

Mass Appeal

Booth Theater
NYC

Director: Geraldine Fitzgerald

So, what's so interesting about a play that spoofs catholicism? Well, if the star is Milo O'Shea and the director is Geraldine Fitzgerald the answer is—plenty. *Mass Appeal* has only two performers. . . . O'Shea as a successful Catholic priest and Michael O'Keefe as a young, idealistic priesthood aspirant. Although a "script for two" seems little to create a Broadway play on, writer Bill Evans has developed a witty, attention-holding story that is both funny and poignant.

Basically, the story begins with Father Tim Farley (Milo O'Shea) taking in young Mark Dolson (Michael O'Keefe) as sort of a protégé of the priesthood. Father Farley, long jaded by the materialistic trappings that come with having a large, well-to-do congregation, drives a Mercedes and intermittently drinks burgundy in his study. On the other hand, Mark Dolson is seriously committed and completely non-materialistic.

The two opposing personalities and

she directed at the Public Theater (see National Scene June 1981) Ms. Fitzgerald demonstrates an ability to get the audience involved with and even care about what happens to the characters. And when Father Farley's arrogant facade is stripped away he conveys a human vulnerability that is readily understood by all. Milo O'Shea's performance is among the most gripping of any leading role this season.

Mass Appeal is a play with meaning that transcends religious preference. It makes a valid statement about contemporary attitudes and with its creative presentation *Mass Appeal* is a testament to the saying "less is more".

Camelot

Winter Garden
NYC

Director: Frank Dunlop

Camelot, which was first staged by Moss Hart and subsequently was done on film is back on Broadway starring Richard Harris as King Arthur. This production is just as lavish and fanciful as in the past. With the Desmond Heeley set and costume design the

be an extremely elusive pursuit and there are components of this production that did not completely come together. Unfortunately, an outstanding play is missing an outstanding cast. Richard Harris has flashing moments of brilliance which he may have retained from his Golden Globe winning performance in the film. But he displays (as do most of the cast) periods of low energy which debilitates *Camelot's* overall impact.

With so much to work with, one wonders why the cast does not generate more enthusiasm. But this emotion seems to rise and subside creating a vague unevenness. Richard Muenz (Sir Lancelot) and Barrie Ingham (King Pellinore) give the most consistent performances. But if one does not expect great acting and can appreciate *Camelot's* technical skill and its music you may find this play entertaining.

West Side Waltz

Barrymore Theater
NYC

Director: Noel Willman

Katherine Hepburn waltzes back to Broadway in this production as another entry in this season's "year of the star" sweepstakes. However, in her role as a 70-ish, retired concert pianist Ms. Hepburn fares better than most. I must confess that with Ms. Hepburn it has always been difficult for me to determine when she was acting from when she is playing herself. Quite frankly, I still don't know. The Hepburn mystique is just as undefinable for me as it has always been. But whatever she is doing in *West Side Waltz* Kate Hepburn is thoroughly enjoyable. Throughout the play she is witty, irascible, sensitive and independent wrapping these emotions in a regal charm that has become her trademark.

Dorothy Loudon, who co-stars, is equally effective as Ms. Hepburn's loyal companion. Ms. Loudon paints a crystal clear portrait of how insecurity and loneliness can have a drastic impact on us all. She brings such reality to her role that Loudon is certain to receive a Tony nomination.

The three remaining performers Regina Baff, David Margulies and Don Howard all turn in good performances. In fact, the high calibre acting in *West Side Waltz* is its strongest suit.

The plot of *West Side Waltz* is interesting but far from powerful. The play seems more a vehicle for the talents of its players. However, in this rare case the actor's performances shine far above the script and it works.



Milo O'Shea and Michael O'Keefe in "Mass Appeal"

perspectives are the focus of the play's conflict. The skill in reaching this conflict's resolution is largely due to Geraldine Fitzgerald's direction. As in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* which

proper mood is created. Naturally, all of those same delightful songs are done as great effort is put forth to recapture this play's magic.

However, to recapture anything can