

# THE INFORMER

THEATRE REVIEWS - ZEPHYR THEATRE, HOLLYWOOD

## Los Angeles Times



LOS ANGELES TIMES  
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Alan Berman is the title character, Liana Odalys a freedom fighter in "The Informer."

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these people. Another actor, David Himes, is too hammy and broad.

Generally, the male actors are heavy-handed and the women too indistinguishable from each other.

At 241 Moreno Drive, (in Beverly Hills High School), Thursdays through Saturdays, 8 p.m., Sundays, 2 and 8 p.m., through July 8. \$12-\$15; (213) 466-1767.

### 'The Informer' Suffers From Too Much Talkiness

An important subject, the FBI's illegal surveillance of protest groups, is botched in the Faustian political drama, "The Informer," at the Zephyr Theatre.

Director/playwright Anton Holden's heart is certainly sound, but his dramatic instincts are not. Despite provocative dialogue, including the juxtaposition of Spanish and English in this tale of an American student who stings for the FBI, the production suffers from a didactic and stilted tone.

As the rootless sell-out who infiltrates Students in Solidarity with Nicaragua and El Salvador, Alan Berman is a credible and anguished informer. Victor Rivers' paramilitary zealot and Frank Mangano's metallic-cold FBI agent are strong support.

But the production is too talky. Its physical design is much too skimpy; lighting designer (David Carlton) must carry too much of the show. And the steely Liana Odalys seems uneasy and self-conscious as the chief Salvadoran freedom fighter, having a romance with the informer.

At 7458 Melrose Ave., Thursdays through Saturdays, 8 p.m., Sundays, 7 p.m., through July 15. \$12-\$15; (213) 466-1767.

*The Informer* is an ambitious play. Through the drama of on boy's experience, it attempts to tell the story of the United State's relationship with El Salvador, particularly of the FBI's domestic surveillance of U.S.-based political groups which protest the U.S.-backed El Salvadorean regime. The play spans months as it traces the transformation of Paul from a small-time dope dealer to FBI informer, taking the audience through his resistance, submission, disillusionment and finally, regret.

But it is exactly the focus on Paul's story which enables the play to succeed. By creating a character who can draw in the audience, the audience isn't overwhelmed by all the information and attention to detail. Each element of the greater issue of El Salvador plays a very specific dramatic role vis-a-vis Paul. Alicia (Liana Odalys), who embodies the victims of El Salvador as well as the force of the protest group struggle, attracts Paul both as an issue and as a woman. Their relationship exists, on one level, between a woman and a man in love, and, on another level, between the struggle for justice and the seduction of payment.

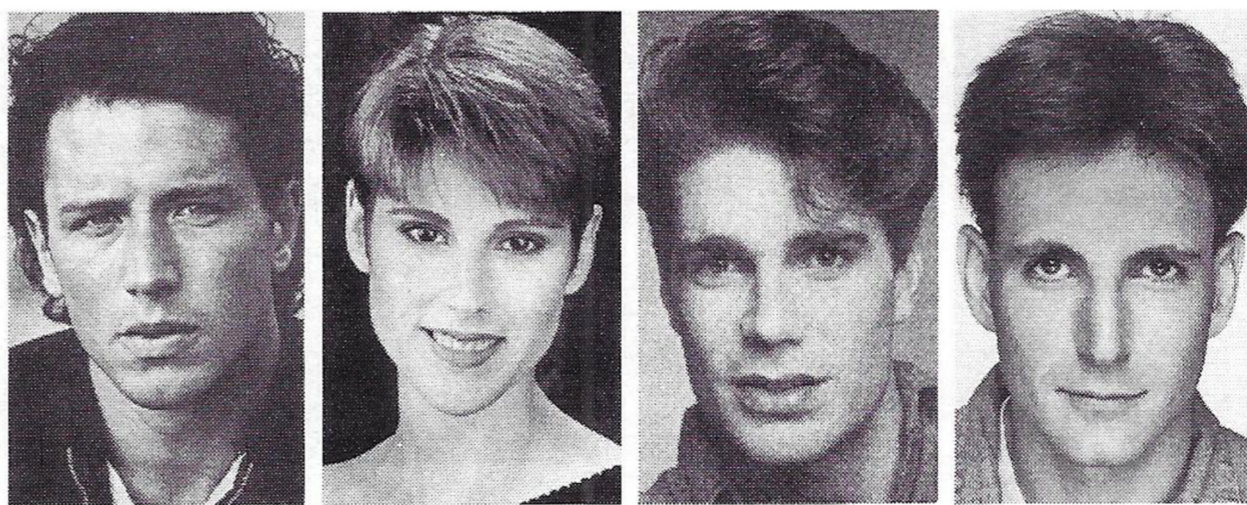
Like all good drama, *The Informer* conveys the universal through the specific, but the play has the added value of educating its audience about a current issue. Outstanding acting by Alan Berman as Paul, Frank Mangano as Bob, and Victor Rivers as Victor, helps the play to expose the theatrical illusions in reality: the pretending, the cover-ups, the lying, and the manipulation of the FBI bureaucracy. Simple, but appropriate, the stage design adapts to each different scene without seeming artificial or contrived.

Written and directed by Anton Holden (who also took care of sets and sound), *The Informer* is a socially conscious and informative play which manages to be entertaining, compelling and funny. It neither sacrifices the greater issue for the sake of cohesive drama, nor compromises drama for the sake of its issue. Perhaps because of his involvement in all aspects of the production, Anton Holden has created a viable and moving resolution between his vision and his medium.

## LAWEEKLY

A young college student named paul (Alan Berman) is arrested on a petty drug bust. He finds himself sitting across the table form a soft spoken FBI agent (Frank Mangano) who offers him a Faustian bargain. . . . Paul's moral drift and self loathing are the most interesting dimensions of Anton Holden's play. . . . we're left with a medieval morality play, or a left-wing movie-of-the-week, that reduces rather than illuminates the complex world it purports to examine. This is in no way meant to discredit the quality of its performances or the rectitude of its sympathies.

## THE Hollywood REPORTER



Wimmer

Tallman

Christopher

Berman

### Theater

Daniel J. Travanti to star in "Les Liasons Dangereuses" at the Ambassadors Theatre in London.

Dane Christopher for "Little Shop of Horrors" at the West Covina Playhouse.

Susan Haefner, Frances Ingalls, Annie Murray and Joyce Worsley for "Steel Magnolias" at the Asolo Theater Center in Sarasota, Fla.

Alan Berman stars in "The Informer" at Hollywood's Zephyr Theatre.

Heather Halley for "Let's Get a Divorce!" at the Santa Paula Theater Center.