

Los Angeles: Steven Morris

A remarkable production of two quintessentially American one-acts by Romulus Linney under the collective title of *Sand Mountain* appeared at the Back Alley Theatre in the San Fernando Valley. The plays were simple charming self-contained stories based on the folk-lore of the southern Appalachian Mountain people.

The former (*Sand Mountain Match-making*) showed the comic and endearing courtship rituals of four men trying to wed an aging (20 years old) widow. The latter (*Why The Lord Came To Sand Mountain*) was a fable about Jesus as a young man (and his companion, St Peter) visiting a poor mountain couple on a stormy Christmas Eve.

The rhythms and structure of the language portrayed the celtic roots of an American brogue, and the tone and manner of presentation of both plays was like an American amalgam of early Chekhov stories and the plays of John Millington Synge.

Under John Schuck's direction, the traps of cuteness and mugging were meticulously avoided in one of the finest ensemble performances seen recently in L.A., capturing the gentle sweetness of the plays while avoiding the syrup.