

Critics Corner

**ARTS** *Music/Theater/Books/Shows***As we see it**

By Herbert G. Luft

**Playgoing**

Barbara Rush, in "A Woman of Independent Means," for many weeks playing to S.R.O. capacity at the Back Alley Theatre before going on with the show to Broadway, renders a virtuoso performance with a magnitude of superlatives one can hardly describe.

In her one-woman show, she is on stage alone for 2½ hours, carrying not only a constant flow of monologue casually made up in the form of letters, but also accentuates each event in a southern belle's life with coquettish gestures, witty asides and genuine sentiments that make you laugh and cry. Before our eyes, the young lady ages from a wide-eyed teenager to a matron of past 75.

Based on the bestselling novel by Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey who has interwoven in her own stage adaptation the platonic relationship of our heroine with a gentle friend, a Jewish financier who helped and advised her whenever necessary — even to the point of endangering his own marriage. This interlude is developed casually and unpretentiously and adds charm and dignity to the unique stage presentation.

"A Woman of Independent Means" was directed by Norman Cohen who last season guided the controversial drama "Desert Fire" at the Coronet Theatre, and produced by the team of Laura Zucker and Allan Miller.