

Del Ray Sun

Bringing the Sun to Del Ray

Vol. 1, No. 6

October 5, 2005

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“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times....”

Hauptmann

The past weekend also saw the opening of the Port City Playhouse's *Hauptmann* at the Nanny Lee Center in Alexandria. Here,

the sound system worked perfectly, dissonant strings acclimatizing the audience to the jarring play that tells the story of the Lindbergh

baby kidnapping from the point of view of Bruno Richard Hauptmann.

Here, the director's touch was deft and costuming simple, yet convincing, as six men and women, often silent witnesses in the shadows on stage, used a shawl, a necklace and a hat, or a jacket to make a convincing character change.

Michael Kharfen's portrayal of Hauptmann is powerful. We felt that his grimacing was a bit strong for our taste, but on the whole, he was convincing and sympathetic.

In this case, the set was simple and dramatic: a few sets of bars represented Death Row, from whence Hauptmann recalls his experience. A table on its side becomes the front of a court bench, and severe lighting

focused attention on the actors and dialogue. This is a professional quality production in a community setting. Action was tight and transitions smooth. A hat and coat, the whoosh of wind and a spotlight with a foil put the audience in a cemetery on a dark cold night.

Hauptmann is good theater. Surprisingly, even though it is told through the title character's eyes, the question of his guilt or innocence is not answered.

Ensemble casts can be distracting, annoying and confusing; this one is not. Through deft direction (by Gloria Dugan), good lighting design (Franklin Coleman), clever costuming and elegant set design (Grant Kevin Lane), and solid actors who knew their roles and what was expected of them, *Hauptmann* represents the best of community theater.

