

Arts

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The Arts

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In Performance



Tom Braml

Susanne Wasson in "Lady Strass," at Ubu Repertory.

THEATER

Two Men Trapped In a Woman's Memories

'Lady Strass'
Ubu Repertory Theater

Memory is all that an indomitable woman has salvaged from life, and it is an inescapable trap for her in Eduardo Manet's surreal play "Lady Strass" at the Ubu Repertory Theater. André Ernotte's direction of this 1977 work by the Cuban playwright, who lives in Paris, draws an audience so deeply into it that viewers, too, may feel trapped in its disorienting vision.

In Central America, two fugitives — a Frenchman (Paul Albe) and a Guatemalan (Robert Jimenez) — break into an apparently deserted ruin of a Belize mansion only to find themselves prisoners of a gun-toting, cigar-smoking British woman (Susanne Wasson) who has sealed herself in to lock the world out. Amid spectacular charades — teas, cocktail parties, dances from the 1920's — and even while they try to plan an escape, they become characters in her memories of two husbands, both British colonials, and two lovers: an Indian poet rubbed out by the first husband and a former Nazi SS officer fleeing detection who hoodwinks and hastens the end of the second. Reliving the memories pushes her from eccentricity into lunacy.

Mr. Albe and Mr. Jimenez are a convincing pair of nafs, astonished at each new discovery of truth behind the woman's baffling tales, unaware of how dangerous that truth is. Ms. Wasson is a superb old survivor — cunning, seductive and disastrously self-deceiving. And Mr. Ernotte so skillfully emphasizes the comic aspects of the dreamlike scenes that the shock at the end comes like a sudden shot from one of the woman's pistols.

D. J. R. BRUCKNER