

Actress challenged more than audience

A Woman of Independent Means
by Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey
Leah Posluns Theatre
until Feb. 9

By ZEZA MARQUES

If there is little positive to say about *A Woman of Independent Means* it is for the simple reason that the play communicates nothing. The production is polished and professional, with every aspect of the presentation handled competently, but it is a competence which is, after all, no more than we should expect from a production refined on Broadway and Los Angeles stages.

Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey's script is interesting because it relates the events of a strong-minded woman's life, entirely through her letters. This proves to be an effective framing device for background information, as well as a credible method of revealing the character's innermost thoughts and feelings.

The most noteworthy aspect of the production is the interpretation of this character's journey from blushing bride to senile octogenarian in just over two hours. Barbara Rush proves capable in her solo performance; her vivid storytelling transports us across time and across continents, and peoples the set with characters her voice brings to life.

Unfortunately, thespian pyrotechnics do not conceal the play's serious flaw: its challenge is entirely for the actress, and not for the audience. This 'white bread' theatre—theatre from which all fibre and nutrients have been removed.

What is left may be filling and delicious, but it cannot provide nourishment.

The play is admirably suited to the television audience—an emotional roller coaster of triumph and tragedy, safely confined to the track of prevailing Western ideology.

The greatest value of *A Woman of Independent Means* lies in its power to elicit from the accomplished actress a spellbinding display of technical virtuosity.

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