

STAGE WATCH

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Los Angeles Times

Van Nuys: The Back Alley Theatre's Laura Zucker on Tuesday disclosed plans for two fall plays in repertory. Well, two is just a manner of speaking.

"The first program," Zucker said, "is an evening of 12 short plays, another offshoot of our playwriting workshop, much like last year's '24 Hours.' This one's called 'Hot and Cold' and subtitled 'Plays for All Seasons,' each one dealing with a different month of the year, but they're much more thematically related.

"The other piece is a work-in-progress. Elizabeth Fosythe Hailey has adapted her first novel, 'A Woman of Independent Means,' as a one-woman play, and Barbara Rush and (director) Norman Cohen have been putting it on its feet. I'm not a fan of one-actor plays," Zucker added, "but this doesn't *feel* like one."

Anyone who's read the Hailey novel, written in the form of a lifetime's correspondence, could not repress great expectations. If the play is half as vivid as the book, it will suffice. Nor is it entirely surprising that Hailey's doing this at the Back Alley. She's married to playwright Oliver Hailey, who heads the playwrights' workshop. Cohen and Rush hope to work out the kinks, then move the show into a contract house.

"'Hot and Cold' will run four performances a week," Zucker explained, "and 'Woman' will run two—from Oct. 15 to Nov. 20, with previews starting Oct. 6."

The 14 performances of "Woman" will be benefits for the theater. "We've provided the space," Zucker said, "because that's what we're about. Our playwrights are now more than 120 strong. We had 150 submissions for the 12 slots in 'Hot and Cold.' It was *very* difficult to choose."

"Hot and Cold" is supported by small city and county grants, and the Rockefeller Foundation has made \$3,500 available to the Back Alley in the coming year for a playwriting residency and to defray operating costs.

"That kind of residency is *vital* to the development of lasting new plays," Zucker said. Speaking of which, she and Back Alley co-director Allan Miller travel to London next spring where he will stage a production of his adaptation of D. H. Lawrence's "The Fox."