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THEATER



PORK POLITICS The Metropolitan Playhouse dials up a lost play about sex, scandal and hardball politics.

the Metropolitan Playhouse. (Later screen adaptations included *The Woman*, *The Telephone Girl* and *The Secret Call*.) The company couldn't even find a hard copy of the script and had to transcribe it by hand from microfilm unearthed in the New York Public Library.

Although *The Woman* is nearly 100 years old, it doesn't smell especially grandmotherly. Like last year's revival of *Gore Vidal's The Best Man*, *The Woman* poses many questions still thorny in Washington today. Are personal indiscretions relevant to public service? Is politics about public service or personal power? Should morals be sacrificed in the name of compromise? The plot centers on Jim Blake (Leo Bertlesen), the U.S. Senate's powerful leader, who attempts to blackmail an idealistic Maine congressman, Matthew Standish (Russell Hamilton), into voting for a porky railroad bill that would make tycoons richer while endangering public safety. Blake has uncovered evidence of a past sexual indiscretion between Standish and an unknown woman, but the only person who could reveal the mystery lady's name is a hotel switchboard operator, Wanda Kelly (Kritsin Stewart).

The Woman

Adapted by David Zarko from a play by William deMille. Dir. Zarko. With ensemble cast. Metropolitan Playhouse (see Off-Off Broadway).

You expect trivial items like car keys and buttons to disappear, but not a hit Broadway play that spawned three movies. Yet that's exactly what happened to *The Woman*, a story of political intrigue, written by the accomplished writer for screen and stage William deMille (brother of Cecil B.). It was last produced in 1911; then, for reasons no one's quite sure of, it pulled a D.B. Cooper—vanishing for 90 years until being rediscovered by

The performances are generally solid, particularly those of Stewart and the play's other female lead, Annette Previti, as Blake's conflicted daughter. Director David Zarko has reworked the ending to make it more ambiguous and has updated the language somewhat—though the occasional “Jeepers!” has survived. The director also, inexplicably, adds a barbershop musical number to open each act. He should have done some cutting instead. At two-plus hours in the sweltering theater, the play feel almost as long as a Strom Thurmond filibuster. —*Reed Tucker.*