

Reworked *Papa* even better than original

By GEORGE CAPEWELL
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Theater Review

Papa

CAST:
William Hindman

CREDITS:
Playwright: John de Groot; Director: Brian C. Smith; Set Design: Jay Tompkins and Dean Kennedy; Lighting Design: Jay Tompkins; Costumes: Rusty Berggren.

At Off Broadway on East 26th Street, Wilton Manors, Fort Lauderdale, through Jan. 22. Begins open-ended run in March at Mallory Square Theatre in Key West. Wed.-Sun. 8 p.m., matinees 2 p.m. Wed. & Sat. Tickets \$16-\$18, phone 566-0554 or BASS.

It's 1957. Ernest Hemingway is just four short years away from committing suicide and locked in another booze-induced afternoon of painful remembrance and regret. The setting is Finca Vigia, his hilltop home a few miles east of a Havana that is about to change forever. Despite a robust and blustery veneer, playwright John de Groot's Hemingway is a man beginning to feel his age, a man filled with fear and about to come face to face with his inner demons.

Although *Papa* was nominated for Best Play in the 1988 Carbonell Awards and William Hindman won the Best Actor award for his Hemingway role, a heavily reworked production has opened a limited run at Brian C. Smith's Off Broadway on

East 26th Street Theatre before beginning an open-ended engagement at Key West's Mallory Square Theatre in March. This *Papa* is a superior production in both structure and insight, offering a more focused ex-

ploration of a life filled with doubt, pessimism and violence, both physical and psychological.

John de Groot's superior writing illuminates not only the legendary Hemingway's inner conflicts but how these almost undefinable deterrents were translated into a crisp and economical writing style that became the Hemingway trademark.

Papa reveals Hemingway's almost uncontrolled hatred of his dominating mother, as well as his desperate need for her approval. It captures the spirit of adventure that would lead an 18-year-old Hemingway to Italy during World War I, his earliest encounter with love, the joys of his first marriage and life in Paris during the '20s as an impoverished but inquiring young writer. It follows a more mature and hardened

Hemingway into the '30s and '40s, a period that found him with a new wife, a new home in Key West and an uncontrollable wanderlust that would lead him to Africa and two close encounters with death, the Spanish Civil War, work as a correspondent and eventual court-martial in World War II, and finally, a less-than-pleasant affiliation with Hollywood.

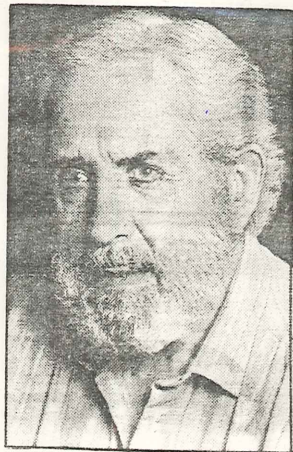
But *Papa* never cheats its audience out of insight into a terribly insecure and frightfully unhappy man.

William Hindman illuminates the mercurial mood changes that were so much a part of Hemingway's persona. His performance breathes life into the legendary character and explores his every nuance, delivering both Hemingway's hard-edged, al-

most gruff exterior and his more gentle, vulnerable nature. Director Brian C. Smith adds some well-chosen directorial flourishes but prudently allows Hindman's tour de force performance to dominate the proceedings.

Dorothy E. Hindman's original score and effects add yet another dimension to the work but occasionally are allowed to detract from the performance. Jay Tompkins' lighting design perfectly captures the play's shifting moods but periodically places Hindman in shadow.

De Groot has invested five years of exhaustive research into creating *Papa*, and the results are keenly evident in a production of extraordinary sensitivity and insight.



William Hindman: Breathes life into Hemingway.