

'Agnes of God' . . .

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The first act set up a multiplicity of relationships. Strasberg left the Catholic Church because her sister Marie died in a convent of neglected appendicitis. Strasberg dislikes Cass because the reverend mother represents the church and selfish purposes. Strasberg adores Agnes because she is pure and good, untouched.

Cass was widowed. She had two daughters who hated her because she was a "failure as a wife and mother." Cass has a deep affinity for the church and its simplistic effect on her life. She loves Agnes and protects her because Agnes is the symbol of this pure simplicity. Cass dislikes Strasberg because she thinks the psychiatrist may take Agnes away, either to prison for premeditated murder, or to a mental institution.

apostles would have smoked. (Peter, the "original Marlboro man," etc.) The cigarette stint was funny, but lost effectiveness because the impulses were forced.

Agnes's revelation under hypnosis of her mother's cruelty highlighted the first act. Though Strasberg suspected all along that Agnes' mother molested her, the worlds and imagery Agnes used to describe the pain and humiliation — the fear and degradation she suffered did evoke powerful emotions.

Agnes loves God. She loves everyone. She loves her mother, and she tells Strasberg eerily that her mother "watches me." Her mother, of course, is dead — the orphaned Agnes came to the convent at age 17. Her mother had "headaches" during which she heard angels speak. The angels said Agnes was a mistake. Agnes was her mother's mistake, an accident resulting from a visit by one of an endless stream of men. Agnes' mother kept her "mistake" sheltered, protected from the world. Agnes never went to school, never saw a television, never heard a radio.

What Agnes did hear was a "sky lady" who turned into clouds and talked to her. The lady sings through her, and we often hear a distracting tape recording of Agnes's supposedly ethereal voice offstage. The lady tells her things about the past and the future. She even tells Agnes about Strasberg's dead sister Marie during one of their sessions, giving the "miracle of Agnes" some credibility in Strasberg's eyes.

The only relationship the audience doesn't find out about is the one that resulted in Agnes' baby. Agnes is no help; she doesn't remember conceiving or having the baby — a mental block, as it were.

The trouble with all of the relationships was that they seemed contrived. No emotion rang true, except during a few exceptional moments when Agnes was on stage. Strasberg's offhand sarcasm was humorous, but it never felt natural. Her respect for the reverend mother never built up, it merely flared during sporadic episodes of camaraderie. One minute, they discussed each other, the next day, they kidded around about what kinds of cigarettes the

The session also set the audience up for a letdown during the second act. Instead of searching for answers and the strength to deal with Agnes' neuroses, the audience was sermonized unmercifully. The struggle between scientific and spiritual answers fell flat on its face. The revelation that Cass is Agnes' aunt only served to make you wonder why it was in the script. And when Agnes finally admitted under hypnosis that she killed her baby, the ending smacked unintentional melodrama: Agnes shrieked that God "did it to her," or a man who sang to her from the fields, blood flowed from her palms, Cass bowed her head and cry, Strasberg collapsed dejectedly to the floor, and Agnes suffered a breakdown on stage and was lead off to God knows where, singing "Charlie's neat, and Charlie's sweet, and Charlie he's a dandy. Every time he goes to town he gets his girl some candy . . ."

Too many loose ends left untied, too many disjointed events with no glue and no clear thrust toward the ending — which was yet another plastic, dissatisfying soliloquy by Strasberg. When she informed listeners that Agnes was taken to an institution where she stopped singing and eating and died, the guilt-ridden psychiatrist screamed quite suddenly, begging for "a reason."

Not only did she need one, but the play needed one, too. The gestures were fine, the blocking was fine, the set was fine — all spit-and-polish. But it was hard to believe that anyone but Agnes really cared, and she was too tired to keep it up any longer. By the end of the play, the audience was, too.

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NOTSPOTS

Television

• Nebraska ETV produced *Edgerton and His Incredible Seeing Machine*, which airs at 8 p.m. on Channel 12. The program profiles the work of Nebraska native Dr. Harold Edgerton, who invented

the electronic strobe. The strobe allows for stunning split-second photography, which highlights tonight's offering.

• What's surprising about *Those Fabulous TV Game Shows*, which airs at 9 p.m. on Channel 3, is not only that the show is

even on the air, but also that they could stretch it out to one hour. Carl Reiner hosts the "event."

Radio

• This week's edition of the New York Philharmonic, led by conductor Zubin Mehta, features a stellar cast highlighted by opera tenor Luciano Pavarotti. Pieces to be performed include Verdi's "Overture to *I Vespri*" Sicilian's "Soldier's Chorus" from *Il Traviatore* and Bizet's "Prelude to *Carmen*." The program airs at 8 p.m. on KUCV, 90.9 FM.

At the Sheldon

• James Ivory's *The Hallelu-baloo over George and Bonnie's Pictures* will be screened in the Film Theatre as part of UPC's Foreign Film series. The film will show at 7 and 9 p.m. A review will appear in Tuesday's Daily Nebraskan.

At the Kimball

• A recital of original music by UNL student composers will take place at 8 p.m. The program includes a horn quartet by George Brissette, a piece entitled "Suite Moods" by Barb Bowen and a flute trio by Marty Shrader. There is no admission charge.

Around Town

• Robert Cray, the bluesman who, legend has it, inspired John Belushi to form the Blues Brothers, will be appearing with his band at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St., tonight only. The cover charge is \$3.

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