

'Angels in America: Part Two Perestroika' shows off strong talent

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Western State College's Peak Productions opened Tony Kushner's "Angels in America: Part Two Perestroika" to a sell-out audience in the Martin Hatcher Theatre in Taylor Hall on Thursday night. The opening show received a standing ovation from the packed audience.

This epic theater experience is not for the weak-hearted. It deals with homosexuality in a very open fashion and is peppered with loud,

abusive, foul adult language. It runs for three and three-quarters hours, from 8-11:45 p.m.. The theater is very hot and stuffy, so audience members are advised to dress in layers.

But in spite of all that, this show is a backdrop for some very talented acting.

Jeremy Fluhrer is riveting in his portrayal of Prior Walter, one of the main characters of this play. Fluher exhibits biting anger as a homosexual man who has contracted AIDS. His disease has

scared off his lover, Louis Ironson, played by Matthew Kearney. Kearney's character is a spineless, whining homosexual who leaves his lover because he can't take watching him dwindle away into illness. It doesn't take Louis long to pick up another lover in the park. These talented actors manage to create believable sexuality with minimal physicality.

Opening the show is Heather Nicolson portraying "the world's oldest living Bolshevik," Aleksii Antedilluvianovich Prelapsarianov.

Without any makeup to make her look old, Nicolson is entirely convincing with her very thick Russian accent and stooped, slow-moving posture. She delivers a long, soul-searching monologue, delivering "the great question before us: Can we change?"

Louis Ironson's new boyfriend, Joseph Porter Pitt, is played by August Mergelman. Joe is married to Harper, a valium addict who floats in and out of reality, another part played by Heather Nicolson. Mergelman and Nicholson give these characters believability, bouncing off each other's confusion and desperation in such a way as to create a realistic disharmony.

Nathaniel Liederbach once again fills the venomous fangs of Roy Cohn, whose illegal maneuverings during the McCarthy Era led to the execution of Ethel Rosenberg. Rosenberg's ghost, played by Allison Moore, haunts Cohn throughout his slow and painful death from AIDS. Liederbach gives power to the fearful character of Cohn even on his deathbed.

Moore plays three other large roles in this show in addition to Rosenberg, including Emily the nurse, the Mormon mother and the bigger-than-life Angel of America. In each of these roles, Moore does an outstanding job. Her characterizations are distinct and thorough, displaying depth and insight on the part of this talented actress.

Steven Powers outdoes himself as the "flaming gay" nurse Belize. In his bright Hawaiian shirts and effeminate mannerisms, Powers lends comic relief to the otherwise serious action.

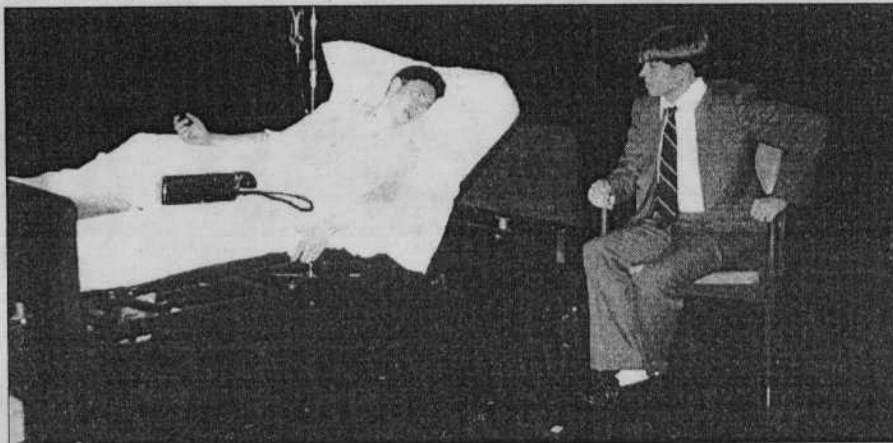
Bethany Stickney appears as Hannah Porter Pitt, Joe's unsmiling Mormon mother. Prior introduces her as "my lover's lover's Mormon mother" in one of the play's few laughable lines. Stickney is to be congratulated in her ability to

maintain a deadpan face throughout, no matter what goes on around her.

Harper's final story about all the lost souls rising up together to form a web that heals the holes in the ozone layer leads to her hopeful remark, "So you see, nothing is lost forever."

And Prior acknowledges that even though "this disease will be the end of many of us." Then he adds, "But we are not going away."

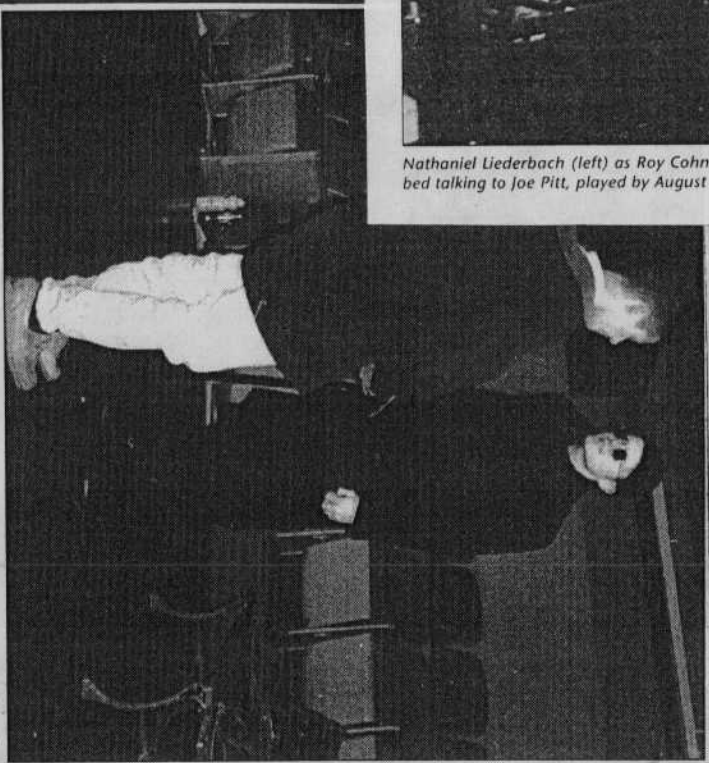
"Angels in America: Part Two Perestroika" plays this week Wednesday through Saturday at 8 p.m. in the Hatcher Theatre. Advance tickets are available at the Circus Train, Paper Clip and at the WSC Bookstore, \$6 for general admission and \$4 for students. Tickets cost \$1 more at the door.



Nathaniel Liederbach (left) as Roy Cohn, a fearsome wheeler-dealer who is dying of AIDS, lies helpless in his hospital bed talking to Joe Pitt, played by August Mergelman.



Heather Nicolson plays Harper Pitt, a disturbed valium addict whose connection with reality is tenuous at best.



Jeremy Fluhrer (right) plays Prior Walter, a homosexual who tests positive for AIDS. Prior's lover, Louis Ironson, played by Matt Kearney (left), abandons Prior, unable to handle the fear and distaste associated with the disease.

Photos by Jan Badgley