

Back Alley Theatre play sheds light on ladies of the evening

STAFF REPORT

"The Early Girl," by Caroline Kava, a new actress-turned-playwright, packs a surprise punch.

Though the Back Alley Theatre public relations folk tout the play as, "a contemporary comedy," the lump you'll feel in the middle of your throat by the end of the first act signals that the tragedy element of this drama is no laughing matter.

This slice of life from the most expensive house of prostitution, in an unknown midwestern town, is a far cry from the likes of, "The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas," and other comedies using the same theme.

Kava's play tells us the sometimes funny,

more often poignant story of Lana's tightly run house and the five working girls who service the johns for 40 percent of the take.

The money's not bad considering the charge for oral or vaginal copulation is five dollars a minute and any thing else is extra. Whoever sells the most extras during the month becomes the number one girl and gets an expensive trinket from Lana on Award Night.

Each girl gets a free but mandatory weekly gynecological exam and the four days of her menstrual period off—though she must either remain in the house or travel at least 100 miles out of town.

"My girls are diamonds," raves actress Morgan Lofting as Lana, with a grittingly appropriate, eternally plastic smile, "And you can't find diamonds on the street,"

pause, stretch those already too taunt lips, "Can you?"

One begins to wonder if the girls are really better off in the sterile, neo-sorority house atmosphere than they would be with a pimp, or on their own.

Kava subtly and convincingly touches on other important topics of the human search for self such as: deciding how close you can be with a competitor of any kind and how greed or a lack of faith can trap us into tight little psychological boxes, even smaller

than the neatly decorated rooms of Lana's bordello.

Lisa Pelikan, as Jean, turns out to be the star of the play and gives the most even performance of the ensemble. Kim Lankford skillfully plays the mysterious Laurel. Heri Kava rather cruelly teases the audience hinting at Laurel's revelatory past but in the end, never telling us what it is.

The Back Alley Theatre is located in Van Nuys at 15231 Burbank Blvd. For ticket information, call (818) 780-2240.



The Early Girls—The cast of Back Alley Theatre's production of "The Early Girl" includes (clockwise from back row left) Tracy Shaffer, Deborah Sandlund, Morgan Lofting, Lisa Pelikan, Siobhan E. McCafferty, and Denise Gordy.

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STROTTERS

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