

Angels in America in London

Paul Olsen

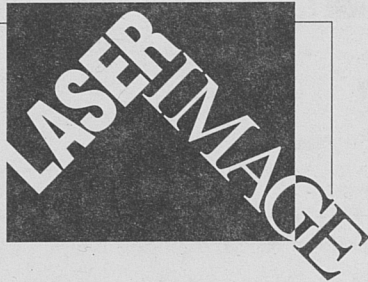
Prior to embarking on a recent trip to Great Britain I was sure that, upon my return, I would be writing about the night-life in London, hiking the sheep-covered Yorkshire Dales, shopping at Harrods, touring medieval churches, or the latest word in the Charles/Diana saga. However, I'd like to share the highlight of the trip which was attending the Royal National Theatre's production of Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America*.

Tony Kushner describes *Angels in America* as "a gay fantasia on national themes." Using a mix of humor, fantasy and tragedy the play is AIDS drama at its best. Subtitled *Part One: Millennium Approaches*, the play focuses on two couples (upwardly mobile Mormon Joseph Pitt, his valium addicted wife Harper and Louis Ironson and his boyfriend Prior Walter) and the guilt they experience during the Reagan years. Featuring some real-life characters, including Joseph McCarthy's secret homosexual aide/power broker Roy M. Cohn and the executed Ethel Rosenberg, the play deals

with the ethical and physical decay of America in the 1980's and is clearly an indictment of the Reagan administration.

Actors in more than one role, actors as stage-hands and minimal scenery contribute to this impressive production. In light of how the AIDS crisis has touched all of our lives this play cannot help but make you cry which is only relieved by the effective placement of humor as evidenced by the witty character Belize, a nurse/former drag queen and Prior's former lover.

American playwright Tony Kushner wrote *Angels in America* as part one of a two part series. The play, which won the 1990 Fund For New American Plays/Kennedy Center award and the 1991 Joseph Kesselring Award, premiered in Britain in January and will be followed by *Part Two: Perestroika*. You heard it here first: *Angels in America* is unforgettable. Watch for it and make plans to attend or better yet call your travel agent and book a trip to London! ▼



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