertory Theatre created by Ken Hoyt just three years ago has grown from an ensemble of four to 18 today and is on its way to having a 295-seat theater to be built on the grounds of the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Monument.

Last Thursday, as champagne corks popped, J. Anton Schiffenhaus, chairman of the board of directors of the non-profit Provincetown Repertory Theatre, signed a 50-year lease with Frank Hogan, president of the Cape Cod Pilgrim Memorial Association for a half-acre parcel where the new theater will be built.

The project will cost \$2.5 million. Already, close to \$1 million has been pledged. Actors Julie Harris, who lives in Chatham, and Jason Robards, are honorary chairman of the fundraising drive. The project has the blessings of noted director Jose Quintero, whose productions of Eugene O'Neill's plays were the showcase of the company's 1995 season.

"I'm the happiest man alive," said Hoyt, artistic director. "We're not taking any money at this time until our plans are further developed, which is the prudent way to go about this," said Schiffenhaus, a wealthy businessman with a reputation as a philanthropist and patron of the arts.

He and his wife Joan, who is also a director of the

new theater group, divide their time between homes in Provincetown and Arizona.

The Schiffenhaus had no plans to get this deeply involved in Hoyt's dream of seeing a theater built in Provincetown, the birthplace of American theater. But Hoyt, a 33-year-old actor from Los Angeles and New York who moved to Provincetown five years ago has a gift for finding the people who can turn his dreams into reality.

Ron Robin, owner of the Mews and a financial backer, recalls how the first time he met Hoyt five years ago, the actor-waiter was talking of his dream of having a theater in Provincetown.

"The more I talked to Ken about this, I realized he was also talking to other people about his idea of a theater. It just blows me away to realize that this fellow relentlessly pursued that idea against incredible odds," Robin said.

"He got the momentum and support for this from other people who have a similar vision and the means to realize it. He has built an incredible group."

Hoyt approached the Schiffenhaus in the fall of 1994 with his dream of starting a company and building a home for it.



Jason Robards at the Monument Thursday night

\$2.5 million theater to be built at the base of the Monument

"He came over to our house and we sat around talking about his idea of starting a rep theater here," Schiffenhaus said. "I thought it was a nice idea, but frankly, I didn't think that much about it.

"Ken didn't know how to get started so I helped him form a non-profit organization and then Joan and I went to Arizona. We stayed in touch, though, and Ken put the company together for its first season in 1995."

The company had one production the first year. When Schiffenhaus saw it, he was impressed and found himself being drawn deeper into Hoyt's dream. Before he knew it, he and his wife were on the board of directors of the fledging new theater group, which won critical acclaim its first year and came close to breaking even financially, he said.

Hoyt proudly acknowledges that the PRT is "my child," but he credits Quintero with "slapping the baby on the rear end and bringing it to life."

Quintero, renowned director of Eugene O'Neill's plays, founded the Circle in the Square in New York. Hoyt wrote to him in 1995 about his new theater group and his hopes of preserving the theater tradition in Provincetown where O'Neill's first play was produced, but got no response.

Then, at the suggestion of his friend and fellow actor Harris, he sent a second letter to Quintero to talk about his hopes of seeing theater revived in Provincetown, the birthplace of modern American theater.

This time, Quintero called him back. "I'll never forget the day, April 9, 1996," Hoyt said. "That's what really started this off. It was a meeting of the minds. This incredible legend of the American theater was excited about the idea of a new company and that's what provided the impetus for us to start playing this game.

"Quintero is not looking for Broadway glitz or fame. It's the work that moves him and that is the one thing we can offer," he said.

Last season, when the PRT produced O'Neill plays directed by Quintero, Hoyt called Robards to invite him to the opening performance. He knew he was an original actor of the Circle in the Square and a 40-year friend of Quintero.

"I'd never met him, but I called and asked if this might be something he'd want to see and Robards and his wife drove her straight from Connecticut. He was really thrilled and talked to me how it reminded him of the early days of the Circle in the Square," Hoyt said.

When Hoyt faxed Robards a request to co-chair the capital fund drive with Harris, "he was on the phone in 20 minutes to say he'd do it. He's a very dear man who is just doing it for the joy of it, which I think shows," he said.

Now in its third season, the PRT's ensemble of 18 is under Equity contract, which assures them set salaries, a place to live during the season, and health insurance.

Schiffenhaus purchased the Monument House on Bradford Street, which has a bakery attached to it. Eleven of the company members live there at about one-third of the cost of summer rentals in town.

"Under our Equity contract, out of town actors, stage managers and all the rest have to be put up. We could see down the line how this would be a big problem," Schiffenhaus said.

So he purchased the Monument House when it became available.

"Not too many happen to have a bakery attached to it, and the rental of the bakery provides two-thirds the cost of the building," he said.

The \$2.5-million capital drive includes \$350,000 earmarked for affordable housing and another \$350,000 for an endowment fund.

Schiffenhaus, who was reluctant to get involved in Hoyt's project at the beginning, said he and his wife are now "thrilled" to be fully involved.

"Ken has two outstanding abilities," he said. "One is to appeal to people like Quintero and Edward Albee and get them to commit to come here. The other is his uncanny ability to pick actors and works

that are quite good. That's the key for what you need in an artistic director," he said.

And yes, he agreed, Hoyt also has the ability to get people like him with organizational skills to turn his dream into a reality.

"He did that all right," Schiffenhaus said with a laugh.

Hoyt is walking on air these days. He knows there are problems ahead, but a survey showed that 81 percent of the people who attended the performances last year came from out of town. Build a theater and they'll come from up-Cape, Boston, even New York, he believes.

It will be a real community theater with the PRT using it from May to October and the 34-year-old Provincetown Theatre Company using it for winter productions, Hoyt said.

But he knows people are wary of the theater groups that come in for a season, then disappear.

"I think a lot of people want to make sure we're not fly-by-nighters, that we're serious about staying and capable of staying," he said. "People have been burned by theater in Provincetown before. I think people are hesitant, but I also think we will be supported.

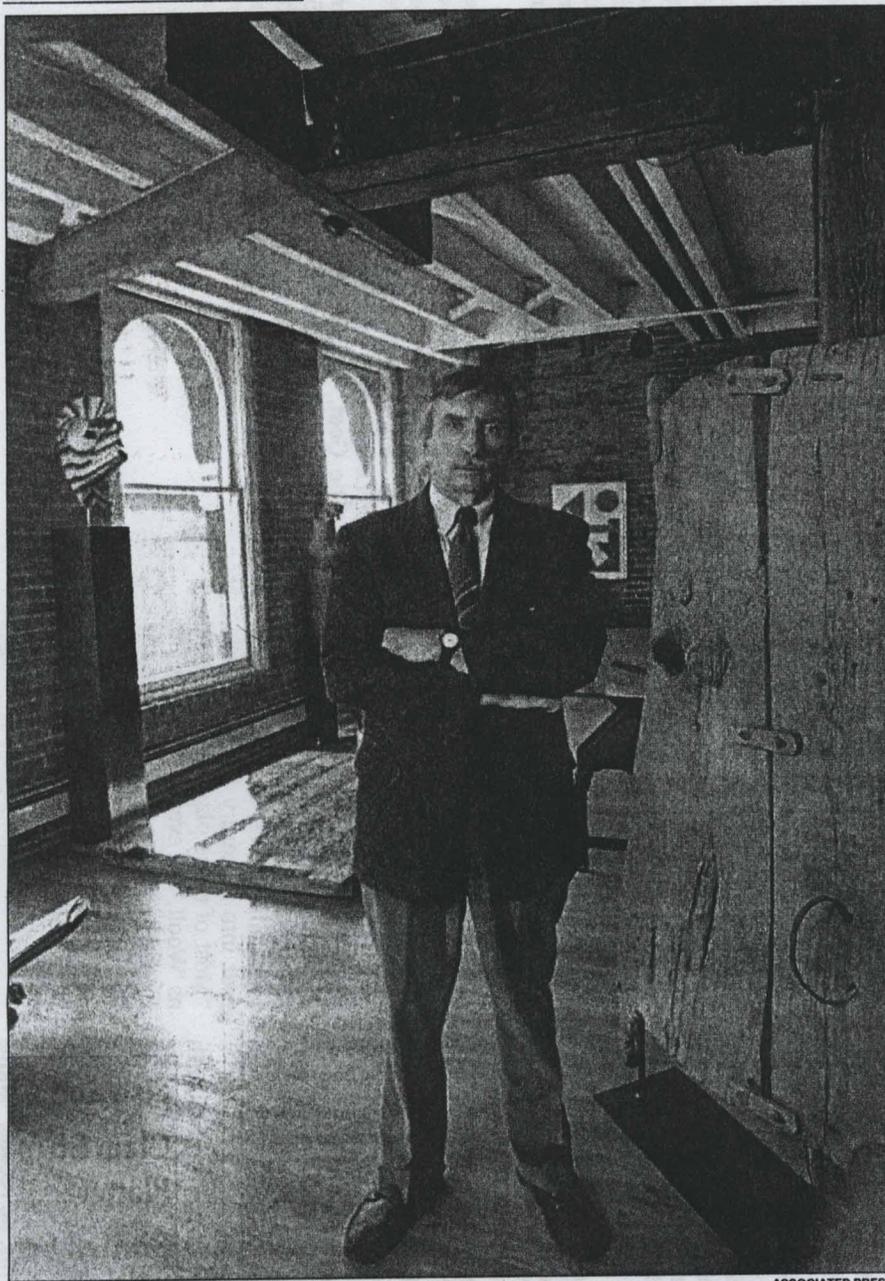
"We'd love to open our first season in a new theater in 1999, but want to move in the most planned, cautious and professional way possible. I hate to talk about dreams and visions and goals, but the idea of being able to provide a salary and place to live to do important works, the idea of being able to have theater that is affordable, I don't know if life gets any better than that.

"It's nothing short of a miracle. It's been timing, luck and fate, all the things I said I didn't believe in, and it has really been an amazing thing. I'm really the luckiest man alive."

Lifestyle/Arts

Monday, June 23, 1997

OUR CULTURE



ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Playwright Edward Albee, shown in his New York City apartment in 1992, will appear on the Cape this weekend.

Edward Albee's delicate balance

Pulitzer-winner juggles his past, present, future as he readies for the Cape

By ALAN W. PETRUCELLI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — The "Woolf" man is finally coming to the Cape. Edward Albee — the three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright whose early works led critics to dub him "the new Eugene O'Neill" and the man who admits he has always felt a kinship for Provincetown — is making his first trip to the tip of the Cape this summer.

Albee's appearance, a reading followed by a question-and-answer session, will be this Saturday, at the Unitarian Universalist Church. As further tribute to the playwright, Provincetown Repertory Theatre will mount "Albee's Men," a one-man performance featuring selections from 11 of Albee's plays, July 10-12. This will be followed by "Albee By the Sea," an evening of three of Albee's one-act plays, July 17-August 3.

"I've traveled everywhere in the world, I've been to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, I know Massachusetts well, but strange — somehow I've skipped Provincetown," says Albee, speaking from his beachfront home in Montauk, Long Island. "I'm glad I'm coming. I expect great beaches and lots of arts and crafts — and too many people."

First to London

Albee, 69, was asked to participate in PRT by Artistic Director Ken Hoyt. Albee agreed to speak, and suggested the company present a trio of one-act plays: "Box," "The Sandbox" and "Finding the Sun." Albee could not direct the plays himself because, he says, he's "just too damned busy." He is heading to London, where a revival of "A Delicate Balance" (the 1966 play for which Albee won his second Pulitzer) will open, and then will oversee a touring company of "Three Tall Women," the 1994 play for which he won his third Pulitzer. (The 1975 play "Seascape" earned him the first Pulitzer.)

Albee turned the directing reins over to fellow playwright and "old, old friend" Glyn O'Malley. "Why did I choose those three works?" Albee repeats the question. "For one thing, they all take place on a beach. For another, they make for a good evening of theater."

IF YOU GO

EVENT

WHAT: Edward Albee reading, benefit for the Provincetown Repertory Theatre
WHEN: 7 p.m. Saturday
TICKETS: \$12; VIP tickets, \$400. Include post-reading cocktails, dancing and dinner

EVENT

WHAT: "Albee's Men," a one-man performance featuring selections from 11 of Albee's plays
WHEN: July 10-12.
TICKETS: \$15

EVENT

WHAT: "Albee by the Sea," an evening of three one-act plays
WHEN: opens Thursday, July 17, and runs through Sunday, Aug. 3.
TICKETS: \$17.

INFORMATION AND TICKETS: 487-0600

Please see **ALBEE** /C-3

ALBEE

Continued from C-1

A good evening of theater is something audiences have come to expect from Albee, since he burst onto the scene in 1960 with "The Zoo Story," the first time he tackled the theme he has become known for: the creation of psychological barriers to avoid intimacy. "Zoo" had critics heaping hosannas on the then-31-year-old playwright; two years later, in 1962, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" — the Tony-winning domestic drama for which he is best known — made Albee the hottest voice on Broadway. The 1966 film version starred Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, and added to Albee's legacy the disturbing story of a middle-aged college professor and his wife in the throes of a drunken, abusive battle.

Misery in Larchmont

No one, not even Albee, could have written the events that shaped his early life. Two weeks after his birth, Albee was adopted by a wealthy Westchester, N.Y., couple. His adoptive father was the scion of a prestigious theatrical family; his adoptive mother was a former department store model. It was a privileged life, life in Larchmont amid servants, nannies and chauffeured limousines. And Albee hated every minute of it.

"I never felt comfortable with those people," he says. "I didn't like them, and they didn't like me. I was always at war with that environment, objecting to its social and political values. I felt like an outsider." Albee wanted to be a writer; his adoptive parents, he recalls, "wanted me to marry and become a businessman. It was like, 'you are adopted property, and you have the

audacity to say no to us?' If I had done what they wanted me to do, I would have been untrue to myself. I would have lived a lie. I knew what the future held, so I got out."

Albee stopped speaking with his adoptive parents in 1950 and moved to Greenwich Village, where he worked odd jobs and lived off a trust fund left him by his maternal grandmother. In 1970, after the death of his adoptive father — with whom he never reestablished contact — Albee decided to call his mother for the first time in two decades. "It was tough, but I decided to play the role of the good son and take her to lunch," he recalls. "But she was still miserable. We had a formal relationship, but it was not pleasurable. She was very much a WASP, making it clear she hated blacks, Jews and homosexuals. She'd use words like 'nigger,' 'kike' and 'faggot,' and I had to tell her that if she ever used them again, I would stop speaking to her forever." (Albee's mother died in 1995; he says one day he may try and contact his biological parents so that "I can find out where I get my bizarre mind from.")

Always something different

Despite the success of his first plays, Albee went through a period in which just about all his post-"Woolf" works were dismissed by important critics, sending his career into a literary limbo of sorts. "Most of those plays were as good as 'Woolf,' but everyone wanted me to write the same thing over and over again," he says. "I'm afraid I'm one of those playwrights who writes something different every time."

It wasn't until 1994, when "Three Tall Women" — a play based on his

mother and the most biographical in the Albee canon — was produced that Albee was welcomed back by critics and audiences. He received his third Pulitzer, and chuckles when he recalls where he was when he first heard the good news. "I was standing in the gym stark naked," he says with a laugh. "I guess maybe I should be naked more often . . . maybe I'll get more awards."

Albee says that he doesn't "even know when I have an idea for a play until it's already nicely developed in my mind. I get images in my head, then there's a knock on the door of my brain that says, 'Here I am. Do something about me.' I don't ever put a play down on paper until I know it's there." He writes in long-hand, shunning computers. "I used to use a typewriter, but even that was far too advanced for me," he explains. He writes whenever and wherever he can — at home, on planes, on the road. The first and thirds acts of "A Delicate Balance," he says, were written while he was sailing to and from France on an oceanliner.

Plays about how we live

His next play, "The Play about the Baby," will have its world premiere in London next year; his 26th play, "The Goat," is currently "in my head and will go to paper this summer." Ask Albee to sum up either work in a few sentences and he

refuses. "Any play that can be discussed in one or two sentences should be that long," he says. "Every play I have written is about every single thing that happens from beginning to end. I only hope I write plays are works that are useful . . . that they offer some true examination of how we live and shouldn't live our lives."

When not writing, teaching playwrighting at the University of Houston or lecturing at worldwide theater festivals, Albee can be found relaxing at either his New York City apartment or Long Island beachhouse, both of which he shares with his companion of 27 years, an artist 18 years younger than he. Albee is ready to reveal his identity, then pauses. "Maybe I better not," he says. Albee doesn't like dwelling on the issue of being gay, simply to say, "gay people should have exactly the same civil rights and responsibilities as anyone else." And please, call him a playwright who happens to be gay, not a gay playwright.

"No one goes around saying Arthur Miller is a straight playwright," he says. "I belong to a minority. But I belong to several minorities. I am white. That's a minority in this world. I am a man. That's a minority. I am over 65. That's a minority. I am all these things, but don't find an identity in any one of them."

"Albee's Men" is a triumphant opening show for PRT

By Timothy XX Burton
BANNER STAFF

THEATER REVIEW

At the start of "Albee's Men," last Saturday at the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, there resided on stage what appeared to be a few simple props: a podium, several jackets upon hangers, a rose-filled vase, a cocktail glass, a comb. But within the hands of actor Stephen Rowe, those simple instruments became complex tools that allow for a succession of characters to beguile us with their wit and lust, their pomposity and sorrow. For huddled inside all of these widely disparate male characters lies a common theme — a desire to understand oneself in relation to others.

The world premiere of "Albee's Men" provided a strong opening for the Provincetown Repertory Theatre's third season at the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum. The dynamic one-person performance, seamlessly directed by Glyn O'Malley, culled monologues from a succession of Albee works spanning 35 years, centering on the male personas and their search for self-awareness. More often than not for these characters, that understanding lies hidden in conversations with others. The monologues Rowe performed with such earnestness are reflections spoken to other characters,

not present on stage, but who live just beyond the lip of the stage. All of the people "Albee's Men" interact with may not be visible, but to Rowe, they are seen.

Rowe began the evening by offering a monologue from a 1993 work by Albee, "Fragments — A Concerto Grosso," wherein Man #3 converses with his mirror. Looking at his invisible reflection, the man ponders on the image a mirror casts back. "It isn't true that we all see what we want to," he says, his face stretching from one expression to the next. Then, with the aid of a baseball cap, Rowe became a young boy from "Finding the Sun," informing the adult-oriented world that youth has its privileges. "We children have all the options. You grownups aren't the only ones. Think about that." As the heavy meaning of that line sank in, Rowe had changed into a man recounting moments as a 15-year-old youth when he was prodded to begin a sexual relationship with a 13-year-old female neighbor. Suddenly, Rowe slipped on a jacket and he was a man who, unable to make contact with his landlady's vicious dog whom he described as "malevolence

Stephen Rowe makes a point during his one-person performance of "Albee's Men."

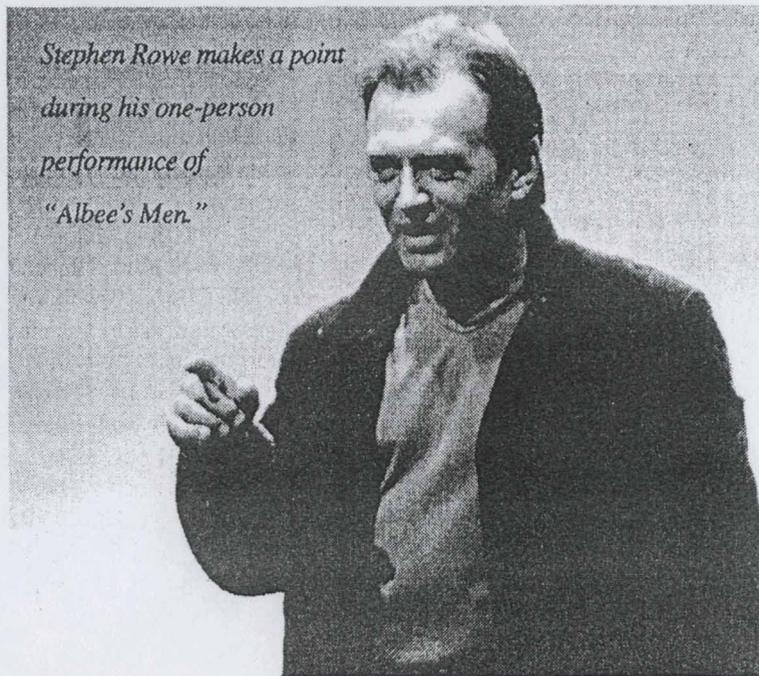


Photo Vincent Guadagno

with an erection," sets out to poison him.

With a combing back of the hair, Rowe transformed into "The Man Who Had Three Arms." This formerly multi-dexterous man asks the audience to allow him the freedom to enjoy a private sob in the midst of delivering a talk on what it meant to have an additional limb that sprouted from his back. Then, with cocktail glass in hand, Rowe's body melted into that of George from "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf." A short fade of stage lights and Rowe plucked away the petals of a rose as

Tobias from "A Delicate Balance," pondering "She loves me, she loves me not." And so it goes, with Rowe embodying a total of 10 distinct characters, all searching for their place in the world.

Now, there are several factors that lead to the success of "Albee's Men," the most obvious of which is Rowe. It would be cliché to say Rowe's performance was reminiscent of a chameleon, as he came across more as another reptile, a snake, because he shed skins more than he changed colors. Rowe began as one character, his eyes at times hypnotic, then he ap-

peared to crack free from those scales, leaving the old skin behind, hissing new life into the next. As alluring as the snake is, with its sexual qualities, so are the characters he became — conniving, magnetic, seductive. It was nearly impossible to take the eyes from Rowe, as he did a sensual dance across the stage.

Rowe's talents were highlighted by O'Malley's unimposing direction. He allowed Rowe to transmute from one person to the next, showing belief in Rowe's talents. O'Malley's direction was more akin to finetuning, giving the actor's performance that slight nudge that makes the picture that much clearer.

Then there are Albee's words, which cover such a broad spectrum of styles that it's sometimes hard to believe they were written by the same person. Perhaps it is the wide range of styles that is the common thread of Albee's words, speaking in a myriad of unique voices of longings for love.

The shine of "Albee's Men," was also due to the lighting. While uncredited in the program, the lighting was a show unto itself, shifting from cool Caribbean blue to hot sunshine yellow for each character.

If there was one unfortunate spot in the production, it was the temperature in the theater. Midway through each act it became uncomfortably warm, which highlights at least one reason for PRT's desire to have a new theater space. That minor distraction cannot take away from what "Albee's Men" demonstrated — that a man's contemplation of his human condition can make for a night of hypnotic theater.

Albee's "Sand" reveals trio of theatrical pearls

By Timothy XX Burton
BANNER STAFF

To view the sand is to see the Earth in its finest form, small pellets of the earth that have been affected by time and the elements. To view the Provincetown Repertory Theatre's production of "Sand: A Trio of One Acts by Edward Albee," is to see theater in its finest form, three small pearls of performance shaped by superb writing and strong ensemble acting.

Linked by a common thread that incorporates sea, surf and air, each one-act makes use of a distinct theatrical style to present a haunting theme of loss. As directed by Glyn O'Malley, avant garde, drama and comedy come together on a slowly transforming stage where the dawn leads to the day, where discussions lead to enlightenment. Each of these one-acts stands on its own merit. When brought together, they create a triptych, a three-paneled piece of

art that folds in upon itself.

The evening opens with "Box," in which a shrouded figure stands within the frame of a large box. A female Voice (Patricia Kilgarriff) muses of the changes brought by time not only inside the box, but outside as well. "Seven hundred million babies die in the time it takes, took, to knead the dough to make a proper loaf," the Voice says, while the figure's veiled head looks around her, her vision following a line of birds she sees flying above the water.

The middle presentation, "The Sandbox," portrays Mommy (M. Lynda Robinson) and Daddy (Michael C. Mahon), who take Grandma (Kilgarriff) to the beach. Placing her in a sandbox at the foot of a calisthenics-minded Young Man (Jim Goss), Grandma wails like a child. "What a way to treat an old woman," she declares, while her daughter and son-in-law sit near the edge of the stage and wait for something to happen.

The last and longest, "Finding the Sun," relates a simple day on the beach for eight people, who enter as four alphabetically linked couples. As they plop themselves in the sand, all of them casting their faces to the sun, the tapestry of their lives becomes evident. "The core that binds them to us is a complex twine," 70-year-old Hendon (William J. Devaney) informs 16-year-old Fergus (Eric Bernat), pointing out that his son Daniel (Ken Hoyt), who is on the beach, is wed to Cordelia (Alison Crowley), the daughter of his now current wife, Gertrude (Kilgarriff). As Fergus saunters about the beach — showing a slightly Oedipal interest in his mother, Edmee (Robinson)

— he discovers that Daniel was intimately involved with Benjamin (Marc Wolf), much to the despair of his wife, Abigail (Kim McGreal). While the sun blazes down upon their skins, their lives begin slowly unraveling as each couple experiences a sudden loss.

Each of the plays in "Sand" projects its own atmosphere. "Box" is by far the most visibly and aurally haunting, as the Voice and figure seem so disconnected, yet are beautifully choreographed. "The Sandbox" is wonderfully ironic, as Grandma discovers why, at her age, she's placed in an area usually reserved for toddlers. Comedy only highlights the despair of the characters in "Finding the Sun," as char-

acter after character voices hysterical lines. It is with great forethought that such different plays were put together, each one pointing back upon the strength of the others.

It is also with great forethought that such a fine cast has been put together. Every single one does a fine job, but a few stand out. Kilgarriff is wonderful playing three different characters, the meatiest of which is the cantankerous Grandma. Then there is Devaney, a strong presence whose acting is assured and nicely underplayed. As a 16-year-old, Bernat is totally believable, portraying youth with grace, all exuberant and inquisitive. And as Cordelia, Crowley nearly steals the show. Her timing could not be better and her

eyes sparkle with infinite meaning. These four work so well because everyone on stage work together so well, supporting one another like the framework of a sturdy house.

PRT continues to raise the stakes, with its daring choices and smooth productions, and this recent production is a fine moment for them. O'Malley has put these one-acts together with such self-assuredness, it permeates the entire production. As the sand within the oyster produces a pearl, so does "Sand" itself produce a gem in theater. It is a semi-precious event to carry within the mind well after the actors have left the stage.

◆ THEATER REVIEW ◆



Photo Vincent Guadagno

Patricia Kilgarriff (center) is restrained by Michael C. Mahon and M. Lynda Robinson in a scene from "Sand."

The Boston Globe

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 1997

THE BOSTON GLOBE • WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 1997

Stage Review

Acting keeps message in cluttered 'Planet' tidy

By Bill Marx
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Steven Dietz's AIDS drama is an earnest student drama exercise, a sloppy mingling of heartfelt concern and dramaturgical contrivance. Despite the script's clumsiness, "Lonely Planet" is moving, primarily because of the tenderness generated by its performers, Jerry O'Donnell and Marc Wolf, who cut against the play's liberal sentiment and unmissable symbolism. The latter comes in the form of chairs that end up crowding the actors off the stage, remembrances of those who have died from AIDS. Dietz illustrates his wooden allegory about American indifference to the disease with furniture.

The chairs are brought into the small map store of Jody, a reclusive loner who wants reality to be as neat as the product he sells. Yet Jody's free-spirited buddy, Carl, won't leave him alone — he barges into the store, spinning wild stories about his jobs, which include working in a

LONELY PLANET
Play in two acts by Steven Dietz
Directed by Seth Barrish. Set, Van Santvoord. Costumes, Austin K. Sanderson. Lights, Craig Kennedy.
Presented by the Provincetown Repertory Theatre
At: Pilgrim Monument and Museum, Provincetown, through Sunday.

glass repair shop and writing sensational whoppers for a tabloid newspaper. Every time Carl returns he brings in a couple more chairs; soon there's no room for customers. Yet Jody can't say no, partly because he can't say yes: to having himself tested for AIDS, to acknowledging the social impact of the disease, to living life to the fullest.

You don't have to be an Einstein to figure out that Carl's a spirit, the zany repository of the cut-off memories, dreams, and quirks of those who have died. The multiple personalities give Dietz a chance to indulge in some nifty comic riffs. My favorite is about the need for special stamps



Jerry O'Donnell (left) and Marc Wolf cut against the play's liberal sentiment and unmissable symbolism.

to put on mail you don't want to send. Yet for all of Carl's vitality, the character never becomes more than a device, a professional guilt-inducing machine. And though Dietz tries to make the point that our homophobic society is sweeping AIDS deaths under the rug, his script doesn't gen-

erate much anger or disdain. This is an AIDS play that asks for quiet tears rather than loud protestations.

"Lonely Planet" exudes desolation because of the performance of Jerry O'Donnell, who manages to make Jody more than just another caricature of a repressed man learn-

ing to feel again. Husky-voiced, thickening around the middle, O'Donnell softens his character through subtle means — a hesitation in the voice here, a sly glance there. O'Donnell remains emotionally distant to the end, a stoicism that maintains Jody's integrity. As Carl, Marc

Carl's multiple personalities allow for some nifty comic riffs. My favorite is about the need for special stamps to put on mail you don't want to send.

Wolf doesn't quite match O'Donnell; his eccentric motor mouth is monochromatic, a little forced around the edges. Still, Wolf and O'Donnell fashion a courageous image of communication amid mutual isolation.

As for Dietz's nerve, he's got plenty. Jody and Carl refer to — even quote from — Eugene Ionesco's "The Chairs," an absurdist classic where seats also take center stage. But that poetic drama is enigmatic to the point of infuriation. Fearful audiences aren't going to understand his fable; Dietz has Jody and Carl explain to us what the play is about. Despite the gum-flapping, poignant glimpses of the drama's lonely hearts can be found in the deft performances of O'Donnell and Wolf, who do their best not to bump into Dietz's furniture.

GENE
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"Lonely Planet" shows signs of intelligent life

By Timothy XX Burton
BANNER STAFF

Every map contains a legend, a box that identifies the symbols used within the map to provide a guide for the traveler. Every chair is in essence a seat, a place to rest the body before or after a journey. And all throughout "Lonely Planet," maps and chairs abound. Amongst these omnipresent symbols, two characters undertake a journey through a slightly troubled script which seeks to address their shared fear of an unnamed pandemic. It is the well-acted rapport of this duo that saves this production from the ordinary.

Written by Steven Flietz in 1994, "Lonely Planet" is being performed at 8 p.m. at the Provincetown Repertory Theatre at the Pilgrim Monument through Sunday. The play chronicles the lives of Jody (Jerry O'Donnell) and Carl (Marc Wolf), two men battling their self-alienation. As the owner of a map store, Jody's Maps, Jody is drawn to those things that display what is known of our world. He is a vivid dreamer, one whose nighttime visions offer overly realistic interpretations of his daytime traumas. "No one is kidding in dreams. No one is casually chatting," Jody says. He recounts these dreamscapes to his lone friend and companion, Carl, a pathological liar. Whereas Jody spends time deconstructing what occurred as he slept, Carl does the opposite, constructing untruths about what supposedly took place during his daytime occupation. His stories about

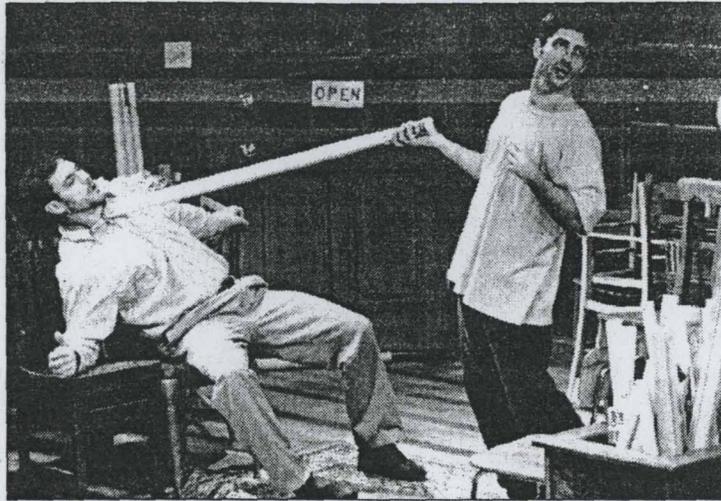


Photo Vincent Guadagno

Marc Wolf's point is well taken by Jerry O'Donnell in this scene from "Lonely Planet."

◆ THEATER REVIEW ◆

working in art restoration or as a tabloid reporter are fabricated to disguise his true occupation as an increasingly overworked furniture mover. These two men interact solely inside Jody's shop, huddling there to avoid what lurks beyond the door — an unnamed plague which has been decimating their friends and colleagues at an alarming rate.

This script relies upon several notions, the first of which is its ability to successfully employ metaphors and symbols. It's here that "Lonely Planet" hits a few snags. Jody states that his obsession to maps stems from the fact that a map represents a solid, fixed

object in space. Yet Jody is obsessed by something as kinetic and unfixed as a supercharged atom, namely Carl. Carl could never be mapped. When Jody recalls his dreams, the symbolism is frustrating in its facility. Unlike most dreamers, Jody's dreams offer no puzzles to solve or enigmas to unravel.

Carl's descriptions of his life hold more truth. As a metaphorical messenger of chairs, he explains their importance to Jody with clarity. The chair itself works as a nice plot device. Underlying the symbolism of maps and chairs is the plague itself, an unnamed contagion that moves at breakneck

speed. It is close to impossible, in this day and age, not to think of AIDS when either character speaks of the unnamed disease. Discussions of the disease hold many similarities to AIDS, including stigmatization due to inferred sexual practices as well as testing centers that seek to offer anonymity. But Flietz chooses never to name the disease. Allowing the plague to remain nameless seems to be Flietz's attempt to have it stand for more than AIDS. Leaving it with no name, one Jody or Carl never seek to identify, dilutes its terror. Perhaps to have named it at some point would have given it more power, made it a fixed object to be studied like maps of Greenland or Chad.

Also important to the play is the ability of the characters to convince us they are who they claim. Both O'Donnell and Wolf succeed at this. O'Donnell plays Jody as a quiet man, reserved and nervous, in a smooth, controlled performance. He plays the proverbial "straight man" to Wolf's wildly en-

ergized Carl. Wolf himself knows when to move and when to be at rest, orbiting around the slower paced O'Donnell. Their energies are complimentary, allowing each to shine at the appropriate moments. Both of them, however, run into a snafu with diction and enunciation, which makes the play difficult to hear at times.

The responsibility of diction ultimately resides at the feet of director Seth Barrish. Barrish has done a nice job of keeping the play energized and with aiding O'Donnell and Wolf with nuances to their characterizations, but it appears he has let their diction slide. It's a mistake that can be corrected, but shouldn't have been allowed to exist in the first place.

Even with a few trouble areas, "Lonely Planet" deserves attention. Its desire to comment on the power of friendship in the face of adversity rings true. It is friendship that keeps "Lonely Planet" revolving, even if the nameless monster that seeks to stop it resides outside of their door.

The bigger the lie the better

The PRT presents a tense and nuanced production of 'The Children's Hour' at the Monument Museum

by John R. Quinn

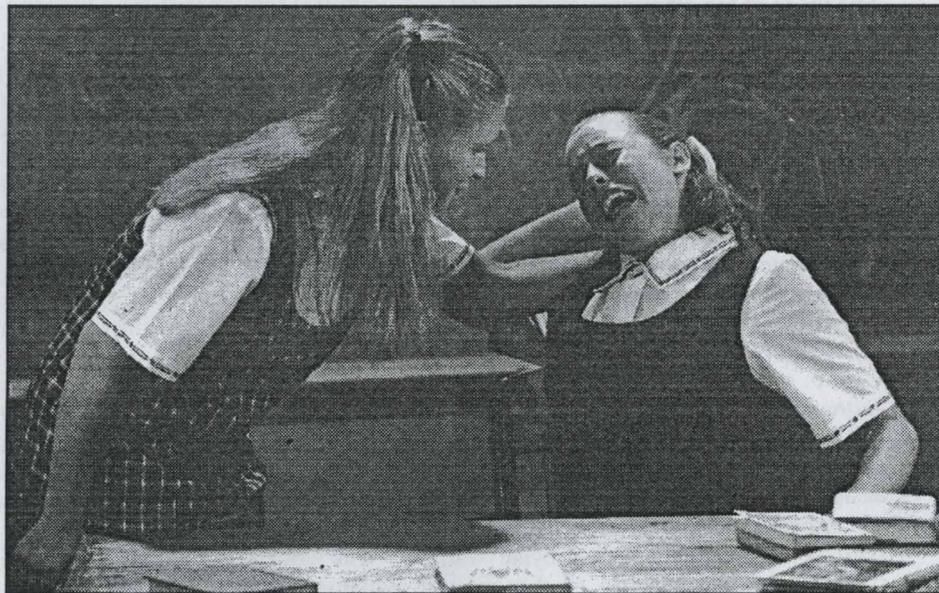
'The Children's Hour,'
by Lillian Hellman, presented
by the Provincetown Repertory
Theatre, at the Pilgrim Monument,
Provincetown. Tues.-Sun.,
through September 14.

Although that certain something said to be in those fabled Provincetown sea breezes pollinates the experimental and erodes the conventional, there's still enough wisdom and good taste, thanks to the commitment and talent of the Provincetown Repertory Theatre, to make a respectful bow for the classics.

PRT's final offering of the season, in its hilltop, monument-side theater, is a graceful, intense production of one of the towering classics of the American theatrical canon, Lillian Hellman's "The Children's Hour."

Hellman's famous play, which ran for 691 performances when it premiered in 1934, is very much a 20th-century tragedy. In true high tragic fashion, despicable things happen to people who seem not to deserve them. In the pagan world of antiquity, the audience

'One of the students, a heartlessly malicious youngster named Mary Tilford, tells her grandmother that the two teachers are lovers.'



Julia Minsky and Sara Dwyer in 'The Children's Hour.' Photo: Vince Guadagno

would be told that the wrath of angry gods accounted for the cruelty that befell poor humans. In Shakespeare's time, it was "Fate," or some character flaw in the tragic sufferer-hero himself. But by Hellman's time, the orchestrator of evil was none other than humanity itself—or, in a word more befitting the drawing-room, late Victorian world of this play, society.

The casualties in "The Children's Hour" are Martha Dobie and Karen Wright, women in their late 20s who run a boarding school for girls. One of the students, a heartlessly malicious youngster named Mary Tilford, tells her grandmother that the two teachers are lovers. The grandmother's influence in society, in turn, lends credibility to the ru-

mor, and precipitates the downfall of Karen, Martha and their school.

The child's whistleblowing is unfounded—she has taken words from an overheard conversation out of context, and bullied another student into corroborative lies about kisses and other intimacies between the two teachers—but by the time the finger-pointing grandmother learns the truth, Karen and Martha have nothing left but each other and an empty school to hide in.

An additional twist is that the rumor forces Martha to discover that she really has lesbian feelings for Karen, a discovery that leads to her offstage suicide.

Complex lead characters

Leading the ensemble cast are Lesley Fera as Martha and Alison Crowley as Karen. The roles are extraordinarily complex, for while they have our sympathy as victims, both women display a capacity for cruelty themselves in their impatience with Martha's aunt, a florid freeloading eccentric. The two performances are strong, intense and controlled. From the moment she walks on stage, Fera is piercing with her alternating moments of explosive rage and simmering re-charge. In perfect counterpoint, Crowley's initially cheerful Karen suffers a well-paced but relentless spiritual deterioration.

As Mary Tilford, high school junior Julia Minsky (a Provincetown summer visitor from New Jersey) makes a commendable stage debut. Though a youngster, the fibbing, bullying Mary is quite painfully evil. "Your Mary is a dark child," Karen tells the grandmother, and that's about all the explanation we really get for Mary's motives. Even the playwright herself confessed years later that she intended Mary to be neurotic and sly, but that audiences see her as utterly malignant. Minsky is no Anna Paquin, but is mostly convincing as this teenage Iago.

Veteran actresses Barbara Lester (of Broadway stages) and Peg French (regionally) are both well cast as the oldest of the three generations of women on stage. Lester plays the eccentric, in-the-way and ultimately cowardly Lily Mortar (Martha's aunt) with sympathy and charm (enough to forgive her occasional stumble over a line), and Peg French is commanding as the regal, stubborn and blind-to-a-fault grandmother of the evil Mary Tilford. Cheryl Meads, Sara Dwyer and Faith Enemark are convincing as school-

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'Children's Hour'

Continued from page 26

girls Evelyn, Peggy and Rosalie, all bullied pawns of Mary Tilford; their performances and those of the other youngsters and teenagers in the cast reflect the patient, effective hand of director John Handy, a long time assistant of Jose Quintero, who took over the reins when Quintero took ill shortly after rehearsals got underway.

There are only two male roles in this production—one small but interesting and one large but uninteresting. Eric Bernat is appropriately rakish as the grocery boy who gawks at the housebound Karen and Martha in Act III, while Michael C. Mahon seems somewhat off-the-mark as the kindly Dr. Joe Cardin, cousin of Mary Tilford and loyal suitor of Karen.

As we've come to expect from the PRT gang, the set, sound, lighting and costume designs are superb. The minimalist school and drawing rooms of Van Santvoord's set, right down to their spare, greyish walls, contribute to the severity of the tragedy unfolding within those walls, and the costumes reflect character to a tee.

Questions to consider

"The Children's Hour," which ironically takes its title from Longfellow's poem, is a disturbing adult drama which provokes as much discussion today as it did at its premiere.

For example, is this a "lesbian" play? Assuming such a simplistic categorization even has any meaning today (does it depend on the subject matter, the theme, or the author's sexual preference?), the answer seems to be no, at least according to the playwright. In an interview during a 1950s

revival of the work, Hellman insisted that this is not really a play about lesbianism, but about a lie, and as with any lie, the bigger, the better.

What lie could have been more hurtful to the characters, her reasoning continues, than the one the evil Mary Tilford tells?

Still, lesbianism is part of the play, and contemporary audiences might well be offended at Hellman's chosen fate for the lesbian Martha. After all, it's Martha the lesbian, not Karen, the object of her affection, who must die. Plus, the suicide occurs off-stage, after which dialogue proceeds for a solid 10 minutes as if nothing had happened, while the corpse is absolutely unattended to. Is the implicit suggestion that not much more could be expected from such an unfortunate woman? (Remember, there's nothing autobiographical about this play: Hellman never attended a boarding school but based the play on a Scottish writer's story, published in 1930, about an 1809 scandal in Edinburgh caused by a child who said two school headmistresses had an inordinate affection for each other).

The women's plight also bears one striking resemblance to Oscar Wilde's: like him, they women arguably bring further societal scrutiny on themselves when their lawsuit for libel (here, against the rumor-spreading grandmother) backfires. Should they not have sought to vindicate their names?

Long after the three-act, double-intermission production, the abundance of nuance in "The Children's Hour" will keep your mind occupied with these and other very adult questions. ▼

For tix to 'The Children's Hour,' being shown Tues.-Sun. at 8 pm, call 508-487-5600. (The Sept. 13 production will include ASL interpretation.)

'The Children's Hour' still powerful after all these years

By ALAN W. PETRUCELLI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — She is, perhaps, the original bad seed. She gifts her teacher with flowers plucked from a garbage can, passing them off as fresh-picked. She throws tantrums and slaps her classmates and pulls their hair when she's not sadistically black-mailing them out of their allowances. She fakes a heart attack to escape having to stay in school.

But more importantly, Mary Tilford lies. And it's those malicious lies and the credence given to them by "righteous" people that Lillian Hellman explores in "The Children's Hour." Though the play — Hellman's debut, first staged on Broadway in 1934 and now being presented as the final show of the Provincetown Repertory Theatre's third season — is dated and creaky and sometimes melodramatic, it's still a trenchant and important work.

Karen Wright and Martha Dobie are two longtime friends who have scrimped and saved for eight years to buy a farm on which they have opened a girls school. After the first year of operation, things seem to be going well . . . except for this brat of a girl. Mary wants her way when she wants it — and when she doesn't get it, she threatens and bullies and faints and slaps and

What works for the play — what has always worked for it — is the power of the words. Sixty years after it was first written, "The Children's Hour" may not shock on one level, but it fascinates on another.

shouts and displays all sorts of signs of early childhood psychosis.

"She's bad for the other girls!" Martha says to Karen one particularly bad day. "She causes trouble. Her lying makes everything wrong!" And on this day, when Mary is punished for "fainting" and lying, she plots her revenge.

She runs off to her grandmother's house, begging to remain out of school. When guilt doesn't work — "You don't love me! You don't care if they kill me!" — Mary resorts to lying. She tells her grandmother that she is afraid of Karen and Martha and their "funny secrets." Mary tells her that she has seen and heard things; they are so unspeakable she whispers them. Martha and Karen, Mary tells her grandmother, are "unnatural."

They are lovers.

The slander sweeps through the small town, and becomes public truth. Parents take their children out of school, and Martha and Karen (and Karen's fiancé, who is the grandmother's nephew) confront the grandmother and Mary. "I did what I had to do," the grandmother explains. "This thing is your own — go away with it!" The two women file a slander suit, and lose, the judge finding them guilty of "sinful sexual knowledge of each other." Martha and Karen become outcasts, paralyzed with fear and shame and embarrassment.

Even when the grandmother realizes her granddaughter has lied and she tries to undo the horror, it is too late. Martha has started to

believe the lies and kills herself; Karen remains, surviving without faith in herself or in other people's humanity.

What works against "The Children's Hour" is its age. Though it surely must have been scandalous in its time (the play was banned in Chicago and London; in 1952, when Hellman directed the first revival of the show, it was even banned in Boston), today homosexuality is celebrated and no longer seen (for the most part) as "unnatural."

What works for the play — what has always worked for it — is the power of the words. Sixty years after it was first written, "The Children's Hour" may not shock on one level, but it fascinates on another. This is not a play about lesbianism (Hellman never even uses the word) but about the monstrous power of gossip. And though it takes Hellman a full act of tiresome exposition to get the ball rolling, once she shifts the focus from her near-clinical study of Missy Monster and the

poison she spills, watch it permeate — and watch out for shattered lives and fallen bodies. By Act 3, the women have been inside for eight days, afraid and shamed to venture outside their cocoon, and here is where Hellman's writing is at its sharpest and pithiest. Karen suggests that tomorrow will be better, a day when perhaps their memories will fail them about what has been said. "I don't want tomorrow!" cries Martha. "It's a bad word!"

Director John Handy (replacing Jose Quintero, who took ill and was forced to drop out of the production) keeps a tight rein on a superb cast. As Mary, Julia Minsky plays the role with remarkable skill, though her inexperience with hysteria (this role marks her stage debut) causes her to occasionally lapse into overacting. As the grandmother, Peg French is appropriately heartless and properly remorseful by play's end. Alison Crowley and Lesley Fera are perfect as the maligned schoolteachers; as

Karen, Crowley especially brings a sense of simple honesty to the role that makes "The Children's Hour" seem much more intimate and uncontrived, especially when it's leaning toward melodrama.

ON STAGE

- WHAT: "The Children's Hour"
- PRESENTED BY: Provincetown Repertory Theatre
- WRITTEN BY: Lillian Hellman
- DIRECTED BY: John Handy
- WHEN: 8 p.m. daily through Sept. 14
- WHERE: Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, High Pole Road
- TICKETS: \$17
- RESERVATIONS: 487-5600