

# Mystery, confusion found in this Quarry

## THEATRE REVIEW

Carolyn Bond

QUARRY, A BRAND-NEW, VERY CLAUSTROPHOBIC thriller, opened Saturday night at the Thousand Islands Playhouse to an appreciative, though puzzled, audience.

Written by a Playhouse stalwart, the very title of the play hints at deep deceptions and doubleness. Yet since every play has a beginning, middle and end, we expect a proper ending – a clearup of alarming mysteries, a clearout of beguiling confusions. And we get it, though some puzzles about the script don't go away.

The opening episode is intriguing and bizarre. Electronic keyboard music, a girl in a freaky outfit (part urban guerrilla chic, part arty dancer) who seems to be performing, not acting. A man enters. The dialogue is utterly mystifying.

With the advent of a third character, a film producer from Vancouver (3,000 miles away, we're told) we begin to grasp the identity of the man (he's a novelist) and the isolation of the grubby room he lives in.

(The set ingeniously suggests a deep cellar, an decrepit old house and a down-and-out's hideaway.)

As the producer presents her proposition – optioning the novel for a film – she begins to press the writer too hard on the whereabouts of Sally (or Angel).

A long discussion with a big theme ensues: Is fiction a thin disguise for fact, and a novel really an autobiography? A good deal of sardonic wit emerges in these exchanges, though in other respects the novelist seems peculiarly unwriterly and the producer a bit more nervous than she should be.

Further, the fact that the girl (presumably Sally/Angel) erupts on the scene intermittently adds a sinister counterpoint to the suggestion that the novelist has killed her off – in fiction and in fact.

Every time she appears, only the novelist (and the audience) sees her. And unlike Banquo's ghost, she's not "blood boltered" but costumed as some figure of male fantasy – a geisha, a saucy schoolgirl, a demure starlet. Her

## Quarry

A play written by Mo Bock.

DIRECTED BY-Gyllian Raby;

SET DESIGN-Katherine Christensen;

LIGHTING DESIGN-Dan Rider

A Thousand Islands Playhouse production playing until Sept. 30. Shows are Tuesday through Sunday at 8 p.m. with matinees Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30 p.m.

## CAST

DAVID WYATT	David Fox
MARNY SIMMS	Brooke Johnson
SALLY WING	Keira Loughran

hostility to him thickens the atmosphere with each appearance.

The audience begins to believe he has dunnit.

The novelist's manner, even when he's seeing things, is at once cranky, manipulative and a bit elderly, as if he were Rip Van Winkle. David Fox negotiates this tricky terrain with conviction.

The producer's manner seems, from the outset, self-conscious and stagey. Brooke Johnson's projection of good amateur acting is flawless.

To sketch out further developments would give away the game – and it's very much a game where the audience is blatantly toyed with and teased.

## UTTERLY BELIEVABLE

Suffice it to say that the revelation at the end of Act I is theatrically stunning and utterly believable.

Act II is brief – too brief – as it moves everything out of the interior – the novelist's mind, where the play began – into a world of external, plausible realism.

A breakdown of the trio's isolation is certainly called for, but here it's accomplished too easily, too quickly. It's as if the playwright got tired of constructing more permutations on his themes (fiction vs. fact, guilt vs. innocence, sanity vs. madness, appearance vs. reality) and simply threw open the window and said, in effect, "Enough!"

The play could use another level of artifice, a few more characters – a Pirandello frame, perhaps – to help this trio make truly strange music together.