

# FROM THE AISLE SEAT

BY DAN WOLFE

In the current month of June, which is a slow period between the end of the winter '97-'98 season and the summer '98 season, there are a few events that demand our attention. I mean besides the weddings and graduations that dot social calendars and are theatrical events of a sort. (If you don't believe that weddings can fall into this category, read the book on weddings by one of the Mitford *filles* of some years back. Good summer fare, to be sure.)

Green Candle Theatre is currently presenting a production of Robert Shaw's *The Man in the Glass Booth* on the stage of Burlington's Memorial Auditorium. This company, known for its dedication to socially meaningful theater, and for being on the cutting edge of experimental theater, has picked a play with more coherence than is sometimes the case, more structural credibility....and in this particular case of a somewhat ambivalent character all in all. But good ambivalence, as in the stream of Pirandello, although without Pirandello's structural craft or way with words.

The play worked well under the direction of Mark Nash, who brought credible performances from actors who sometimes

are not so credible. Nash also made good use of the stage and the set, although that the doors on stage left were not clearly an elevator initially.

John Alexander plays the lead part, a Jewish man who apparently chooses inexplicably to be thought to be a Nazi, a cousin of his, who was an officer in a prison camp. Perhaps he is a victim of the Stockholm syndrome, a person who develops empathetic views towards his captors. Perhaps he has other messages, such as the post-WW II silence of Jews in South Africa as *apartheid* spread, and which is referred to in the script. Or perhaps there is permanent damage to him by his being in the concentration camp.

Alexander portrays all of the swagger and apparent devotion to Hitler, as well as letting down his guard when his double pose is laid open. His is a strong performance.

Jim Reid, who plays several roles, is more convincing as the trial judge than as the doctor. Walt Levering is excellent in his two roles, especially as Rudin. They are the two best portraits that he has brought to a stage yet. Geri Amori brings quiet credibility to the pivotal role of Mrs.

Lehmann, although the accent falls in and out a bit. Ryan Ober is also excellent as Charlie Cohn, the loyal employee. Bridget O'Connor was a bit too rough and tough as Mrs. Rosen. Michael Gills was interesting as Steiger, the prosecutor in the courtroom.

The play itself didn't quite work for me, mostly because the final moments of the play are so ambivalent as to be meaningless: Goldman's unmasking, followed by his locking himself into the glass booth and disrobing. What was the point? Why did he do this?

I didn't/don't still know. If this were a matter to be decided by contest, I could solicit your views. It just isn't clear...and that's in the writing. There may be clues in the music: the opening of the Verdi *Requiem* in act one, but only the prayer for peace; the prologue from Boito's *Mefistofele*, which takes place in heaven, where the devil and God decide to tempt Faust; and a return to other *requiem* music for the last scenes, as I recall, the one by Mozart, but my memory is faulty here.

Green Candle has once again given us a piece that causes us to think, this time with a better *mise-en-scene* than usual. It is much to their credit.

Performances continue tonight, Saturday, June 13, and June 18 to 20. All at Memorial Auditorium. Tickets: 893-7333.

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Stowe Theatre Guild has reported in with their season: *The Secret Garden* weekends beginning June 18-July 3; *Man*

*of La Mancha* weekends July 15-25; *Baby - aka The Baby Dance?* - from Aug. 5-15; and *Crazy For You* to close the season, from Aug. 26 - Sept. 5. Cast lists and information at their website: <http://www.pwshift.com/theatre>; or e-mail at [theatre@pwshift.com](mailto:theatre@pwshift.com).

Also Lost Nation Theatre, which opens its tenth anniversary season with *Working*, June 18-July 5; *The Mousetrap*, July 9-26; *The Fantasticks* July 30-Aug. 16; *Beckett Bits*, Aug. 19-23; *Greater Tuna* Sept. 3-6; and closing with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Sept. 24-Oct. 11. Plus *Musical Tuesdays the New Works Showcase* and much more. Info: 229-0492.

And don't forget the Jazz Festival is everywhere downtown.

See you at the theater.

## Vermont artists sought for hospital annual calendar

Artists who live and work in Vermont are invited to submit slides of their paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, crafts, photography and/or mixed media works to be considered for publication in the 1999 edition of Fletcher Allen Health Care's "Vermont-artists-only" calendar, *Celebration of Excellence*.

Vermont artists who would like to submit color slides of their recent work prior to July 2, should send their names and addresses to "A Celebration of Excellence," Communications and Public Affairs Office, Fletcher Allen Health Care, 111 Colchester Ave., Burlington, VT 05401 or call 656-2886.