

applications might have gotten the audience involved in feeling the bite of the satire. But the dogs were just dogs, the pigs just pigs, and there were no attempts to invoke the Chicago Police Department, the City Council, the Contras or the Sandinistas, to mention just a few potential targets. In the Bailiwick *Animal Farm* the abstraction of Orwell remained on the one level that Peter Hall provides. The audience grasps that straw early on, and for the remainder of the evening must be contented with appreciating a skillful performance. The problem faced here is not an easy one. Many of us are tired of the bungled attempts of directors to make the productions of classical plays relevant to our times by contemporization through costume, setting, use of multi-media or wholesale rewriting. We yearn for the chance to find the relevance ourselves in the full texture of the original rather than narrowing distortions of production team. But in the case of *Animal Farm* the utter simplicity of the tale gives the audience too much leeway. We can use some prompting to get our imaginations working. We know the animals are to be taken metaphorically, but we need the clues that bring us out of the English countryside into the post-industrial world of the 80's before we feel the sting of satire that Orwell hopes will keep us vigilant.

Donald E. Polzin  
*Northern Illinois University*

**THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK.** By Francis Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. Milwaukee, Wisconsin. December 3, 1987-January 10, 1988.

Scheduling this production in December meant that the MRT faced the problem of a reluctance on the part of audience to deal with the material of the Anne Frank story in the midst of preparations for the holidays. Artistic director John Dillon wrote an effective justification for the timing in the subscribers magazine, citing the Chanukah scene and the empathy it generates for those who are forced by circumstance to live with little or nothing. Whether the notes were effective in overcoming the problem is not certain, but there was no doubt that the audience was conscious of the matter, and it was a factor for good or bad.

Another task faced by the production team was that of recreating the claustrophobic Amsterdam loft setting on their new thrust stage with its 180 degrees of audience arc. Designer Jeffrey Struckman provided director Kent Stephens with a cluttered main room

on the thrust entered by way of a downstage trapdoor stairway, backed by a heavily beamed facade which incorporated rooms for Anne and Peter on either end, and a central kitchen and stairway, the latter leading to the Van Daan space on an upper level. It was a massive structure which successfully provided an atmosphere of confinement and constriction. The roof line angling inward hovered over the occupants and separated them from the outside world of light and air. Brick wall fragments on either end, and the window and roof line treatments gave the proper Amsterdam feel to it all. The very strength of the setting, however, may have undermined the play. The tenuous situation in which the Franks existed was minimized in the production. Ensnared in this fortress, the family is shown in scenes when they were able to move about, sing and engage in lively interaction. The long tedium of the days is absent. The occasional klaxon, the oddly timed telephone bell, the noises from outside and below were not enough to recreate for us the threat of the Nazi beast. Perhaps our senses have been dulled by the passage of thirty plus years, or by the new terrorism and genocides of the eighties.

The warmth and life of the budding teenager vibrantly played by Catherine Lynn Davis dominated this production as it must, but the horror recognized by the adults too often came across as unjustifiable paternalism. The precarious balance between life and death was not maintained. With the audience insulated by collective forgetfulness, we needed to see beyond the walls that protected the Franks temporarily. We needed to be reminded, more than the words of the script reminded us from time to time, that the insanity of the master race had captured to political, economic, and military power of an entire continent, and that the religious faith and sincere hope expressed by Otto Frank was not enough to save the family. In 1955, Goodrich and Hackett could invoke the horror of the final solution with a litany of the names of the death camps -- Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Buchenwald, --but today the audience doesn't bring even the knowledge of history into the theatre, much less the abhorrence of fascism.

The MRT should be applauded for giving us a polished production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, with exceptional performances by Miss Davis as Anne, Tom Blair as Otto Frank, Steven Gefroh as Peter, and Linda Stephens as Mrs. Frank, but the predominance of the warmth of Anne and the comic relief of Mr. Dussel and Mr. Van Daan, encourage us to unthinking acceptance of the ideals Anne herself labeled as absurd. If we come away still believing "that people are really good at heart," and that faith and hope are enough, then the production has misfired seriously. The story of the Franks needs to be retold, and MRT is to be lauded for bringing it to us, but the tragic irony of the

play is unfortunately not self evident. The memorial to Anne Frank must not be remembrance of the happy hours she was able to experience in spite of the situation she was forced into, but an awareness of the collective failure of the human species to purge itself of the Nazi virus.

Donald E. Polzin  
*Northern Illinois University*

**JULIUS CAESAR.** By William Shakespeare. Royal Shakespeare Company, RSC Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, England. July 16, 1987 (Production opened on April 2, 1987).

Perhaps the only significant flaw in the current Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Julius Caesar* is that it is exactly what its audience expects. Despite some fine performances, clear and clever staging, and efficient and telling scenic effects, the interpretation is a mundane and standard view of the play. Its bland faithfulness to traditional treatments make it the sort of Shakespearean production that audiences and critics often say they want to see produced, but very likely do not really want to have to see themselves. Like many of the recent BBC Shakespeare productions, this *Julius Caesar* is a respectful and superficially unassailable production, but the sort that has too often made Shakespeare the high school student's idea of hell.

In comparison with such recent RSC productions as the delightful 1950's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, the Mafia-inspired *Romeo and Juliet*, and the striking and powerful *Titus Andronicus*, *Julius Caesar* probably cannot fail to disappoint. Although one could argue that these other RSC productions may play too fast-and-loose with Shakespeare, they at the very least engage their audiences in a distinct point-of-view and a vivid physical production, extending beyond the level of a clear oral presentation in a appropriately decorated setting. This *Julius Caesar* is somewhat more interesting than that, but audiences are likely to be lulled into the comfortable somnambulence of boredom by the lack of any particular thematic emphasis. Certainly the contemporary parallels in the play have been richly exploited in numerous prior productions, but one is left wondering why director Terry Hands decided to stage it at all if this is all he could do with it.

The setting, designed by Farrah, is a steeply raked stage platform with red brick walls at the sides and back. Few properties and set