

More reviews from Ashland

'Man and Superman': perfect parlor comedy

"Man and Superman" is perhaps Shaw's most ambitious work. It is very wordy—as most of Shaw's works are—and if done entirely it would take over six hours to produce.

The play includes an entirely self-contained play within a play, "Don Juan in Hell," where characters from the surrounding play meet in Hell to discuss Shaw's philosophies.

The Festival has chosen to stage separately "Don Juan in Hell" and a truncated version of "Man and Superman." The editing leaves the audience with a delightful, yet still political, Edwardian drawing room comedy.

The strength of the production lies in Joe Vincent's portrayal of Jack Tanner, the free thinking member of what he calls the Idle Rich Class.

Vincent's timing is impeccable, his gestures correct, and his expressions faultless. He manages almost single-handedly to carry the entire show.

It's needed. Director James Moll has not been able to blend his characters sufficiently well to make Shaw's wonderful mix work.

Where Tanner is an independent man of the world, his friend Octavius is supposed to be a proper, but sensitive young man, aware of all the correct conventions of the British upper class.

But Allen Nause plays Octavius as a sorry simp. He's too hand-wringing to be believed.

Childhood friend or not, the real Jack Tanner would have long ago dumped this little twerp.

Joan Stuart-Morris, who plays the willful Ann out to trap and marry Jack, is likewise out of the control of director Moll.

She is supposed to be both manipulative and enticing, but she's so full of herself that if Jack weren't bound by the script to love her, he should dump her too.

Michael Kevin does a creditable job as the patriarchal Roebuck Ramsden, but he's so obviously too young for the part, he can't carry it off. The Oregon Shakespearean Festival should not have to resort to such feeble miscasting.

The remainder of the cast, however, is excellent. Shirley Patton shows great restraint and sensitivity as the typical empty-headed old mother. And Gayle Bellows is tough and businesslike as Octavius' no-nonsense sister Violet.

The production again demonstrates the skill and professionalism of the Festival's back shop. The sets are exquisite and Jack Tanner's car, built from scratch across the street in the scene shops, could very well be real.

Those among the audience expecting to see the philosophical brigand Mendoza will be disappointed—he's been cut. But the script is pure Shaw, and the production mostly lives up to its source.

'Ah, Wilderness!' celebrates good ol' days

It was fitting that "Ah, Wilderness!" should play Sunday night. It's a Sunday night kind of show.

"Ah, Wilderness!" is O'Neill's only comedy. It's a gentle look at an understanding American family watching its children grow up and its adults grow old.

Jerry Turner, Festival artistic director, has created an enjoyable, businesslike, creditable production. Like the script, it's not flashy, but it glows.

The play takes us back to simpler times, to small-town America early in this century. Young Richard is reaching the age of consent. He's discovered poetry, and socialism, and girls.

His father, Nat, the publisher of the local

paper, understands. There's no screaming and trauma. Nat knows his kids are good, and he remembers himself what it's like to grow up.

Phillip Davidson, as Nat, makes the show work. His even-handedness, his calm, quiet good humor set the tone for the play.

Craig Rovere, who plays Richard, is every bit the post-pubescent teen-age boy. He's manic, he's emotional, he's unreasonable, he's a charmer.

But no one really stands out in this cast. They all shine, and that's exactly what Turner wanted.

It's the script that stands out, and it does so very well.

Reviews by Jonathan Siegle

Staff

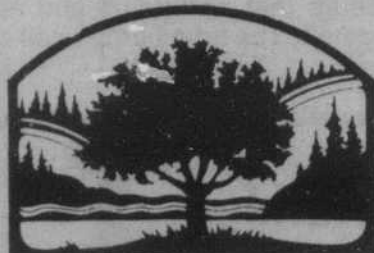
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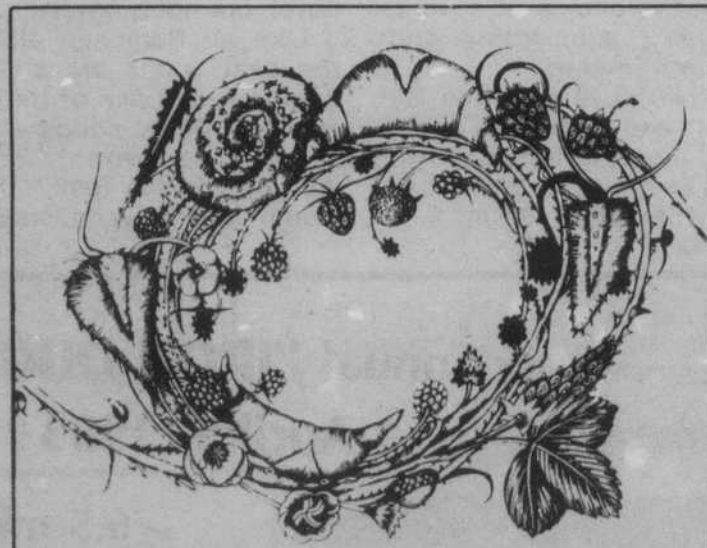
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