

ACCENT

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WILLIAM L. SANDERS, the actor, and ROB RAYNE, the director: "We wanted to do a full biography."

2 local men try to bring Booth actor and assassin and real man—to life

"I want to be remembered by succeeding generations, not just as a great actor, but as one who had done something which no man had done before."
—John Wilkes Booth

By Winifred Walsh
Kovach Staff

A 19-YEAR-OLD John Wilkes Booth dreamed of topping the great Columbus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the world. On the night of April 4, 1865, the 26-year-old actor mortally wounded an American colossus, Abraham Lincoln, with a single pistol shot in the head.

Endowed for his bombastic portrayal of Shakespeare's imprisoned assassin, Booth sought greater glory in his true life role as a madman against the Confederacy. An irrational thinker who confused reality with fantasy, he perceived the president as a Caesar who must be slain.

The mystical psychological forces that brought the famed, flamboyant tragedian to this infamous moment in history is the subject of an original dramatic work by local playwright Chris Dickerson, William L. Sanders, a professional actor from Maryland, stars in the one-man stage-pace which offers a full biographical concept.

Approved by the Maryland Historical Society for its factual attention to detail, the play, under the auspices of Sanderson Productions, Inc., opens early in January for a two-week run at Covver College in Sparta, Md. From there the company moves to the Alliance Theater in Atlanta.

"The play does not justify the deed," said Sanders during a rehearsal break at the Fellis Point Theater where he, the author and the director, Rob Rayne, were making final changes in the script. A tall man in his mid-40s who carries himself with flair and style, Sanders admits the basis for the play stems from a long-time desire to play the role.

"It was an idea I had been turning around in my mind for years," he said. "Chris and I would sit around and talk about it. We both wanted to portray Booth the man. We felt he was given a raw deal by history. We also

wanted to do a full biography. Most of the current shows deal only with highlights.

"Finally Chris sat down and went to work on it. After six months of solid research he came up with a 90-minute dramatic form. The one-act takes place in Peter Tallant's saloon, next door to Ford's Theater, right before the assassination. A performance of 'Our American Caesar' is in progress on Ford's stage.

"As one of the patrons of the tavern, Booth, who was known to, shall we say, expand on the truth," Sanders said, checking "spine stories of his famous father, Shakespeare actor James Booth, and his elder brother Edwin, also a renowned actor, and another brother, James Bruce, Jr., who devoted his later years to theater management."

"At the time of the play the streets are filled with gagged-headed wretches," said Dickerson, a lean, pipe-smoking young man whose last theatrical endeavor, "Deadline," was presented during the Baltimore Playwrights Festival.

"The war has just ended. Atlanta and Richmond have burned, inflaming Booth's fanaticism and tenuous mental balance. His once flourishing career is flourishing because of a mere condition. Historical speculation has it that he might have been dying of throat cancer. His work, epitomized by the Southern plantation owner, was gone, never to be recuperated.

"He had very little to look forward to," said Sanders. "If he killed Lincoln he thought it would make him famous and carry out the political Southern cause."

"He was obsessed, not rational," said Rayne, the red-bearded operator of a theater-cadence studio. "I am not certain he was crazy since he formed a conspiracy to remove the entire head of the Union government—the president, the vice president and members of the cabinet. It was all carefully planned. My approach to the role is that he is sane."

"In the play he tells the audience he will kill Lincoln," said Sanders. "By the middle of the second act it is close to the end. His only cut at the end of the play is to do the deed."

See BOOTH, C2, Col. 1

Elise T. Chisolm

Her opinions on cologne and beards sway nation

HELLO, ARE you the lady of the house? Yes, well, no. Sometimes. Well, we are from the Riggins Diggins Company, and if you can answer this question: "Yes, yes, I can, I can."

"The question is: 'What kind of whiskey do you drink?' 'Uh, I'm a Baptist minister...' 'Thank you for your time.' Click."

Has this ever happened to you? I'm talking about real polls, of course, where they ask you how the President is doing, or whether the world should get rid of nuclear weapons, or how you feel about air pollution laws. You have polls that may sway national policies.

No! Well then, who does get polled? I mean, there's the Gallup poll, the Harris poll, the Hill report, Masters and Johnson... and there are just over the big ones. Yet none of them has ever called me, and I always felt left out.

As, but I have recently changed. I finally got to answer a poll and feel so much better. Kind of perked, like I let my opinion finally be heard and felt. I may sway a nation.

I was asked 10 questions, right here in Baltimore, by the Merrit Report, a public opinion survey sponsored by the manufacturer of a cigarette. They bring me into city in their big buses, full of computers and pretty girls. All you do is wander into the bus and press the opinion buttons. The same questions you are responding to are also being asked in a national telephone survey.

I was so excited that I couldn't remember whether I was over 18 when they asked you have to be over 18 to participate, I couldn't recall. The questions weren't quite the ones I wanted to answer, though, as in "Should Nancy Reagan travel by helicopter when she could travel by car?" or "Should children who are 45-week allowances make their own beds?"

Some of them were okay, ranging from trade and Social Security to nuclear plants. But the question I had the most trouble with was: "Do you think the use of cologne by a man makes him more or less appealing to women, or doesn't it make any difference?"

Well, I have to confess, I can't stand fragrances on men, so I said "less appealing."

But do you know, when the local results came out a few weeks ago, it turned out most respondents on this area said cologne makes a man "more appealing." In fact, last year \$457.5 million was spent on men's cologne and after shave lotions.

Yet I'm sticking to my guns. I find men's cologne too strong, cloying and overbearing, especially in an elevator. If I want it to be the man not his perfume.

I mean, does Don Meredith wear cologne? Does Jim Palmer wear cologne? Does Bert Reynolds wear cologne? I did more with the majority in answering who is most attractive to women: a man with a beard, a man with a mustache or one who is clean shaven? I said: "clean shaven," and so did the locals and so did the nation. But only barely. About 54 percent of American adults say a clean shaven man is more attractive, according to the poll.

Joni Mitchell

Her music now has wisdom, gained from experience

AMIDDLE-AGED rock musicians does not usually make for a pretty sight. Watching some burly, 45-year-old father of five children, two or three of them legitimate) sing lyrics that should emit only from the mouth of an 18-year-old is a painful embarrassment. For the singer as well as the listener.

Still, there are exceptions. A handful of pop composers have managed to age with a semblance of grace and wit.

Among these artists have been Paul Simon, John Lennon, Pete Townshend, John Prine and Joni Mitchell, whose latest album, "Wild Things Run Free" (Geffen/CBS 3819), examines love's glories and sorrows.

Early in her career, Mitchell received a lot of flack for being a young woman in the public eye who was less than discreet about her love affairs.

And then the Canadian singer-songwriter-pianist tread even further on formerly male-dominated turf by using her romances as grist for her musical mill.

A decade or so later, the mores of society have loosened somewhat. But Joni Mitchell's scrutiny of male-female relationships continues.

Though reportedly in a state of married bliss nowadays, Mitchell brings a good share of pain to this album. It starts with "Chanson Cafe (Unchained Melody)," wherein the descriptors being "caught in the middle."

By the middle class, we're middle aged." The old wild times of youth are replaced by thoughts of mortality. "Nothing lasts for long." She is shocked to realize that she and her former male contemporaries "look like our mothers did."

The next three songs sustain this melancholy note. Men come and go,

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JONI MITCHELL. Her peers well understood and heaped.

breaking the narrator's heart and leaving her sad and alone in the title track, "Ladies First" and "Moon at the Window." She bounces back on the album's closing number, "Sold Love," with its appropriately buoyant reggae beat.

Side two runs an emotional gamut, from the loveheadbanger that comes from experience ("Be Cool" and "Love") to the unambiguous that comes from too much experience ("You Dream Flat Tire" and "Man to Man") to the elation of being in love ("You're So Square," "I Don't Care") by Jerry Lehrer and Mike Southon rock to a free jazz flourish ("Court and Sparks") possessed a cer-

tain energy that "Wild Things" however competent a production, lacks. This seems a disappointment until you consider that Mitchell herself, about 30 at the time of the '73 record, had a lot more "sparks" than she has at the age of 41.

Her new work, of course, must reflect that. And while it isn't as risky or exuberant as her earlier efforts, Joni Mitchell's music now has a wisdom that was missing before, wisdom that only experience can bring.

Such music may not thrill the younger members of the record-buying public, but Mitchell's peers will understand and be grateful.

For the record