

# Theater: 2 La Mama Revivals

By MEL GUSSOW

"Clara's Ole Man," in revival at La Mama as part of Ellen Stewart's 20th anniversary season, reminds us of Ed Bullins's ebullient humor and his gift for creating vivid, larger-than-life characters. In this case, the character is Big Girl, a bold, brassy, overweight young woman with the presence of a longshoreperson. In common with "The Fabulous Miss Marie" and other assertive women who have appeared on Mr. Bullins's stages, Big Girl runs the show. She is "ole man" to her petite friend Clara, as is clear to everyone except Jack, Clara's uptight, Ivy League visitor.

The play is about Jack's sudden awakening to the lesbian relationship between Clara and Big Girl; Mr. Bullins calls the work "a play of lost innocence." First produced in New York in 1968 at the American Place Theater as part of a Bullins triple bill titled "The Electronic Nigger and Others," it has the freshness and the naïveté of youth, both of which are reflected in Robert Macbeth's production.

Ebony Jo-Ann lacks the physical dimension for Big Girl, but she has an easy command of the character's language, demonstrated, for example, in the nonchalant and confident way the actress explains her absence from work that day: "It's all part of my master plan." Helen Pearl Ellis is sweet and tentative as Clara, and Martin Pinckney makes the young man's formality seem an essential part of his personality.

Although the play is short, Mr. Bullins takes the time for a side incident — not really a subplot — as a trio of self-styled hipsters take refuge in Clara's kitchen. Led by a jive-talking Herb Rice, the three are a feisty, supercool and threatening band. There is also a walk-on, or stagger-on, by Mr. Bullins as a wino who can scarcely zig-zag from door to chair — an amusing successor to the playwright's cameo performance in Wallace Shawn's "The Hotel Play." Bill Stabile's set and Gabriel Berry's costumes add their own seedy authenticity, with Miss Berry's contribution seemingly emerging from a 20-year-old trunk.

The second play this week at La Mama is José Triana's "The Night of the Assassins," first produced at La Mama in 1969. In this murky drama, a brother and two sisters ritualistically re-enact the murder of their parents. A child's garden of evils, it is almost suffocating in its obsessiveness. Staged environmental-style by Endre Hules, the production accents both the horror and the playroom aspect of the work. The overlong one-act is filled with symbolic objects — severed heads and

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 microfilm.

Roger Greenawald

Ed Bullins

## The Cast

**CLARA'S OLE MAN**, by Ed Bullins; directed by Robert MacBeth; music director, Arnel Jones; set, Bill Stabile; lights and sound, Joe Hardy; costumes, Gabriel Berry; stage manager, Janine Lucas.

Clara .....	Helen Pearl Ellis
Big Girl .....	Ebony Jo-Ann
Jack .....	Martin Pinckney
Baby Girl .....	Barbara J. Perkins
Miss Fomle .....	Joyce Griffen
Stoogie .....	Herb Rice
Hoss .....	Michael DeWitt Payne
Bama .....	Mel (Lightnin) Davis
C. C. ....	Ed Bullins

and

**THE NIGHT OF THE ASSASSINS**, by José Triana; directed by Endre Hules; costumes by Mr. Berry; lighting by Anne Milifello; production stage manager, Esteban Fernandez.

Cuca .....	Magaly Alabau
Lalo .....	Christopher Deoni
Beba .....	Elizabeth Peña

Presented by La Mama Etc. At 74A East Fourth Street.

limbs of mannekins. The three actors, Christopher Deoni, Magaly Alabau and Elizabeth Peña, all demonstrate their performance dexterity.