

# The Northridger

September 3, 1987



## BACK ALLEY "BELLES"

(l. to r. backrow): Tracy Shaffer, Deborah Sandlund, Morgan Lofting, Kim Lankford; seated: Denise Gordy, Siobhan E. McCafferty, Lisa Pelikan in *The Early Girl*. Back Alley 1987. (Photo: Ed Krieger.)

The Back Alley Theatre presents the west coast premiere of Caroline Kava's *The Early Girl* will run through

September 27th. *The Early Girl* is a contemporary comedy about the raw tumultuous doings of seven "working girls" in a Midwestern house of prostitution. The play probes beneath the decadent surface of prostitution and, with admirable candor and lack of sentimentality, offers pertinent commentary on the profit motive and the pursuit of being "number one." It was originally produced to

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critical acclaim by Circle Repertory Theatre in New York last fall.

Heading the seven women cast is Lisa Pelikan in the role of the alienated, acerbic Jean, who gave up her college courses "but kept the vocabulary." Ms. Pelikan won a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for her role last year in *Blue Window* at South Coast Rep and the Mayfair Theatre.

Also appearing in the ensemble are Siobhan E. McCafferty as Lily, the new girl (Ms. McCafferty recently appeared in the critically acclaimed revival of *ASHES* at the Zephyr Theatre) and Kim Lankford as Laurel, a prostitute too tired to talk after 37 clients in one night (remembered as a series regular on *Knots Landing*).

Morgan Lofting appears as the Madam, Lana: "Don't get me wrong. I'm crazy about men. I have a lot of men friends, but if we have sex, he pays, that's all. It works out nicely for everyone." Despite Ms. Lofting's many TV credits, she is best known for her extensive voice over work, including the voice of the Baroness on the *GI Joe* cartoon series.

Tracy Shaffer appears as Pat, who acquires electronic hardware as fast as it's invented. Ms. Shaffer has appeared in regional theatre from one end of the country to the other—including Alaska Repertory Theatre. Debra Sandlund appears as George, who makes the mistake of falling for one of the customers; she co-stars with Ryan O'Neal in *Tough Guys Don't Dance* directed by Norman Mailer. Denise Gordy, who is making her stage debut, plays Sally, the newest new girl.

Playwright Kava has found an intriguing metaphor for the ladder climbers of American business and social life. Her setting for *The Early Girl* is a whorehouse, whose inhabitants are at once salesmen and products. The goal is to advance to Number One Girl by posting highest sales. As in any business, not all the participants are willing or able to play the taxing game of aiming for the top. But among those who do, the competition is fierce and individual feelings don't count for much. Nelsen, *Daily News*.

Set design is by Derek McLane, who has designed at the Hartford Stage Company, the Folger Theatre, Indiana Rep, Circle in the Square and Yale Rep. Lighting design is by Ken Lennon (*Days and Nights Within* and *San Mountain at the Back Alley*) and costume design by Meg Gilbert (*Talking Things Over With Chekov* and *The Carney Rod and Gun Club* at the Victory).

*The Early Girl* will play Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at 8 PM with two performances on Sunday at 2 PM and 7 PM. Ticket prices are \$13.50 Thursdays and both shows Sundays, \$15.50 Fridays, and \$17.50 Saturdays.

Talkback, a chance for the audience and artistic staff to exchange views, will follow Thursday performances.

The Back Alley Theatre is located in Van Nuys at 15231 Burbank Blvd., east of the San Diego Freeway. Call (818) 780-2240 for more information.