

September 30 - October 15, 2005

## Hauptmann

Director Gloria Dugan does a good job of creating the feel of the time in this piece of true crime recreation. With a fine set and costume design in shades of gray and a strong performance by Michael Kharfen doubling as the accused kidnapper/murderer and as the surreptitiously tipling defense attorney, this examination of the public record in one of the many "trials of the century" of the highly litigious twentieth century is filled with intriguing detail. It doesn't resolve all the issues it raises. Indeed, it probably shouldn't if it is to remain true to the public record. It does, however, capture and hold your attention for an evening, and then leave you with many questions to ponder.



**Storyline: The play attempts to portray and make some sense out of the events between the night in 1932 that the 22 month old son of Charles Lindbergh and his wife Anne Morrow Lindbergh was taken from his nursery, and the night four years later that Richard Bruno Hauptmann was executed for the crime.**

Potomac Region theatergoers may recall an earlier true-crime/famous trial play by this playwright, John Logan. His *Never the Sinner*, played Arlington's Signature Theatre before transferring to an Off-Broadway house. It gave a very similar treatment to the events surrounding a famous 1920s murder trial, the case of Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, who received a vigorous defense by none other than Clarence Darrow, and were convicted of the murder of fourteen year old Bobby Franks. Here he turns his attention to the 1930s, but he still uses the facts from the public record to tell his story. The record in this case includes handwriting analysis, the identification of ransom money, and the matching of nail holes and wood grains that might seem familiar in an episode of television's CSI, as well as eye witness testimony about fleeting meetings in dark cemeteries and familiar voices in brief phone calls.

Michael Kharfen brings a strong stage presence and a good blend of confidence and panic to the role of the title character as he alternately assumes his protestations of innocence will prevail, and is infuriated by the thought that the prosecution's case might succeed. While a bit stockier and stronger looking than the slight man shown in the historical pictures of Hauptmann, there is enough of a physical resemblance to be striking.

Long's concept here has all seven of the cast members playing multiple roles. This gives Bruce Follmer a chance to exercise his skill at distinguishing between character roles as the judge, an eye witness and a handwriting expert. Donald Neal doesn't really seem to try to distinguish between roles, but gives the part of the prosecuting attorney a great deal of energy. Lorraine Magee is affecting in her primary scene as the grief-stricken mother of the kidnapped and murdered boy.

*Written by John Logan. Directed by Gloria DuGan. Design: G. Kevin Lane (set and costumes) Avery Burns (properties) Kendel Taylor (makeup and hair) Lorraine Magee (choreography) Frank Coleman (lights) Anna Hawkins (sound) Doug Olmsted (photography) Kira Simon (stage manager). Cast: Bruce Follmer, Nano Gowland, Michael Kharfen, Lorraine Magee, Donald Neal, Mari Pappas, Ed Starr.*