

St. Andrew's Theatre Presents

MACHINAL

by
Sophie Treadwell



Parents Weekend - October 2006

Director's Note

Machinal (french for machinery) was first performed in 1928 and was highly acclaimed by many critics. Reviewer Brooks Atkinson called it "an illuminating, measured drama such as we are not likely to see again."

Despite its initial surge of popularity, it was performed rarely and, for years, could only be found in a collection of plays by American women. Thankfully, *Machinal* has hit a revival phase - was produced in New York and London in the 1990's and has become, again, a very popular play.

Treadwell worked as a reporter for years and covered a number of murder cases involving women. She observed a double standard in the way these women were treated and questioned. Though many of these women had suffered extreme abuse at the hands of their husbands, it was ignored by the legal system and the media. The women appeared immediately guilty simply for acting out in a way that was not submissive, not uncomplaining and not that of the stereotypical happy housewife.

Inspired by one of these courtroom sagas, *Machinal* is about the struggle of a woman internally jailed - not only by her marriage, but also by society's expectations of her. She searches for her voice and yearns to be heard; yet, the "machine" speeds along without notice.

The question is - why has such a seemingly dated play resurfaced? Years after the industrial revolution and the fight for equal rights, are we still stuck on the assembly line?