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Agnes of God

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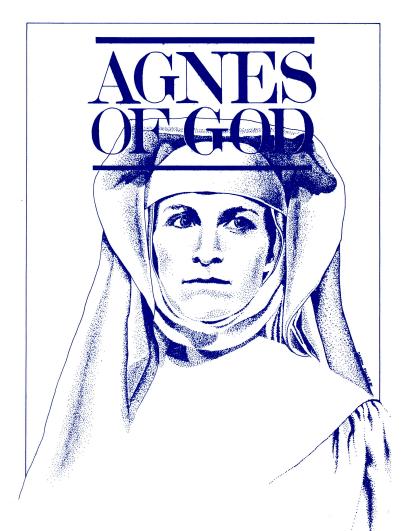
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John Pielmeien's



May 1, 2, 8, 9, 1987 Little Theatre



Recently I was driving across the country at sunset. There had been a fairly severe thunderstorm that day which was in the process of dissipating. Heavy dark clouds were still very much in evidence, but here and there the sun was penetrating them lending an aura of mystery to the scene. Near the horizon the sky was turning pink and gold. In several places the clouds had parted and the edges were tipped with bright white-gold light. Directly in front of me, the rays of the sun actually pierced the clouds sending mysterious shafts of light toward the earth.

John Pielmeier's play is very like that skyscape. The basic plot line is dark and foreboding, dealing with events most of us would rather not think about. However, the darkness is shot through with the golden rays of mystery and faith. The play's meaning exists on a variety of levels. Beyond the surface of the story there is a rich panoply of symbols many of which are drawn from the mysteries of the Church.

The basic structural framework of the play is the Mass itself which is sung by Sister Agnes. Before the action begins we hear her ethereal voice invoking God's presence with the words of the Kyrie: "Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy upon us." A few scenes later, Pielmeier juxtaposes the words of the Gloria, "Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, oh Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit are most high in the glory of God the Father" with Dr. Livingstone's memory of her childhood rejection of Catholicism, thus reinforcing the dramatic tension between belief and non-belief. This tension is further heightened by the words of the Credo: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty...in one Lord Jesus Christ...and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life." This precedes the first verbal duel between Mother Miriam and Dr. Livingstone regarding the nature of faith and scientific rationality. The Sanctus, another paen of praise to the Lord God of Hosts whose Glory fills the earth is interjected between the two women's confessions to each other. Finally, just before the climactic revelation of the final hypnotism scene, Agnes pleads, "Oh Lamb of God,...have mercy upon us. Grant us peace.'

Mother Miriam and Dr. Livingstone share many aspects of their experience, but each has made a choice about how to respond to life. One has run from religion as fast as her mind can take her while the other has embraced faith even in the midst of doubt and unbelief. As the verbal competition progresses, the smoke from Dr. Livingstone's cigarette curls upward. Just as the incense and the smoke from the candles in countless churches has served to remind the faithful of the presence of the spirit in the world, Martha Livingstone's Virginia Slim presents a uniquely modern testament to faith which even she does not understand.

As the play concludes, Agnes raises her hands bearing the stigmata, the visible wounds of Christ, and offers absolution to both women. Despite this application of grace, Dr. Livingstone's faltering steps toward affirmation and faith do not bring easy resolution to life's mystery. She still wants answers. She still wants to believe in an alternate reel that will lead to the promised "happy ever after" ending—the ending that she now acknowledges can never be.

Agnes of God

Directed by Dr. Jessica Rousselow Designed by Dr. Oliver Hubbard

Cast

Doctor Martha Livingstone	Rochelle Manor
Mother Miriam Ruth	. Valerie Flower
Agnes	Angela Gollmer

Time: The Present

There will be a ten-minute intermission between acts

Musical Selections

From the Mass Festis B.	Mariae Virginis 2
Kyrie	Sanctus
Gloria	Ave Maria
Qui Tollis	Agnus Die
Credo	
Composer	Anonymous
Charlie's Neat	Folktune

There will be an open discussion beginning five minutes after the closing curtain. You are invited to stay and talk about the play with the director and actors.

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Acknowledgments

Our special thanks to Dr. Timothy Sharp, Dr. Ronald Sloan and Dr. Richard Stanislaw for their help in preparing the music for this show.

We also appreciate the assistance of the Taylor Health Center, the Print Shop, and Sharon Gray of the Social Work Department.

Our thanks to Darrin Fuller for his copy of Pablo Picasso's Les Demoiselles d' Avignon, 1907, Museum of Modern Art, New York, and to John Hossack for the preparation of the stained glass window.

Furniture has been loaned by Hahn's *Little Colonial Shoppe*, Hartford City, Indiana.

A communication Arts Department Production

Thanks for your support—see you next season!

- Jessica Rousselow

As a courtesy to the actors, please do not use cameras during the performance.

Production Staff

Assistants to the Director Shawna Stoll Kelly Spencer
Technical Director Dr. Oliver Hubbard
Set Crew John Hossack Mike Kennedy Tim Lambert Toby Shope Brian Smith
Light CrewBRIAN SMITH Scott Clarke John Hossack Joe Maniglia Dave Myers
Sound Crew Lee Crawford Philip Roberts
PropertiesROB HARTWELL Tom Verratti
Make-up Crew LISA SNAPP Christine Durrer Tina Fares Heather Long
Costumes STACIA MILLER Cassandra Edgecombe Nancy Plumb
House PHILIP ROBERTS Jen Aldridge Tad Atkinson Heather Long Julie Miner Richard Muthiah Kelly Pool Toby Shope Andy Winters
Program Cover DesignDarrin Fuller