

ON STAGE

BY DICK LOCHTE

A WOMAN OF INDEPENDENT MEANS

Rich Drama

This adaptation by Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey of her popular novel has, in its debut at the Back Alley Theater, Barbara Rush as its solo performer. Rush has demonstrated her beauty, charm and acting skills in numerous films and, recently, in the television series *Flamingo Road*, but she has done nothing, to my knowledge, that would indicate an ability to carry a complex and demanding production such as this. Still, carry it she does, convincingly, effortlessly, flawlessly. And touchingly.

Hailey created a heroine whose life unfolds from childhood to old age in a series of diary entries, letters, notations and even a self-penned obituary. This tricky, literary way of telling a story would seem to rule out a theatrical adaptation. But the play and its star, like its heroine, rise to the occasion.

Marriages, deaths of loved ones, wars, peace and a myriad of shocks, surprises, happiness and despair—through them all, Rush, using a minimum of costume changes (here a hat, there a coat) and a maximum of talent, turns the letters, notes and announcements into a flowing narrative that adds up to a full, dimensional life of an extraordinary woman.

Norman Cohen directed this striking play. Marcia Hinds' delicate yet formidable drawing-room set contributes to the mood and, in its way, helps to establish the character of its only occupant. Pam Rank is responsible for the lighting. And Rush's clever costumes (skirts hidden beneath skirts, etc., for quick changes) are the creations of Garland W. Riddle.

The one problem with *Woman* is that it is scheduled to close on approximately the same date that this magazine goes on sale (moving on to New York, in all probability). Unless you act very quickly, you will miss one of the best plays and performances of this season. ★★★★★



Rush in Woman.

★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★ Good ★ Poor
★★★★★ Excellent ★★ Fair