As the 1998-99 season proceeds, “How I Learned to Drive,” winner of the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, remains the most produced play of the year. Never one to slow down, Paula Vogel took some time recently to have a conversation with Robert Vaughan, our director of professional rights, about where she’s been and where she plans to go.

RV: You've been so busy. Where have you just come from now? Oh man, Robert. Let me try and think about what this past week has been. Well, Seattle. I do remember Seattle; Seattle was fun and fabulous. Let's see, where else have I been? Little things, you know … and Washington D.C. … I'm starting to work with Arena Stage. The Hampstons, to get some award, which was kind of fun.

RV: You got another award? Yes, I got another award. And, you know, that’s been all in the past week. I don’t really remember what I did yesterday.

RV: (Chuckling) Have you had time to see the new film version of “Lolita”? I was wondering what you thought of it, considering how you feel about “Lolita.” I liked it very much. The one thing I missed was that tone that Nabakov achieved? You can't. You really think it's an impossible task to adapt something like that.

RV: A full-length play? Well, however long it comes out. I say to people that they have to write it in 48 hours, and if they sleep or eat it's on their own time. Usually what does come out ends up being the germ of a full-length play, if not a full-length play. The fourth workshop I'm doing will be open to Arena Stage subscribers, people from the neighborhood, board members, anyone who wants to come down. We're trying to create circles that expand, and God knows I'll know Washington in a much better way when the three years are up than I know it now. You know, I'm always in a state of shock when I go back and visit family members, because when I was growing up, basically it was the National Theatre and Shady Grove Music Fair. (Pause) Wait, I have to tell you about some memorable things.

RV: I like that laugh. What did you do? You'll probably quote this, but you need to have a vital theatre community, more than any place else in the continued on page 4

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RV: (Chuckling) Have you had time to see the new film version of “Lolita”? I was wondering what you thought of it, considering how you feel about “Lolita.” I liked it very much. The one thing I missed was that kind of irreverent humor that the first film had. It was a little more twisted and a little more scrappy. I think this “Lolita” was reverent. It was almost religiously done, beautifully done, so I thought it was really interesting, but I still prefer the original movie version, and of course nothing beats the book. The real trick is how can you get that tone that Nabakov achieved? You can’t. You can’t do it on stage, you can’t do it in the movies. I sort of go in (to the movie) expecting the worst and then being pleasantly surprised, because I really think it’s an impossible task to adapt something like that.

RV: So you went to Arena Stage recently. You're going to be working there for three years? Yes. This first season I'm going to be doing four workshops. The first is going to be for anyone who works in the building and wants to take a playwriting workshop and spend eight hours with me on a Saturday. The next workshop is for anyone who works for the Washington D.C. media - reviewers, reporters. And for the third one we're asking several theatre companies in Washington to nominate two playwrights and I'm going to do for them what I call my "boot camp."

RV: You do that at Brown, don’t you? I do a boot camp at Brown. I’ve done a boot camp in L.A.. I’ve done a boot camp in London and Prague and Brazil, and it’s usually for professional writers, although I’ve done it with student writers. Basically we spend every day for at least a week in the rehearsal room writing short plays and we end up doing what we call “The Great American Play Bake-Off,” where everyone has to write a play in 48 hours.

RV: A full-length play? Well, however long it comes out. I say to people that they have to write it in 48 hours, and if they sleep or eat it’s on their own time. Usually what does come out ends up being the germ of a full-length play, if not a full-length play. The fourth workshop I’m doing will be open to Arena Stage subscribers, people from the neighborhood, board members, anyone who wants to come down. We’re trying to create circles that expand, and God knows I’ll know Washington in a much better way when the three years are up than I know it now. You know, I’m always in a state of shock when I go back and visit family members, because when I was growing up, basically it was the National Theatre and Shady Grove Music Fair. (Pause) Wait, I have to tell you about some memorable things.

RV: I like that laugh. What did you do? You’ll probably quote this, but I never forget the night that Anna Maria Alberghetti was performing and left her throat mike on when she went backstage to the bathroom during Act One and … this you can’t quote … anyway, it was the purest, highest “C” I’ve ever heard her hit. Then there was the time when Marlene Dietrich fell into the orchestra pit and never came out again. She was making a comeback.

RV: You’ve making that up. I am not making it up. Listen, Washington D.C. is rife with these things. Do you know about the instance of “Mata Hari”? Now, I was in town when this happened.

RV: Mata Hari the spy? “Mata Hari” was a David Merrick musical, and it opened at the National. Lyndon Johnson was in the audience opening night, and at the end of the first act, the stage set fell on the actress who was playing Mata Hari. Fortunately, it hit her with the canvas part instead of the wooden part, and her head basically just went through the flat and they brought the curtain down and they never had an Act Two. They never opened. That was the end of “Mata Hari,” though it would be interesting to see if someone could bring it back.

RV: Don’t give them any ideas. Washington is different from when I knew it. Now it’s as own community with a very diverse spectrum of theatre. It’s really a place where I think you need to have a vital theatre community, more than any place else in the

How
Paula Vogel Learned to

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representing the american theatre by publishing and licensing the works of new and established playwrights.

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“The Irish are Coming!” (At Play, issue 2) was the first thing I saw. As Artistic Director of The Irish and American Repertory Theatre, a new company in Columbus, Ohio, I was extremely excited to see your article on Martin McDonagh and the continued renaissance of Irish arts. As a new company interested in producing professional productions, Dramatists Play Service was a great help in getting us set up for our first production, “Molly Sweeney” by Brian Friel. Love the newsletter, love Dramatists Play Service. We look forward to working with you again soon!

Anne Hannon
Irish and American Repertory Theatre

Congratulations to everyone at Dramatists for an outstanding web site (www.drama-tists.com). I found what I wanted. Ordered it. Got on with the rest of my day. Thanks to all for the thoroughly professional job. You’re making everybody’s life much easier.

Neil Thackaberry
Summit Classic Theater

The Play Service was proud to see so many of our titles included in American Theatre Magazine’s annual Top Ten List of the most-produced plays of the year.

1. How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel
2. The Last Night of Ballyhoo by Alfred Uhry
4. Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller (Non-Professional Rights)
5. Having Our Say by Emily Mann, adapted from the book by Sarah L. and Elizabeth Delany with Amy Hill Hearth
6. The Old Settler by John Henry Redwood

Below is a selected list of outstanding new properties acquired since the publication of our 1998-99 Supplement.

Corpus Christi by Terrence McNally

Controversy! Protest! Hysteria! The theatrical event of the season is a contemporary passion play drawing parallels between “the greatest story ever told” and the life of Joshua, a young man discovering his sexuality and purpose in Corpus Christi, Texas. (World premiere at New York’s Manhattan Theatre Club.)

Love and Understanding by Joe Penhall

The British Invasion continues. What do you do when a no-good friend needs a place to stay, but seems intent on turning you and your girlfriend against each other? (American Premiere at the Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven CT.)

The Ride Down Mt. Morgan by Arthur Miller

When Lyman Felt is injured in a car accident, his wife Leah is called to his side — as is his other wife, Theodora. Gaudy, both women come home to and around the meaning of Lyman’s nine-year-deception, and he is called to account for his many betrayals. (As produced in New York by the Joseph Papp Public Theater. World premiere at the WYndham’s Theatre, London.)

This is Our Youth by Kenneth Lonergan

One of the season’s most celebrated new plays about three friends poised on the edge of adulthood but lost and disaffected as they experiment with drugs, courtship and surviving the legacy of their 60s generation parents. (As produced by New York’s Second Stage Theatre. “Commercial comedies of such brio and darkly satiric edge are rare these days. Supercool entertainment.” — New York Times)

This Lime Tree Bower by Conor McPherson

A son attempts to get his father out of debt with the dangerous local bookie, but chooses to do it by robbing the bookie himself in this amazing new play by the young, Dublin-born author who has taken London by storm. (American premiere this May at New York’s Primary Stages.)

Vernon Early by Horton Foote

Pulitzer Prize winner Horton Foote returns to Harrison, Texas in this dark and poignant drama about the sadness of growing old. (World Premiere by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Montgomery, AL.)

The Weir by Conor McPherson

In a bar in a remote part of Ireland, the boys are trading ghost stories in the hopes of spooking (or is it impressing) a pretty young woman just arrived from Dublin. But she has an even more chilling story of her own. (Broadway premiere this March. “The Weir” was commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre, London. “With bewitching fluency allied to a gift for locating the greatest emotions in the smallest details, and a facility for parody, McPherson achieves something remarkable.” — TLS)

Wit by Margaret Edson

One of Time Magazine’s 10 Best Plays of 1998, this is the shattering and uplifting story of the last hours of Vivian Bearing, a 50th literature professor and John Donne scholar facing her imminent death by ovarian cancer. (Bravely human and beautifully layered...The kind of theatrical experience of which legends are made.” — New York Times. Currently running at New York’s Union Square Theatre.)
Have you ever borrowed a record or CD from a friend and made a tape of it? Of course you have.

I used to do the same thing. Before I learned it was illegal.

It doesn’t matter that Paul McCartney is almost a billionaire. He still deserves to be paid.

CopyCat

by Craig Pospisil, Director of Non-Professional Rights

Piracy of intellectual property is big business. Bootleg copies of movies and music are being distributed in Eastern Europe. The U.S. government has been in discussions with the Chinese about closing down factories that pirate American music and computer software, resulting in the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars for our industries. You can find pirated videos of current movies being sold on the streets of New York. And Congress is currently debating the best ways to protect copyrighted material from dissemination over the Internet. Digital technology makes it possible to make perfect copies of a piece of music—a fifth generation copy might be just as good as the original itself.

So what does this have to do with plays? After all, you don’t see too many photocopied plays for sale on the street, or hear of high level, international negotiations over unlicensed editions of “Long Day’s Journey Into Night.” But it doesn’t mean that other violations aren’t happening here at home and on a smaller scale.

May I copy a script for the actors at my theatre? No. Just like making a copy of a friend’s CD, this is a violation of copyright law. Royalties from script sales is one of the ways that a playwright is compensated. For every illegal copy of a play made, the author has been denied the money that he is rightfully due.

Can I copy a script and distribute it to my class for study purposes? Under the provision of “fair use,” copyright law does allow for limited photocopying in educational settings. You cannot photocopy an entire play for your students, but copying a short section is permissible. I recommend that you read up on copyright law for further clarification before proceeding.

My daughter is playing Maggie in “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.” Can I videotape this for her grandparents to see? I know that this seems harmless enough, but the answer is very likely to be “no” because video rights are also subject to the author’s copyright. Dramatists Play Service, however, does not control video rights; we only administer the English language stage performance rights to the plays that we publish. Questions about videotaping a performance should be directed to the author’s primary agent listed on the copyright/caution page of our acting editions under “All other inquiries…”

Keep in mind that video rights are considered part of the motion picture and television rights to a play, so agents are generally reluctant to exploit them separately.

My son is in “Hamlet.” May I videotape that? Yes. “Hamlet” is in public domain. There is no prohibition to videotaping any play that is in public domain. You should, however, have the actors’ and the theatre’s permission before proceeding.

Our theatre would like to make a videotape for our archives/grant proposal. Is this all right? The agents I deal with are more open to this kind of request, but as usual you must get their permission first. Again, contact the author’s primary agent by writing to them at the address on the copyright/caution page of our scripts.

A local video producer wants to film my production and sell tapes in our lobby. This is absolutely not allowed. Theatres that have engaged in or tolerated this activity have faced serious legal repercussions. Stay away from this kind of venture.

I am a college student. Can I get permission to make a film of a play? This is very unlikely to be approved. Again, you should contact the author’s primary agent, but don’t get your hopes up.

Dozens of people wrote in after my last two “Rights & Restrictions” articles and requested permission to reprint them. I was pleased with the reaction, and we said yes to all who asked. Thank you for letting us know how much you liked the articles and feel free to reprint this one or copy it. All we ask is that you give the proper authorship and credit the article as follows: “Copyright 1998 by Dramatists Play Service, Inc.” We would also appreciate it if you would list our mailing and Internet addresses. And drop us a line to let us know, or send us a copy of the reprint.

Once again, if anyone would like to learn more about copyright, a trip to your local library would be an excellent starting place. Or, if you have access to the Internet, I highly recommend visiting the U.S. Copyright Office web site:

www.loc.gov/copyright

The site has recently been given a make-over and is greatly improved. It is easy to navigate and has a “Frequently Asked Questions” section which covers a lot of ground. I also recommend “10 Big Myths About Copyright.” This site was put together by Brad Templeton, and he sets the record straight in a clear, concise manner. Please note, the Internet address for this site has changed to:

www.templetons.com/brad/copymyths.html
United States, because that’s where the battle against the arts is taking place.

RV: You’ve been accused of being political in your writing. Do you think you are?

I issue new and very political. I think when people say “political,” they mean being polemics or propagandists or something like that. And that’s not my notion of the word “political.” I think that simply being a political being, having the theatre is basically about the present moment in time, and you’re creating a community which comes into a common space and examines the present moment in time. The theatre goes into a movie is a private self. It’s in the dark. It’s voyeuristic. But when you go into a theatre, you’re going into the public. That’s a much different persona.

RV: You never get on a soapbox, though.

Well, personally I do – because I’m a very short woman – but not when I write. It’s an interesting thing, Robert. I think that because I’ve been writing for so long, and this is true of all writers, it’s such an automatic reflex that when I’m writing I’m thinking about things and it only comes through the writing and doesn’t necessarily intersect with the other aspects of my being, my teaching, who I am as a person. Something else takes the over.

RV: If you’re conscious of your process, it won’t work.

Well, I think we have to go through a period of being conscious, and that’s when we start, and it seems to me being a student and studying theatre or being a student playwright, you are being conscious of your devices. You’re learning all of your tricks and you’re thinking about them. And then there has to be a point where it becomes subconsciously. It’s the richness right now of the arts is taking place.

RV: Wasn’t it Martha Graham who said that no artist is ahead of his time, the artist is the time?

Oh, that’s nice. Martha. That’s nice.

RV: You write things that people are just compelled to talk about, whatever they like, or not. Or whether your plays make them angry.

There’s a lot of that, too. I do know that there’s a button that I trigger, where I seem to irritate people, which is always intriguong to me because it’s not anything that I intend to push, but it does get pushed.

RV: The people who were terribly upset by “How I Learned to Drive,” I just don’t understand it. I mean, is it that there was something wrong with me.

Join the club. (Laughs) There are times when people find out I wrote “And Baby Makes Seven,” and they don’t want to sit next to me on the bus. They move a seat away. There’s always been that feeling of…you see it’s a terribly oddball professor. So you try to achieve that — and John Guare does, and so does, for example, Peter Barnes, who is a British playwright that I really love — to do that, though, as a woman… I often feel that we’re equivalent to women painters. There’s almost a decorum to what we think women playwrights should be, a decorum that they should adhere to … and that is that women painters should be painting delicate watercolors, they shouldn’t be working in deep, messy acrylics and oils. But again, if you’re in the theatre, you’re not going to combine the kings with the clowns. I think that’s what John Guare does and other writers that I really love. That’s what they do, they have that huge, many, many, many human heart. But do feel that, as a woman, I often get comments deploving the vulgarite of say, the Greek chorus in “How I Learned to Drive.” Certainly “Minneola Twins” is going to make a lot of people uncomfortable. That’s what they do, they have that human heart.

RV: Sometimes. Sometimes it’s with envy, but usually it’s “Oh, when are you going to grow up and get a real job?”

RV: When you write, you never got a chance to sit down without…

Sometimes I feel that even, usually it’s “Oh, when are you going to grow up and get a real job?”

RV: Yes, in New York, it’s more along the lines of “Oh, do you actually work in the theatre?” and “Yes, I do.” And I say “Yes.” It’s not that I’ve got to have to, I’m compelled to do it.

I’ve heard many similar stories. It is a compulsion and it is an addiction. I remember the first play where I really got attached to my characters. I had been doing little high school skins and things like that, things that didn’t really matter to me. But when I was a freshman in college I wrote something called “The Beautiful Quasimodo” and that sensation happened. I fell in love with Quasimodo. I fell in love! And the night that we pulled down that play I knew that I’d never see him again and I stayed up all night in the theatre weeping. (Pause)

RV: That’s great. That’s amazing!

You know, I think you’re very strange when you fall in love and they’re not even people. We fall in love almost with the undead, if you will. This is somebody that really filled me with possibilities that I hadn’t recognized before. There’s a certain total sympathy I think I have for him. He can be ironic and morose and morose and morose and, in a great way, vulgar. In a way I love. RV: I think he captured every single theatrical aspect in “Six Degrees of Separation.”

Yes, he does. I’m thinking about this a lot because I’m a woman who writes comedy and I think that that’s different from a man who writes comedy. I think what we forget in the twentieth century is that if we really love theatre and we love what we do, we think about Shakespeare, and Shakespeare combines kings and clowness side by side. So you have the assassination of Duncan followed by piss jokes told by a drunken porter. They’re side by side, and then the other of the human heart. Or you try to achieve that — and John Guare does, and so does, for example, Peter Barnes, who is a British playwright that I really love — to do that, though, as a woman… I often feel that we’re equivalent to women painters. There’s almost a decorum to what we think women playwrights should be, a decorum that they should adhere to … and that is that women painters should be painting delicate watercolors, they shouldn’t be working in deep, messy acrylics and oils. But again, if you’re in the theatre, you’re not going to combine the kings with the clowns. I think that’s what John Guare does and other writers that I really love. That’s what they do, they have that huge, many, many, many human heart. But do feel that, as a woman, I often get comments deploving the vulgarite of say, the Greek chorus in “How I Learned to Drive.” Certainly “Minneola Twins” is going to make a lot of people uncomfortable. That’s what they do, they have that human heart.

RV: I don’t recall the Greek chorus being cheap and being vulgar.

The British thought it was very vulgar, and I’ve heard comments that’s its sort of slappick. I’ve also had a lot of comments about “Baltimore Waltz,” that the last moment that came before was just too slapsticky. But I don’t feel that, as a woman, I often get comments deploring the vulgarite of say, the Greek chorus in “How I Learned to Drive.” Certainly “Minneola Twins” is going to make a lot of people uncomfortable. That’s what they do, they have that human heart.

RV: But, well, certain families are like that, too, in real life.

I certainly think that I like that. In my household, you never got a chance to sit down without a whoopee cushion and then you always had to look before you sat, so I just assumed that most American families are like that. And, of course, I’m sure that there are some very “elevated” and... RV: Yeah, but they’re boring, I bet.

They’re probably boring, and their repression probably leads to one of the most amusing stories that ever have just had a nice, loud, scatological laugh at it and put it in my work. It’s an interesting thing about comedy, it’s about where we come from, where our roots are. Theatre is of the flesh, it’s not abstract words. It’s literally words made flesh and when...
you talk about the flesh, what does that mean? It certainly has erotic connotations, it certainly has beauty, grace and dignity. But it also has banana peels, whoopie cushions and fart jokes. That's also flesh. I think that in America we are starting to get new groundings, and we have to write to that large spectrum. I think when I look at Irene Fürnесс or Cyril Churchill or John Guare, they make that spectrum clear. All of their work is really, 'of the flesh' in that way. John Guare and I have never been to know each other a bit because, of course, I've embarrassed myself every time I've met him in public. I would grab his hand and kiss it. I have a tendency to do that with people whom I think of as gods. He asked me to introduce him to the 92nd Street Y this past year when he was giving a lecture, so I got this opportunity for five minutes to stand on stage and say to his face what I've said all these years behind his back, that I think he's the greatest living American playwright. So, in my mind, just about every play that John Guare has written has a Pulitzer Prize play that's never gotten the Pulitzer Prize. I often think about this, and I think about how lucky I've been with both 'Baltimore Waltz' and 'How I Learned to Drive,' and not as fortunate with 'And Baby Makes Seven,' not as fortunate with other plays. You know, playwrights have to be advocates for the art form. I think we really understand what they do for new work. I think that theatre plays from the printed page, from reading, we're creating instead through visual images and we see everything, whether it's the prosценium arch, the movie theatre or the video screen, or even our computers, through a kind of box lens, and that's how we enter into the world. I think that's where we are at the end of the twentieth century and that to me is the most exciting age of film and theatre and that there are separate strengths of film and theatre that are never going to be a two for one.
Nothing Mega About It
Except the Applause

Imagine having to testify about your sex life: what presents you gave your lover; how often you met; why you chose someone so much younger, and so beneath you in social status. Sound familiar? It should.

It happened to Oscar Wilde a little over a century ago.

As author-director Moisés Kaufman discovered, the figure behind the most notorious court case of the 1900s (think O.J. Simpson meets Mapplethorpe) is hard to pin down. The result of his investigation, Gross Indecency, The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde is the 3rd most produced play of the year.

Prior to Gross Indecency's commercial transfer last year, Robert Myers of the New York Times reported on the spectacular success of this sleeper turned hit.

written and directed by an unknown dramatist and put on with a bare-bones budget of $15,000 and one set, “Gross Indecency” has been the talk of Off-Off Broadway, drawing audiences and critics alike in a season crowded with multi-million-dollar shows that in many cases have received mediocre reviews.

The story of this spare and original play with an innovative style borne of necessity is a fable with a familiar moral: persist only bring about his artistic downfall but would leave him to die a broken man five years later at the age of 46 after a miserable stint in Reading prison.

In the first of three trials, Wilde was forced to withdraw his suit against Queensberry after inadvertently betraying himself during cross-examination with his own too clever tongue. Much to the delight of the promoters of Victorian morality, criminal charges were immediately brought against him. A parade of working-class male hustlers, whom Wilde admitted befriending and showering with cash and silver cigarette cases but denied having sex with, were summoned to testify about their “illicit” relations with him. Although the jury at the second trial was unable to reach a verdict, by the end of the third, Wilde had been convicted of “gross indecency with male persons.”

Mr. Kaufman got the idea for the play about two and a half years ago when a friend gave him a small volume of epigrams entitled “The Wit and Wisdom of Oscar Wilde” that also contained a description of the trials. By that time he had attended an international theater festival in Caracas, Venezuela, to study theater. Educated at a yeshiva in Caracas, he arrived in the United States 10 years ago from Caracas, Venezuela, to study theater. Educated at a yeshiva in Caracas, he had attended a university in which most of the students were business majors. “Being Jewish in a Catholic country, gay in an Orthodox Jewish school, an artist in a business school, and coming to the United States and becoming a Latino,” he observed with a grin, “has given me an outsider’s perspective.”

Oscar Wilde was, of course, also an outsider - an Irishman in Victorian England, a passionate social critic of his age, a husband and father who nonetheless sought the sexual company of men. Still, Wilde, whom Mr. Kaufman calls “the first postmodern,” lived the life of a notable insider until he stumbled into a lawsuit that ultimately destroyed his life.

“Gross Indecency” chronicles his precipitous descent from the most celebrated playwright in the English language - who had two hit plays, “The Importance of Being Earnest” and ”An Ideal Husband,” running simultaneously in London’s West End - to an object of almost universal scorn in a scant three months.

When in February of 1895, at the height of his success, Wilde elected to sue his lover Lord Alfred Douglas’s father, the Marquess of Queensberry, for slander when Queensberry accused him (in a misspelled note) of “posing as a sodomite,” he set in motion a chain of events that would not only bring about his artistic downfall but would leave him to die a broken man five years later at the age of 46 after a miserable stint in Reading prison.

Mr. Kaufman said he has been fascinated with the ways in which theater can create its own reality ever since he attended an international theater festival in Caracas at the age of 14. The event featured works by such eminent theatrical figures as Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor, Peter Brook and Pina Bausch. “That was one of my earliest experiences with theater,” he said over cappuccino in an East Village pastry shop. Mr. Kaufman, who has a crop of dark hair and intense
brown eyes, often gestures broadly to make a point in his nearly impeccable English. “What these four people did is they created a world on the stage. They didn’t pretend to imitate reality. When I saw my first naturalistic play, I was shocked. I thought: This is like a movie or TV show. This is not what theater is supposed to do.”

The form that “Gross Indecency” ultimately took is, he said, a function of months of reading, writing, dreaming and contemplation, an unsuccessful attempt to collaborate on the script with the playwright and actor David Greenspan, and two readings...

Mr. Kaufman said he had conceived of the play as “a journey from Wilde’s public into his private persona” and had known all along that the third trial would take place inside Wilde’s head. After seeing the reading in the fall, however, he decided that the other two trials should be dramatized in distinct styles, the first in documentary fashion and the second as if from the point of view of titillated voyeurs.

“I had two major objectives,” Mr. Kaufman said, “to tell the story, a story, of Oscar Wilde, and to understand how theater can communicate history.”

In the production, four of the ensemble’s actors serve as a kind of chorus, seated in front of the stage on which the trials take place, making selections from the books, pamphlets and newspapers stacked on a long table in front of them. With the carefully chosen historical citations, Mr. Kaufman has developed a new kind of wordplay, a polyphonic pastiche that requires the actors and members of the audience to almost repeat the process of research, interpretation and evaluation he engaged in to construct the play.

In a kind of dramatic parenthesis at the opening of the second act, the director sets up a brief modern-day exchange between an actor playing Mr. Kaufman himself and another representing Michael Taylor, the head of the Fales Library at New York University and the editor of a book about Wilde. In this self-conscious satire of the elliptical jargon of the modern academy, the Taylor character states that while Wilde “loved having sex with men,” he may not have been “what we would call gay today.”

One aspect of the case that particularly intrigued Mr. Kaufman was the fact that Wilde, who indeed had had sexual relations with the male hustlers, not only elected to stay in England to face criminal charges - unlike many of his gay compatriots who fled to France during the three trials - but also chose to baldly lie in court about the erotic nature of his liaisons.

While other treatments of Wilde’s life have tended to see him as a victim of unjust Victorian morality or the quintessential martyr of gay liberation, Mr. Kaufman said, he has tried to present a more complex portrait. For example, in Act II, Wilde confesses to a close friend that he is “not innocent.”

“You can’t sanctify Wilde,” Mr. Kaufman said. “One moment you adore him for what he’s saying; the next you’re extremely critical of him for his treatment of these young men. Toward the end of the play he says: ‘I became the spendthrift of my genius. There’s no faulting what I did, but there’s fault in what I became.’”

Mr. Kaufman has received offers for possible productions of his play in Berlin, Scandinavia, Australia and at regional theaters in this country. He has also been approached by four movie studios about creating a film version, although he says that the inherent theatricality of the piece, especially the role of the audience as a sort of surrogate for the reproachful Victorian spectators at Wilde’s trial, would make a translation to the screen difficult.

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Selected Professional Productions, April - June 1999

ARIZONA
THE NIGHTMARE OF BALLYHOO by Alfred Uhry; Arizona Theatre Company, Tucson/Phoenix. (APR.)

CALIFORNIA
BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY by Pearl Cleage; Old Globe Theatre, San Diego. (APR.)

CONNECTICUT
STEEL MAGNOLIAS by Robert Harling; Greenwich Theatre, Greenwich. (APR.)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SIGHT UNSEEN by Donald Margulies; Arena Stage, Washington. (APR.)

FLORIDA
FLORIDA.Elapsed (by Lee Blessing; Riverside Theatre, Vero Beach. (APR.)

GEORGIA
CRUMBS FROM THE TABLE OF JOY by Lynn Nottage; Alliance Theatre Co., Atlanta. (JUNE)

ILLINOIS
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge. (MAY)

INDIANA
HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE by Paula Vogel; Theatre at the Center, Munster. (JUNE)

MARYLAND
MARYLAND. (by David Robb; Chesapeake Theatre, Annapolis. (APR.)

MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS. (by William Inge; Manhattan Theatre Club, New York. (APR.)

MICHIGAN
THE BIG SAIM by Bill Coral; Purple Rose Theatre, Chelsea. (APR.)

MINNESOTA
HAVING OUR SAY by Emily Mann. (JUNE)

MISSOURI
HAVING OUR SAY by Emily Mann. Adapted from the book by Sarah L. and Elizabeth Delany with Amy Hill. (MAY)

MISSOURI
THE ART OF HAVING A HONEY BROWN by Douglas Carter Beane; Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. (APR.)

NEW HAMPSHIRE
THE OLD SETTLER by John Henry Crawford; Unicorn Theatre, Kansas City. (JUNE)

NEW JERSEY
THE ZONING ROOM by A.R. Gurney; Our House Productions, Maplewood. (JUNE)

NEW YORK
DEATHTRAP by Ira Levin; Kaufmann Astoria Studios. (APR.)

NEW YORK
THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO by Alfred Uhry; Playhouse on the Square, Memphis. (JUNE)

RHODE ISLAND
HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE by Paula Vogel; Trucks Theatre, Columbia. (JUNE)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE by Paula Vogel; Trustus Theatre, Columbia. (JUNE)

TENNESSEE
WHEN SUNDAY COMES; Walnut Street Theatre, Pittsburg. (MAY)

UTAH
HUNGRY WOMEN; Utah Shakespeare Festival, Cedar City. (JUNE)

WASHINGTON
THE GRAPES OF WRATH adapted by Frank Galati; Fulton Opera House, Lancaster. (APR.)

WISCONSIN
A QUESTION OF MERCY by Frank Galati; Theatre of the Stars, Milwaukee. (APR.)

WISCONSIN
HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE by Paula Vogel; American Repertory Theatre Co., Tulsa. (MAY)

CANADA
WASHINGTON. (by David Ives; Round House Theatre, Silver Spring. (JUNE)

PENNSYLVANIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge. (MAY)

ARIZONA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Studio Theatre, Washington. (APR.)

CALIFORNIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Studio Theatre, Los Angeles. (APR.)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Studio Theatre, Washington. (APR.)

MASSACHUSETTS
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge. (MAY)

MICHIGAN
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Northlight Theatre, Skokie. (APR.)

MINNESOTA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Round House Theatre, Silver Spring. (APR.)

MISSOURI
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Pittsburgh Public Theatre. (APR.)

PENNSYLVANIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Pennsylvania Stage Co., Allentown. (JUNE)

WISCONSIN
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Madison Repertory Theatre. (APR.)

CANADA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Madison Repertory Theatre. (APR.)

ARIZONA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Studio Theatre, Phoenix. (APR.)

CALIFORNIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Northlight Theatre, Skokie. (APR.)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Studio Theatre, Washington. (APR.)

MASSACHUSETTS
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge. (MAY)

MICHIGAN
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Michigan State University Opera House. (MAY)

MINNESOTA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Minnesota Opera. (MAY)

MISSOURI
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Playhouse on the Square, Memphis. (JUNE)

NEW JERSEY
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Dell’Arte Company. (APR.)

NEW YORK
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Company, Tucson/Phoenix. (APR.)

PENNSYLVANIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; Pittsburgh Public Theatre. (APR.)

WISCONSIN
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CALIFORNIA
THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN by Martin McDonagh; San Diego Repertory Theatre. (MAY)

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