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Our box office (opens July 1) 508-487-5600

# Lucky break-a-legs

## Theater companies thrive despite creative risks

By Hamilton Kahn  
BANNER STAFF

Lucky for residents and visitors, summer theater is a thriving cultural staple, as it has been here for more than 80 years. And lucky for the theaters, audience interest and support remain strong.

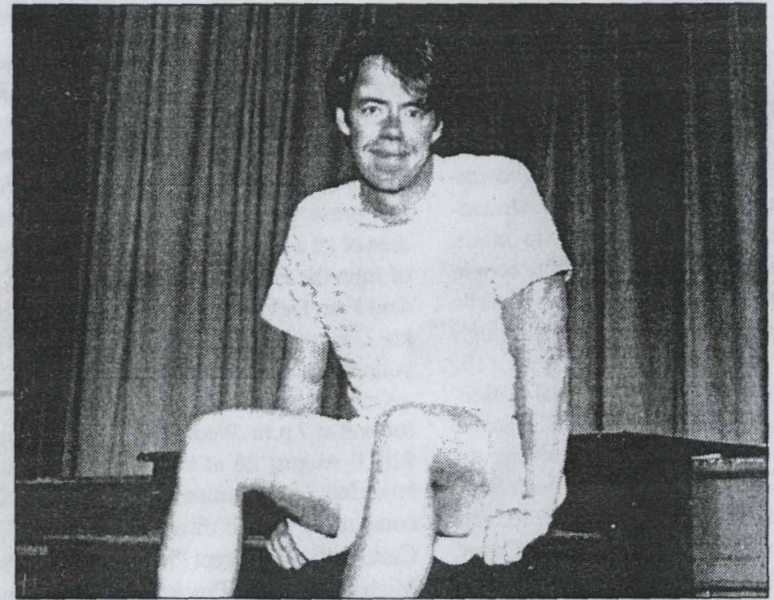
Lucky, because theater has and always will be among the riskiest of all creative endeavors. Expensive and time-consuming to produce, a play comes to full fruition only when the lights go up on opening night. By then, it's too late to do anything but minor tinkering, which is why there is no such thing as a sure-fire hit (just ask Paul Simon and countless others before him). Yet despite these risks and the unpredictability of the summer economy, local theater groups keep taking the plunge again and again — and with a remarkable high degree of success.

Speaking of high, the **Provincetown Repertory Theater**, heading into its fourth season as the Cape tip's resident professional troupe, is almost dizzy from riding waves of success and good fortune toward its goal of building a new theater in Provincetown. Its previous accom-

plishments of bringing famed director Jose Quintero and playwright Edward Albee to town were tough acts to follow, but artistic director Ken Hoyt keeps coming up with toppers, including this month's gala benefit at Boston's Shubert Theater, starring Julie Harris, Hume Cronyn, Kim Hunter and Lee Grant. The centerpiece of its upcoming season are a play and appearance by Paula Vogel, winner of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for playwriting for her play, "How I Learned to Drive." Vogel's comedy, "The Minneola Twins," directed by Ronn Smith, opens PRT's season at the Provincetown Museum (adjacent to the Pilgrim Monument on High Pole Hill) and runs from July 18-August 2. In addition, Vogel, a long-time visitor to Provincetown, is expected to conduct a playwriting seminar (details to be announced later). Next up is the world premiere of a one-man play by PRT company member Marc Wolf entitled "Another American: Asking and Telling," directed by Tom Demenkoff, running from August 13-30. It's described as a "poignant and startling look into the debate and personal issues" surrounding the issue of gay men and lesbians in the military. The season wraps up in September with a return

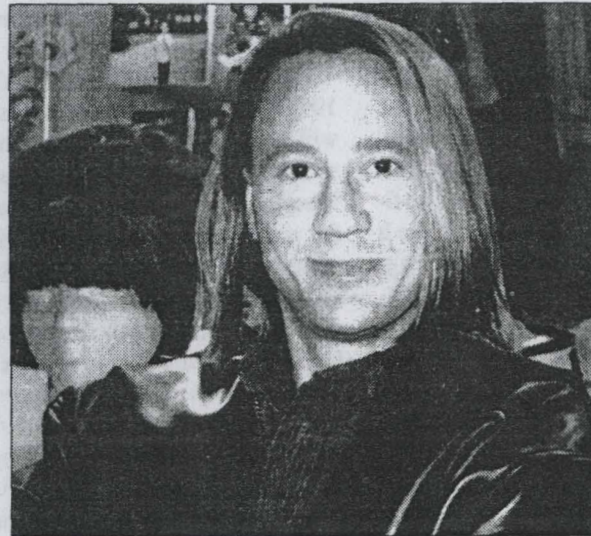
to the town's theatrical roots — a production of Eugene O'Neill's two-character drama "Hughie," directed by Laura Josephsen, about a small-time gambler's confessions to a hotel night clerk. A distinguishing characteristic of this production will be a filmed rendition of the lead character's thoughts, which were precluded from inclusion in early versions of this work. The play runs from September 10-27. For ticket

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Banner file photos

Provincetown Rep's Ken Hoyt keeps coming up with ways to top himself.



Gregory Henderson returns to town this season with his renamed one-man show "Whirlwind," at the Universalist Meeting House.



Marjorie Conn is back at the Provincetown Inn, performing "Lorena Hickok" and Wallace Shawn's "The Fever."

continued from previous page

Jonathan Reynold's comedy "Stonewall Jackson's House," directed by Daisy Walker. The implausible plot concerns an African-American tour guide who offers himself as a slave to an Ohio couple visiting the Confederate general's home. It runs Wednesdays through Sundays, July 22-August 15. Samuel Beckett's existential masterpiece, "Waiting for Godot," directed by Jeff Zinn (see accompanying story), runs Wednesdays through Sundays, from August 21-Sept. 13, and the cast includes Dan Joy, Casey Clark, Julie Perkins and Ed Swiddy. Wrapping things up in the fall will be "Nixon's Nixon," a comedy by Russell Lees, starring Stephen Russell in the title role and, perhaps, WHAT's artistic co-director Gip Hoppe as Henry Kissinger (depending on the availability of Hoppe, whose plays "Jackie" and "Future Hollow" are in the process of being produced in England, Germany and Los Angeles). For tickets and other information call 349-6835.

Now in its 35th season, the **Provincetown Theatre Company** is offering something for everyone in its ambitious and varied season. First out of the gate is "The Tranny Chase," by Les Simpson, directed by Michael Soldier, an award-winning black comedy about drag queens and the straight men who chase after them. It will be the first play ever staged at the 200-year-old Atlantic House, 6 Masonic Place, and the cast features female imper-

sonators Joanna James and Jona Williams, the reigning Miss Gay Massachusetts. It runs Monday nights, June 8-Sept. 7, with curtain time at 7 p.m. In another first, PTC will present a production for "children of all ages" entitled "The Forest of John the Fox," by Wellfleet resident Fran DeVasto, whose Periwinkle Players have been entertaining youngsters in Wellfleet for the past several summers. It will be performed at 7 p.m. Wednesdays from July 8-August 26 at the Provincetown Inn, One Commercial St. The company's artistic director, Roger Cacchiotti, will direct "Message to Michael," by Tim Pinckney, an urban, gay, bittersweet romantic comedy running Thursday through Sundays, July 9-26 at 8 p.m. at the Provincetown Inn. Steve Martin's successful comedy "Picasso at the Lapin Agile," directed by Gary Palmer, runs August 6-23 at 8 p.m. at the Inn, and it concerns a fictional 1904 encounter between the artist and Albert Einstein in Paris. The final offering of the season is "Give It Up," written and performed by English actress Maggie Barrett and directed by Charles Manyan. Recently showcased at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City, the play is described as being about "survival, choices and the art of finding a place to belong in the world." It runs August 27-31, with performances at 8 p.m. at the Inn. For ticket information call 487-8673.

Marjorie Conn's **C.A.P.E. Theater**, also at the Provincetown Inn, will provide the space for several

shows in a season running from June 29 to Labor Day, including the one-woman show, "Lorena Hickok and Eleanor Roosevelt: A Love Story," starring Conn and back for its fifth season in Provincetown after a successful cross-country tour. Conn will also be performing Wallace Shawn's one-person play, "The Fever," three times a week, while R.F. Griffith and Ellen Mulrone will star in "The Diary of Adam and Eve" on Sundays and Mondays at 7 p.m. Daniel Haben Clark will direct his own play, "Tiny and the Size Queen," about a hustler "somewhat unqualified for his profession," from July 2-Sept. 5. Also in the works are new plays by Fran Arenson, a.k.a. Roxanne, and Ruth Greenblatt (details to be announced later). For tickets and further information call 487-2666.

Fans of Gregory Henderson's 1995 hit "Big Wind on Campus" will be pleased to hear about the show's return to the **Universalist Meeting House**, 236 Commercial St., under its new name, "Whirlwind." In the years since its Provincetown premiere three years ago, the one-man, multiple-character comedy, directed by Joseph Massa, has revised its script, added a character, and earned accolades in New York City, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Miami and other U.S. cities, and from here it's headed back to New York for a production by the Turnip Theater Company. It runs Thursdays through Mondays, June 18-Sept. 7, with performances at 8 p.m. For tickets and informa-



*Marc Wolf will perform "Another American: Asking and Telling" for Provincetown Rep from August 13-30.*

Further up the Cape, the **Academy of Performing Arts**, 120 Main St., Orleans, will benefit from two performances this Friday and Saturday, May 22 and 23, by famed actress and Cape resident Julie Harris, who will be reading a new one-woman play, "Staying on Alone: The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas," assembled by literary scholar Bruce Kellner. (Tickets are \$35.) Next up is John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men," directed by Adona Butler, which runs from May 29-June 6, with Friday and Saturday performances at 8 p.m. and a 2 o'clock matinee on Sunday, May 31. The rest of the summer schedule includes "Gilbert & Sullivan's 'H.M.S. Pinafore'" (June 18-July 4), the musical "Grease" (July 9-August 1), "Broadway '98" (August 6-Sept. 5) and the musical "Gypsy" (Sept. 10-Oct. 3). In addition, the Academy will present "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp" at Nauset Re-

gional High School in Eastham at 10 a.m. Fridays from July 10-August 21. For ticket information and reservations call (508) 255-1963.

The **Cape Rep Theatre**, Route 6A, Brewster, has a chock-a-block summer schedule consisting of Arthur Miller's "A View From the Bridge" (Thurs.-Sun. through June 14), the musical "Once Upon A Mattress" (July 2-25), Neil Simon's "The Sunshine Boys" (August 4-22) and Ariel Dorfman's "Death and the Maiden" (Sept.-1-26). In addition, Cape Rep's outdoor theater will present "Rapunzel and the Witch" on Tuesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m., June 30-Sept. 4, and on Mondays July 13, 20, and August 17 and 24 at 8 p.m., as well as "The Bremen Town Musicians" at 10 a.m. Wednesdays from July 1-Sept. 2. For ticket information and reservations call (508) 896-1888.

# PROVINCETOWN BANNER

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PROVINCETOWN BANNER

MAY 14, 1998

## Boston gala gives big boost to the provincetown

By Hamilton Kahn  
BANNER STAFF

If there were any doubts remaining about Ken Hoyt's dream of building a professional theater in Provincetown, they were vaporized by the "One Night Only" benefit for the Provincetown Repertory Theatre held Monday night at the Shubert Theatre in Boston.

A capacity crowd of approximately 1,600 turned out for a remarkably varied and moving evening of entertainment featuring legendary performers Julie Harris, Hume Cronyn, Kim Hunter and Lee Grant, along with up-and-coming Broadway singing star Lauren Ward, and members of the PRT company.

With the Shubert stage adorned with a gigantic version of PRT's wave logo, emcees Joyce Kulhawik and Gerry Studds got things going, with Studds calling Provincetown, his part-time home, a "historic, magical and wonderfully idiosyncratic community." The Cape's former Congressman, Studds added that it was a night of firsts: his first time sharing the billing with WBZ-TV entertainment reporter Kulhawik, his first time in 25 years "on the legitimate stage instead of the theater of the absurd," and the first time a Provincetown theater company "had enough gumption and support to make it to Boston and land center stage at the Shubert."

Following greetings from event

co-chair Josiah Spaulding, president of the Wang Center for the Performing Arts (where the after-gala reception was held), Studds introduced Emmy and Oscar-winning actress Lee Grant, who currently works as a documentary film producer. Grant referred to theater as a "religion" and spoke of a recent interview with Vanessa Redgrave she found inspiring. "That same sense of mission is what [PRT artistic director] Ken Hoyt and Provincetown Rep have," Grant said. "The resurrection of Provincetown theater is a gut reaction to its past and is pushing that past into the future."

Lauren Ward, a member of the cast of the current Broadway revival of the musical "1776," wowed the crowd with her flawless vocal technique in a song from that show entitled "He Plays the Violin," accompanied by violinist Irina Muresanu and pianist Michael Baitzer from the Boston Conservatory. (Ward and Baitzer later returned for another song from a new musical, "Violet," which got off to a rough start when Ward twice forgot the words and had to start over.)

Providing a link with another icon of Provincetown Theater history was Kim Hunter (subbing for the otherwise engaged Patricia Neal), who played Blanche deBois in the original production and film version of Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" (although the role that got the biggest hand during her introduction was that of Dr. Zira in

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"Planet of the Apes"). Hunter read several of Williams' poems, which she said were unfairly overshadowed by his plays.

With Jason Robards unable to attend because of illness, famed actor Hume Cronyn filled in admirably, reciting short poems by Ogden Nash and A.E. Housman and performing a long monologue by the character Richard Crookback from Shakespeare's "Henry VI, Part III" — all entirely from memory. An impish, youthful presence despite his advanced age, Cronyn finished with a poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay and also introduced the audience to the former Susan Cooper, whom he recently married following the death of his long-time wife, the actress Jessica Tandy.

After Hoyt took the stage briefly to offer thanks to the theater and gala's many supporters, PRT actors Alison Crowley, Jerry O'Donnell and William Devany performed a scene from O'Neill's one-act, "Ile," which Jose Quintero directed in Provincetown two summers ago. Then PRT capital campaign co-chairs Alix Ritchie and Anton Schiffenhaus took to the podium, with Ritchie speaking of Provincetown's history and unique qualities, and Schiffenhaus urging the audience members to lobby for government funding for the arts.

The evening wrapped up with a remarkable star turn by Julie Harris, who performed an extended excerpt from "The Belle of Amherst," the

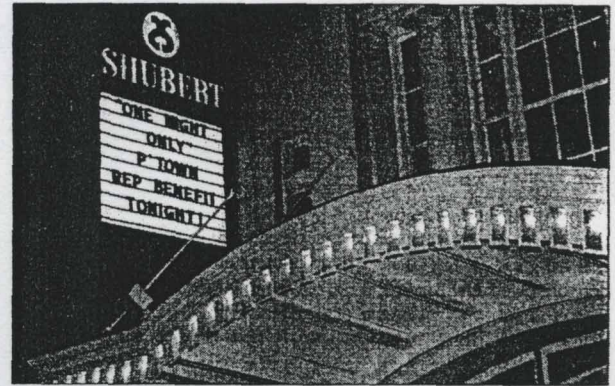


Photo Hamilton Kahn

Provincetown makes the marquee at the Shubert on Monday.



Hume Cronyn and PRT artistic director Ken Hoyt at the reception held at the Wang Center after the gala.

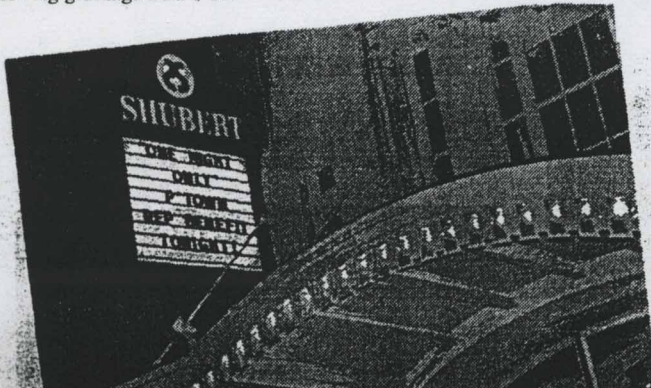
one-woman play about poet Emily Dickinson, for which she won a Tony Award. Harris took the audience on a half-hour emotional roller-coaster ride, which led, inevitably, to

bravos and an extra curtain call.

Kulhawik summed it up nicely in her closing remarks, saying, "We have clearly spent tonight in the presence of greatness."

## Arts: Provincetown Rep makes it big with gala in Boston's theater district

Stage legends Julie Harris and Hume Cronyn thrill capacity crowd at the Shubert



# Arts & Entertainment

## Paula Vogel in the driver's seat Playwright's career has hit high gear since winning Pulitzer

By Hamilton Kahn  
BANNER STAFF

Paula Vogel's so buzzed these days, she's given up coffee.

For most 46-year-olds, the prospect of hopping continents, meeting high-pressure deadlines, and moving into new creative realms might seem exhausting, at the very least. But for this uniquely upbeat and prolific writer, it's fuel in the furnace — not to mention the culmination of a dizzying upward spiral in her 15-year-plus theatrical career, culminating, for now, with a 1998 Pulitzer Prize for her play, "How I Learned to Drive."

"It's effortless, in fact," Vogel says of the current frantic pace her life has taken, "because I get to spend my days in a room with these wonderful people called actors and directors."

Briefly back in her home state of Rhode Island after returning from the London premiere of "HILTD," Vogel is headed here for Saturday's opening of the Provincetown Rep production of her latest Manhattan-bound play,

"The Mineola Twins," then it's up and off at 6 a.m. the next morning for another "HILTD" opening in Seattle. In August, she's writing the "HILTD" screenplay, and in September she becomes Playwright in Residence at the prestigious Arena Theater in Washington, D.C.

"I'm going to stop going to productions of 'How I Learned to Drive,'" Vogel says, not entirely convincingly. "Except Australia. Oh yes, and Los Angeles. There've been over 50 produced, and I just can't see any more."

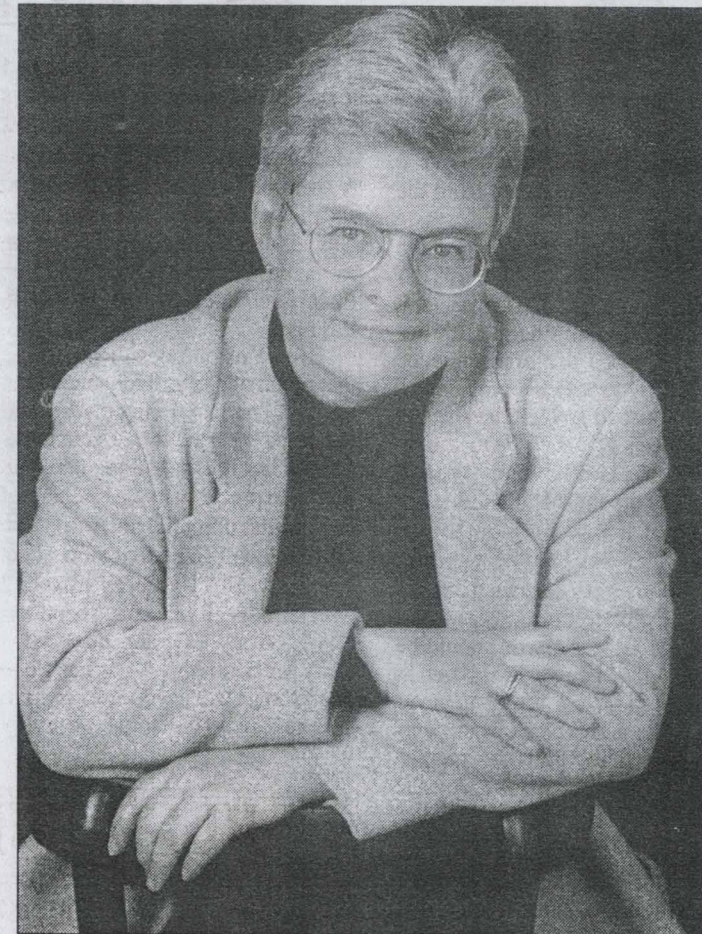
A long-time educator currently on a two-year leave from her job as head of the Master's playwriting program at Brown University, Vogel is a rare combination of depth and accessibility. Her work seems to come from a wellspring of personal experience, yet her ability to connect with both theater-makers and audiences reflects a genuinely outgoing nature.

"For all writers, the inner world represents consciousness and the outer world represents social skills, not unlike the social skills of

a Brown University professor, surrounded by students," Vogel says. "It's so public, not only in talking with the audience and the press, but the work itself is created by many people. The day you stop writing, you're talking with the director, [and] the art director. Really, the creation belongs to them as much as it belongs to you."

Vogel says she loves the collaborative process, including the fact that productions of the same play come out looking very different from each other. "I know the play is working when the director comes up with very different results and it works with an audience," she says. For example, she expects director Ronn Smith, a long-time confidante, to interpret "The Mineola Twins" differently from either the recent Trinity Rep version or the upcoming Roundabout Theatre production in New York. "Every time I write something, he's one of the first to read it," she adds. "We talk as much in our heads as on the phone or in person."

"Mineola Twins" is, Vogel

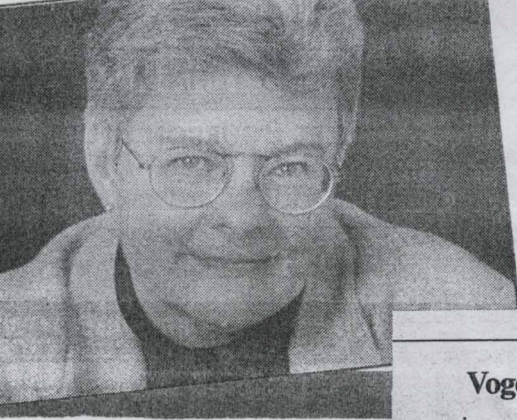


*Paula Vogel's ultimate destination is Provincetown, where she hopes to spend more time down the road.*

says, "probably my most comical play." Written three years ago, it's the story of two "almost twins," spanning three distinct

political/cultural eras — Eisenhower, Nixon and Reagan-Bush. Vogel calls it the outgrowth of a

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## Arts: Paula Vogel proves herself to be a master of modern theater

Pulitzer-winning playwright coming here for opening of "Mineola Twins" at Provincetown Rep

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**Vogel** continued from 33

certain perspective that only comes with what is commonly known as middle age. "I got to the point where I could start look at playwriting that took place over a period of decades," she recalls of the play's genesis. "It was the perfect way of looking at the way we are as Republican and Democrats over the past four decades.... I've said that I wrote it to be played in really bad wigs."

Originally from D.C., Vogel says her first brush with theater came from going to Broadway musicals with her father, but it wasn't until she walked into a high school drama class that she experienced what she remembers as something "similar to falling in love." Attending a Catholic university, she tried her hand at acting briefly ("I was terrible," she says), then moved to the technical side of theater and considered becoming a director before finding her true calling and the creative force behind the final product.

"It was a way of not being present in the room and watching

everybody else," she explains of her gravitation toward playwriting. "I have a politician's instinct, but I've never been an on-stage person. I love people, but I love watching them, not being watched by them." In addition to generating hit plays such as "The Baltimore Waltz," "Hot N' Throbbing," and "The Oldest Profession" (now being made into a movie from her screenplay), Vogel has been busy teaching, first at Cornell and, since 1985, at Brown, where, she says, about half her students have gone on to professional theater careers.

The workload she's been used to carrying has made it easier to cope with her recent success, Vogel says — in fact, the pressure may have eased up a little.

"I'm only working 16-hour days, instead of 18- to 20-hour days," she says. "I feel like there's a big demon off my back, but I'm still working on my playwriting, still finding my place in the theater."

At the moment, Vogel's also finding herself in the movies, which she notes is a very different realm. "Playwriting doesn't have unlimited possibilities," she says. "Also, collaboration doesn't exist for screenwriters.... It's image-based, not dialogue-based." Still, she says, "I'm going to stick with it for a couple of years," and there can be no doubt that the paydays offset whatever sacrifices are entailed.

Where's it all leading her? Well, for one place, to Provincetown, where she visited for many years before buying a house here not long ago. "I'm more and more interested in spending more time on the Cape," Vogel says. "I have a five- to 10-year goal of living there all the time."

## "White Night" opens company's 4th season

To mark the opening night of its fourth season as the town's resident professional theater, the Provincetown Repertory Theatre will present "A White Night" reception this Saturday on the grounds of the Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum. The event, which includes winning, dining and dancing to the 16-piece band Stage Door Canteen, begins at 9 p.m., following an early 7 p.m. performance of Paula Vogel's "The Mineola Twins." In attendance will be Vogel, director Ronn Smith, and members of the cast, including

Provincetown Rep artistic director Ken Hoyt, Alison Crowley, M. Lynda Robinson, Marc Wolf and John Butterfield. Combined tickets for the performance and reception (where guests are encouraged to wear white) cost \$125 (\$100 for the reception only) and may be reserved by calling 487-0600. "Mineola Twins" continues through August 2, with performances at 8 p.m. at the Provincetown Museum.

# "The Mineola Twins," kooky, caustic comic book

By Joe Dziemianowicz

Golly. For two women who share the same DNA, identical twins Myrna and Myra sure don't have much in common. In fact, they are as different as night and day, black and white, left and right, flat-chested and busty, good and bad.

And Paula Vogel's "The Mineola Twins" — the kooky, caustic live comic book-cum play being performed by the Provincetown Repertory Company at the Provincetown Monument and Museum through August 2 — points up this gap from the get-go.

"Twins" begins in the 50s. Myrna, a 17-year-old hopeful for a Homemakers of America Award, is determined to stay pure until she weds her boyfriend, Jim. Considering that she's got a bod for sin and an eager-to-please nature, that's not easy.

On the other hand, Myra is nothing if not easy. Achingly restless from living in a town so dull Communists wouldn't even bother bombing it, this bad-to-the-bone gal's got no intention of saving herself for anything — or anybody. She's scored touchdowns with the entire football team, been repeatedly pinned by wrestlers and even let loose on the links with the golf team.

It probably comes as no surprise, then, that Myrna and Myra have major hate-ons for each other. So much so, each dreams (four nightmares are relived during the play) of having the other go kablooey in an explosion or totally nuts in a mental meltdown.

Ironically enough, however, the more the twins do to separate themselves from each other, the more they find their lives irrevocably entwined as the play bobs and weaves through four decades worth of politics, sexuality (homo and hetero), social mores and much, much (maybe too much) more.

Like the clever rotating set by Van Santvoord, questions that emerge by the end of the play about who's good, who's bad, and, well, who's who will have your head spinning.

However, there's no question that Alison Crowley — under the direction of Ronn Smith, who deserves kudos for keeping the action moving at a breakneck pace — is doubly delicious in the title roles. Whether she's playing a twentysomething Myra as a pot-smoking bank robber on the lam from the law or a fortysomething Myrna as an ultraconservative radio shock jock, Crowley's performance is filled with a physical and emotional abandonment that is brain-dizzying, dazzlingly disarming and downright hilarious.

While "Twins" other actors also carry off double duty, they have far less to do than Crowley. In spite of the Huh?-Factor inherent in casting a woman as a man (monkeying around with what it means to be male or female? a "Yentl" fetish?), M. Lynda Robinson gives a good performance as Myrna's beau, Jim. Robinson's comfort level — and believability — get a big boost when she shows up later as Myra's lesbian lover, Sarah.

Meanwhile Ken Hoyt, PRT artistic director, shines as Myrna's son Kenny and Myra's son Benjamin, two boys, who, perhaps unsurprisingly in the context of the play, prefer the worldview — as well as the company — of their aunt to that of their mother.

It's worth mentioning that "The Mineola Twins" is Broadway bound. A production is planned for

January at the Roundabout Theater, according to a recent story in "Variety." In that interview, it was mentioned that Vogel, who won a Pulitzer Prize (and numerous other awards) for "How I Learned To Drive," is well aware that great expectations await her next work.

That said, it's also worth mentioning that "Twins" was written before "Drive."

"I'm now hoping people will allow me to rewind the tape," said Vogel in that story. "With *Mineola Twins*, I'm not doing 'Long Day's Journey Into Night': I'm doing 'Ah, Wilderness!'"

Ah. While much of "The Mineola Twins" is on target and terrifically funny, some scenes seem superfluous. For instance, there's an ongoing gag about shock therapy (why is that funny?) and a too-long, ultimately unproductive spiel about sperm. In the end, "The Mineola Twins" could benefit if some of the tape — just some, mind you — was erased.

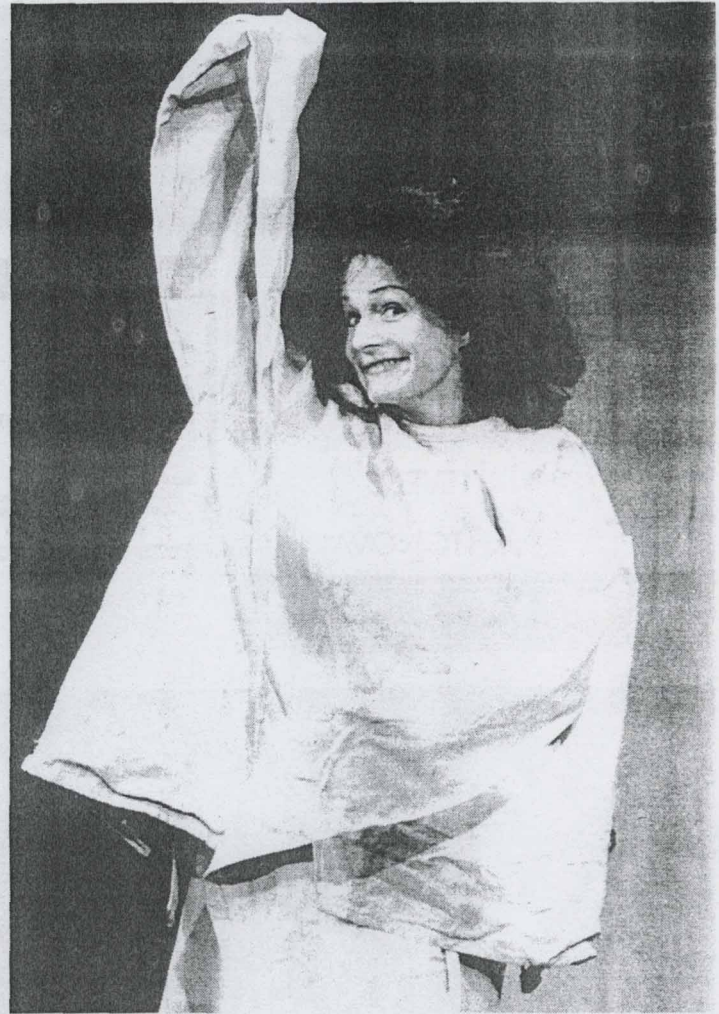


Photo by Vincent Guadagno

Alison Crowley in "Mineola Twins"

# "Mineola Twins" is mostly on the mark

By Timothy XX Burton  
BANNER STAFF

In America, popular culture has encapsulated our never-ending metamorphosis from past to present. Through a wide range of media, artists have striven to document the political, spiritual, emotional and sexual growth held within the borders of our country. Pulitzer-prize winning playwright Paula Vogel's new play, "The Mineola Twins," takes a stab at the same issue, thrusting at the heart of the country's constantly shifting systems of belief from the 1950s to the 1980s. Using comedy as her saber, Vogel scores a number of well-placed hits. Her accuracy is coupled with an almost equal number of misguided jabs, which creates a strange balance that softens the sparkle of a potentially hard-hitting show.

In a move to capture a sense of middle America from the time of Eisenhower up until the Reagan-Bush era, Vogel focuses on Mineola, N.Y., and for teenage twins who are growing up there in the '50s, things ain't so great. Myra (Alison Crowley) cares so little about her goody-goody sister, she envisions a scenario where they are separated during an air raid while at school. It becomes apparent, through her violent images, that Myra wouldn't mind if Myrna (also played by Crowley, in a brilliant dual role) disintegrated in the nuclear fallout. Myrna wouldn't have been surprised to hear the sentiments of her "identical" sister and, a few years later, she tells her fiancé, Jim (M. Lynda Robinson), that the devil rocked Myra's cradle when their mother was not around.

At first glance, they seem to be nothing more than the proverbial

"good twin-bad twin" duo. The line between good and bad is not so easily defined as the sisters grow up and their lives become more interwoven even as they struggle to pull them apart. Their sisterly tug-of-war is first played out through Jim, who, desperate to lose his virginity with Myrna, finds himself in a compromising situation with Myra, who has taken up working in a house with an ill-fabled reputation.

As the sisters mature, their animosity toward each other percolates. They pass through the Kennedy-Johnson era on seemingly separate paths, but are thrown together again in the Nixon era. Myrna, who is now prone to mental short circuits, enlists the help of her son Kenny (Ken Hoyt) to aid his Aunt Myra after a bungled crime. She hopes to rid her life of Myra, but Myrna begins to realize that like chronic headaches, her sister is near impossible to get rid of. The two of them ride their seemingly fated course together like chasing roller coasters on dual tracks, going through similar ups and downs at virtually the same time.

Vogel has put a lot into "The Mineola Twins," and, at times, it may be too much. The first act itself deals with nuclear war, chastity, prostitution, Jack Kerouac, communism, the Vietnam war, marijuana, free love and electric shock therapy, to name but a few. Act Two considers the after-effects of these issues only briefly, giving itself room to take up homosexuality, the rise of fundamental Christianity, talk radio, feminism, capitalism and abortion. That's a long

laundry list of topics our country has tried to wade through in four decades, so it's not surprising Vogel would have some difficulty getting through all of them, and others, in two hours.

What softens her occasional sledgehammer-heavy remarks on some topics is Vogel's satiric edge, which, thankfully, she has not spared. Lines such as "Women are born the way they are, but men become who they are" are nice little

son. Crowley has the comedic timing of a well-crafted pipe bomb, causing each of her lines to detonate at exactly the precise moment. Even when the direction of the script causes disorientation, she provides a steady enough touch to make the voyage enjoyable.

Crowley is a hard act to match on stage and her fellow actors fall below her high water mark. Robinson, a woman, plays Jim, a man, to mediocre success. Having a

woman play a man creates a wealth of opportunities to comment about gender, but Robinson does

not always take advantage. Her "maleness" is defined more by her clothes than her manner, as if she's not entirely convinced herself she's a man. Portraying a man is more than smoking a pipe or walking with a wide gait, much as portraying woman is more than batting eyelids or swinging hips. Every once in a while, this notion appears to click for Robinson, but not often enough. However, as Sarah in Act Two, Robinson exhibits a level of ease that makes you long for such a sense in her earlier male role.

Hoyt, portraying the young counterculture Kenny, looks the part, but also seems uncomfortable in that role. His body looks tightly wound, even though his words speak of how loose he is. In scenes with Crowley as his mother Myrna, her uppity nature is more free-wheeling than the open-minded

values he supposedly stands for, but in Act Two, as Benjamin, the buttoned-down son of Myra, he, too, performs with such ease, it's as if the wig he donned earlier weighed him down.

Director Ronn Smith seems to have placed a majority of attention upon Crowley, which pays off handsome rewards. Smith seems a little less sure of where to lead Robinson and Hoyt at first, and they appear unprepared until the moment their respective roles change. Smith keeps the show moving at a good clip, however, and has the actors utilize space in an optimum manner, a space beautifully designed by Van Santvoord. Santvoord's work compliments the fine work of sound designer Johnna Doty.

"The Mineola Twins" bills itself as a comedy in "six scenes, four dreams and six wigs," all of which is totally accurate. Vogel has the essence of a really intriguing play, one that, with work and time, could shift into a thought-provoking piece of commentary, but it should not be surprising that Vogel does not always come away with a bull's eye for every topic she tries to nail down. Much like the styles and lengths of hair that have changed drastically over the past five decades, so too have the moral, sexual and political landscapes of the country. It stands to reason that even the best hairdresser in town would have a hard time moving from a bouffant to a shag to a page boy to a bob without getting a few hairs out of place.

## Theater review

barbs that stick in our concept of gender roles. But Myra, who tells a sobbing trick during her stint in sex work that she is "making up her life from scratch," is a solid example of a woman who is completely creating the person she will become.

Any playwright's humorous lines of dialogue are worth nothing more than ink drying on a page if there isn't an actor who can breathe humor into it. "The Mineola Twins" has been blessed with such an actor in the Provincetown Repertory Theatre production presented at 8 p.m. Tues.-Sun through Aug. 2 at the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum. As evidenced by the opening night performance, Crowley is nothing short of terrific. Essentially, the show resides upon her shoulders, and she has no trouble carrying the weight. Her interpretations of Myra and Myrna are similar enough to be slightly confusing — as can be the case when both twins are known, but only one is seen — yet distinct enough to make each her own per-

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# "Another American" offers compelling tales of the untold

By Susan Grilli

## ◆ THEATER REVIEW ◆

In the Provincetown Repertory Theatre's world premiere production of "Another American: Asking and Telling," actor-author Marc Wolf attempts to refocus the spotlight on what he considers the neglected issue of Article 31 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice — commonly known as the "don't ask, don't tell" clause. The solo work is lifted verbatim from interviews with those whose lives have been directly affected by the issue of gays and straights serving together in the military.

The production opens with a pre-show tape of an elementary classroom recitation of The Pledge of Allegiance, military service ballads, and a rendition of "This Land is My Land," which leads into an opening dialogue between an older couple wavering in their decision to "tell." Next we meet a young gay serviceman who is giving Wolf a tour of his base, followed by Wolf as himself as he shortcuts through standard theatrical revelation by explaining what, why, and a bit of who we are about to meet.

As the evening moves on, the audience is confronted with a deluge of the heartbreaking narratives of the abhorrent activities of the military in regard to sexual orientation. We meet a young serviceman who refused to betray his colleagues, was subsequently imprisoned and while imprisoned set up in a situation in which he was beaten and raped by a person infected with the AIDS virus. We meet a woman, who, following a dismissal based on sexual

court-mandated to return to her position and rank. We meet a lesbian nurse who describes her work with the injured and dying in Vietnam, and others whose ruthless sincerity contribute to the powerful message in this piece.

Three narratives stand out from the rest, however, and it is out of the stories of these individuals that the work goes beyond a litany of victimization at the hands of the military.

The first of these is the story of Brandon, who as a child, cried when he realized that "Mickey the Pedophile" was going to be beaten to a pulp for buying him a slice of pizza. The second outstanding narrative is that of a male soldier, who went by the name Mary Alice. You could easily observe the audience's relief when Mary Alice humorously described his combat experiences — his comic relief is also indicative of an indomitable spirit because Mary Alice plays against the stench of war and the vulgarities of government without losing effectiveness.

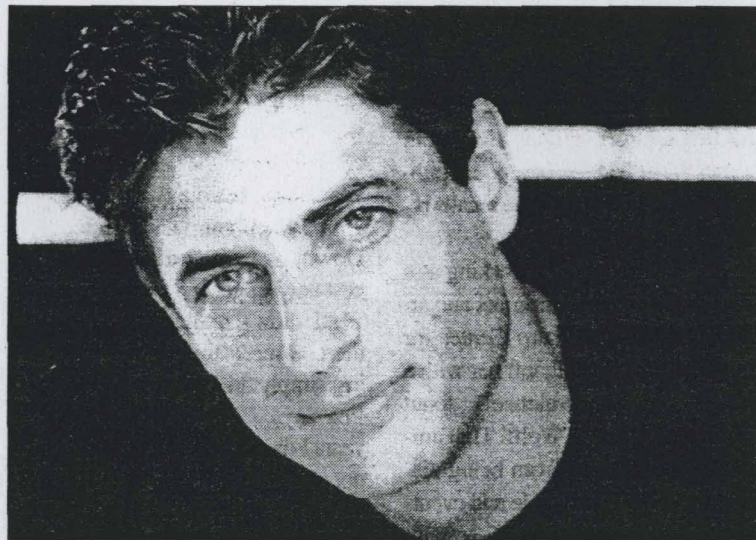
The third subject is found in the second act, which as a whole is more cohesive and fluid than the first. Here we listen to the sorrow of the mother of Alan Schindler, who was beaten beyond recognition and

murdered by his Navy colleagues shortly before his discharge from service. Mrs. Schindler is today one of the most sought-out speakers on gay rights issues.

Heroes like Mary Alice and Mrs. Schindler are pictures of the human being's will to survive. They've chosen to play against the worst sorrow by raising their voice or decorating a bunker. Injustice is not unique in its attack on sexual orientation. Betrayal, whether it be familial or governmental is an age old theme. When a theatrical piece works — when it inspires — it is because it plays against the obvious. It becomes the hero.

On the whole, the production seems to evoke the response the author intends. Wolf the actor, who has previously appeared with the Provincetown Repertory Theatre as Carl in "Lonely Planet" and Benjamin in Albee's one-act play "Sand," has been diligent in his study of his character's physical nuance, speech, and regional affectations and carries off most roles effectively. Particularly well done are Brandon and Mary Alice, and a lovely moment between the two "down on the farmers" in the second act.

Wolf's director/developer, Tom



*Playwright-actor Marc Wolf shows the human cost exacted by the military's anti-gay attitudes in "Another American."*

Demerkoff, does a fine job with this work. His ability to streamline movement and capture each transition in gesture and sound is superb. The set design created by Jeffrey S. Davis is very succinct and invokes a cold and militaristic image of the

United States.

Wolf has been given gifts from his subjects but he has been given a responsibility as well that needs to be met, to go beyond the specifics and find the commonality, character and revelation essential to any play.

# 'Another American' powerful statement

By K.C. MYERS  
STAFF WRITER

PROVINCETOWN — "It was hot, I mean hot," shrieks a man nicknamed "Mary Alice" by his fellow soldiers during Vietnam.

Mary Alice cut off his camouflage fatigues as high as they could go. He also decorated the tents, adding "a little 'fancy sis' touch to the bunker."

This soldier may be comically affected, but one cannot deny what he went through in the war: the 130-degree heat, dropping out of helicopters into rice paddies filled shoulder-deep with water.

## THEATER REVIEW

"Some days you don't come back with all your friends," he says, tearing up.

In Provincetown Repertory Theater's stunning one-man play, "Another American," writer and actor Marc Wolf uses interviews with 100 gays and lesbians in the military to move beyond the superficial "don't ask, don't tell" political joke of President Bill Clinton's early years.

Sparing the audience clumsy costume changes and corny voices, Wolf uses subtleties of speech, accents and mannerisms to recreate some of the most incredible characters affected by the U.S. policy.

Sgt. Miriam Ben Shalom, the first openly gay woman ever to be re-enlisted in the military after a court order, is one shining example. When he is in her fierce persona, Wolf appears to be 10 feet tall while his voice booms with her commanding pride.

## ON STAGE

■ **WHAT:** "Another American: Asking & Telling"

■ **PRESENTED BY:** Provincetown Repertory Theatre

■ **WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY:** Marc Wolf

■ **DIRECTED BY:** Tom Demenkoff

■ **WHEN:** 8 p.m. shows through Aug. 30

■ **WHERE:** Provincetown Pilgrim Monument & Provincetown Museum, High Pole Hill Road

■ **TICKETS:** \$17

■ **RESERVATIONS:** 487-5600

The characters are presented by Wolf exactly as they spoke to him during the interviews, so when Sgt. Ben Shalom corrects herself about a date, she points to an invisible notebook and commands, "Wrong date!"

This device allows the audience to glimpse personality between the words. More importantly, viewers experience the raw moment of discovery that Wolf himself must have felt hearing these stories for the first time.

Wolf gave up soap-opera stints and other roles to write this play, and his passion for the cause could help explain the talent and brilliance of his performance.

"If there is one thing I've learned from this century, it's don't be

quiet. Don't let someone else make decisions for your community," he says at the beginning of the play.

Wolf clearly sympathizes with the gay men and women. But he also respects the likes of David Hackworth, a decorated Vietnam veteran who speaks against the war and who also opposes gay people in the military.

Hackworth discussed P.F.C. Ganna, an 18-year-old who was always beaten by other squad members.

It turns out that he was having oral sex with every guy in the squad, Hackworth relates. "The conflict was, they got it on with Ganna and then they felt guilty and beat up on him. ... Gays are bad because it broke up my squad."

This is a play about politics, but Wolf wastes no time preaching. His body and voice become an instrument through which an orchestra of human voices emerges.

There is the man who went to prison, where he was raped by an HIV-positive inmate because he did not turn in other gay enlisted men.

Meet Professor Charles Moskos, the military sociologist who developed the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

"My argument," he says between fingerfuls of Mexican food, "is, in a way, two cheers for hypocrisy."

The most incredible character of all is the mother of Allen Schindler, who relates through tears how her son was beaten to death, beyond recognition, by his fellow men on a Navy ship because he was gay.

This play is as powerful as it is important. You may decide not to see it because you think it's not about you, because you're not gay.

But the message you'll come away with will be much different: Politics is personal. This country is not always fair.

But then again, many war veterans already know that.

# Gamble doesn't pay off for Provincetown Rep's "Hughie"

By Hamilton Kahn  
BANNER STAFF

## THEATER REVIEW

If looks were all that mattered, Provincetown Rep's "Hughie" would be a winner. The pieces are all there — the stylish, angled set design, sharp costuming, moody lighting, and projected background of slides and video. But it never comes to life, making this production almost as much a loser as its main character, a hard-drinking gambler named Erie who wiles away the lonely hours talking to the Night Clerk at the hotel where he lives.

It begins with much promise — the Clerk (Robert T. Dillon) is at the front desk, his leg swaying in time with the ticking of the clock, in a scene right out of an Edward Hopper painting. The sharp-suited Erie (Steven Goldstein) enters, and launches into a long soliloquy about how he's come off a hard drunk, and how his luck with the horses just hasn't been the same since the death of the former Night Clerk, whose name was Hughie. As he talks, the new Clerk stays mostly silent, but the projected images show what's going on in his mind, drawing on bits and pieces of what he's hearing or just zoning out with repetitive images, such as water lapping against a pier. The denouement, such as it is, comes when Erie realizes that this new Clerk can be just as much of a good luck charm, and needed companion, as

his predecessor. It's a fairly simple premise, one that leaves a lot of room for the power of language, performance and presentation, but all three founder here.

Steven Goldstein, whose professional credits include work on and off-Broadway and in television and movies, never gets a handle on the character of Erie, or even his New York accent, strongly suggesting a lack of adequate preparation. Talking out of the side of his mouth and using a limited repertoire of hand movements, Goldstein delivers his lines haltingly and without conviction, and Laura Josepher's static direction allows him little opportunity to build physical momentum.

Robert T. Dillon, as the Clerk, has a much less difficult job, but to his credit, he does it well; his comportment and distraction seem completely genuine, as does his eventual engagement, such as it is. But Eugene O'Neill crafted this play to be carried almost entirely on Erie's shoulders.

Perhaps things might go better if the images of the Clerk's thoughts had more presence of their own, but Hugh Morris's crudely filmed black-and-white vignettes, alas, are either too obvious or incomprehensible. There are

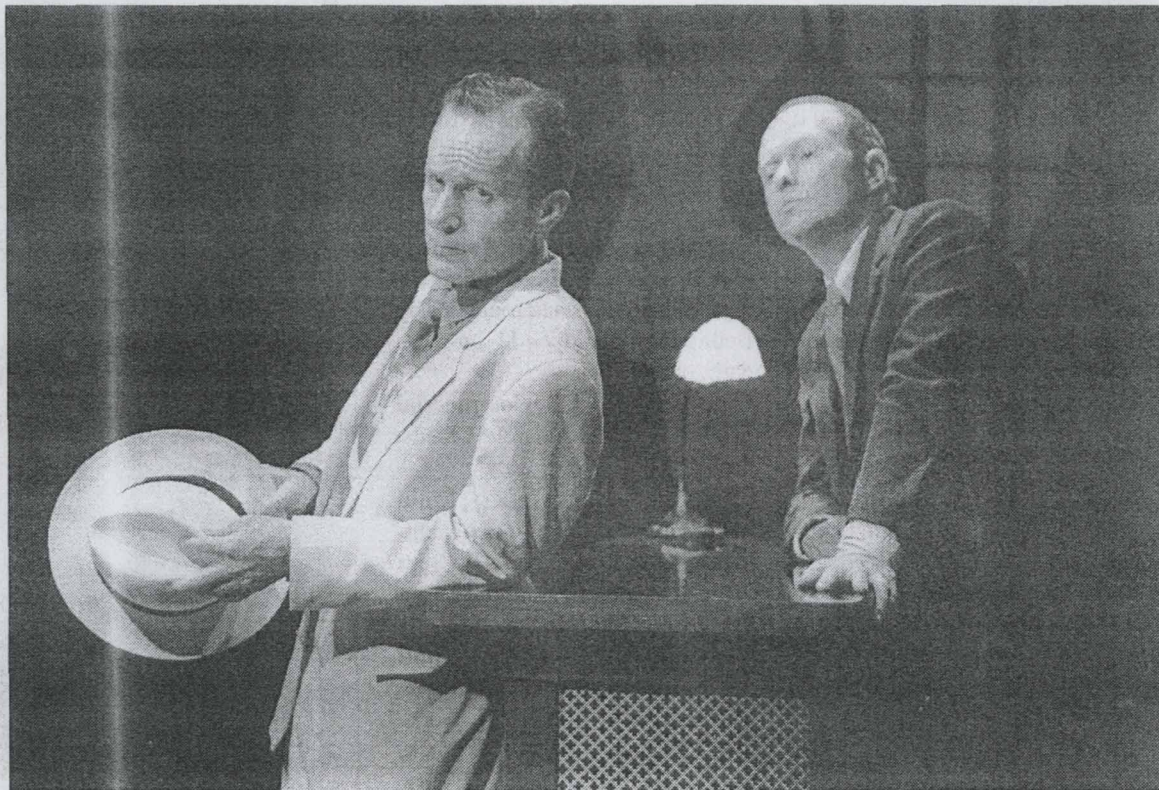


Photo Vincent Guadagno

Steven Goldstein and Robert T. Dillon in the Provincetown Rep production of Eugene O'Neill's "Hughie."

long stretches of nothing but feet walking on the pavement, and passing shots of faces and places whose meaning is either unclear or of little interest. Rather than enhance the on-stage monologue, they wind up being more of a distraction, and not the illuminating and, one suspects, darkly whimsical one O'Neill envisioned.

Van Santvoord's set is the best part of this show, whose technical components — lights, sound,

slides, video — run like clockwork. But despite that professionalism, "Hughie" ends up being a

surprisingly excruciating experience, 55 minutes of theater that seems to go on forever.

## Women sought for play auditions

Auditions will be held for a lesbian play by Jane Chambers entitled "Last Summer at Blue Fish Cove." Eight women in an age range of 25 to 40 years are needed. No acting experience

is necessary. Two performances will be held over Thanksgiving weekend, Nov. 28-29.

For time and place of audition call Dakota at 349-3471.

# Arts & Entertainment

## Filmmaker's a silent partner in PRT production

By Hamilton Kahn  
 BANNER STAFF

*Wanted: Independent filmmaker with a strong background in theater, deep appreciation of silent movie genre, and an ability to produce lavish results on a shoestring budget.*

Such a classified ad, if it existed, would be unlikely to draw many respondents. But for New York-based filmmaker Hugh Morris, the job of creating an original 20-minute black-and-white film for the Provincetown Repertory Theatre production of Eugene O'Neill's one-act play, "Hughie," was almost perfectly suited to his particular skills.

"I grew up backstage, and onstage as well," Morris says, taking a break between technical run-throughs last week. "My father was a director-actor-designer and my mother was an actress and a singer, which is kind of interesting in Illinois. We were just about the only ones in town. I didn't go to school to study film, I've basically been working in it, in theater, in various aspects of the theater, since I was a child. I was always drawn to silent film, in particular. I don't know what it was, there was something very primal about the black-and-white images."

"Hughie," which is set in 1928 and was never performed during O'Neill's lifetime, is problematic because much of the action takes place in the thoughts of the character Erie (Steven Goldstein), who is talking to a hotel night clerk (Robert T. Dillon). It was Province-

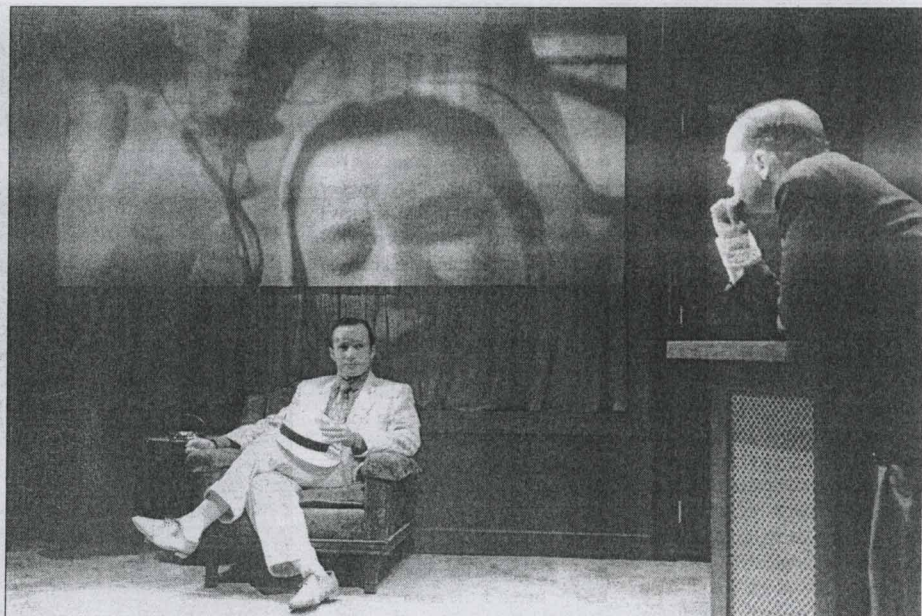
always that specifically — in O'Neill's script. Hoyt was referred to Morris by set designer Van Santvoord, who had already signed on for the production.

"Hughie" opens tonight and runs through Sept. 27 at the Provincetown Museum at the base of the Pilgrim Monument. For ticket information and reservations call 487-5600.

Because the film must start and stop in response to specific cues from the actors, "Hughie," which runs a scant 55 minutes, has turned into what Morris cheerfully described as a "technical monster." Adding to the logistical difficulty is the theater's small size, which necessitated having the video and slide projection equipment backstage, away from the other technical controls (lights, sound).

"If it were just a film, without the human element, it would be fine. It's really like another actor in this case," Morris says. "If nothing else, people will walk away from this and say, 'That was interesting.'"

Morris, who says his all-time favorite silent movie is Keaton's "The General," is putting the finishing touches on his first feature-length silent film, "Beloved Cabbage," which he hopes to have out in Europe and/or making the rounds at film festivals in the not-so-distant future. "I like directing and I like having control of all the different aspects," he says — and therein lies the rub of the "Hughie" project: Morris must mold his artistic vision not only in response to O'Neill's directives but he also must defer to the wishes of director Laura Josepher, who has overall responsibility for the production.



Steven Goldstein (left) and Robert T. Dillon in a scene from "Hughie."

Photos Vincent Guadagno

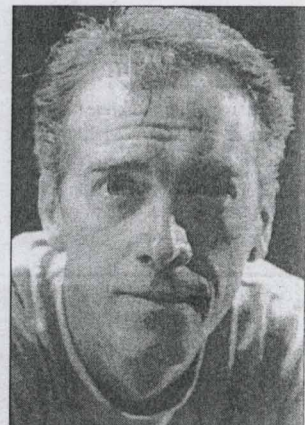
Morris says. "It was an interesting enough project for me to take a back seat. I would have specific images, I tend to think in images. I would give her a call and say right here I would like to have this, and she would say that's a little too much for me, maybe tone it down a little bit."

Because of the power of film and the dominance of a large video screen on the small stage, Morris says he had to work to avoid having his part of the project become dominant. "It can't be so dynamic that it pulls away from the text, which is a little tricky," he says.

Morris was able to make the

most of his small budget by taking advantage of his set-painting job at the Publick Theater in New York, where the company and costume room were routinely raided for shoots on the city streets; no less than 14 actors appear in the film. The PRT has been able to make the most of its friendly relationship with New York University (where set designer Santvoord works) to borrow state-of-the-art video projection equipment for the production.

All in all, an ideal gig for a theater-based filmmaker like Morris. "And my name is Hugh," he adds. "It's just perfect."



Hugh Morris