

OUR TOWN

The Kraine Theatre Manifesto and The Execution

BY MARK HALL AMITIN

A new theatre company has taken up quarters on the East Side's "theatre row," better known as E. 4th Street between Second and Third avenues, where La MaMa, New York Theatre Workshop and a number of other companies call home. In what was the Ukrainian Hall, this ambitious company has set up two theatre spaces and a



PETER STONE

The Execution, at the Kraine, E. 4th St., through Jan. 23.

bar (the KGB) all true to the decor of its predecessor. The endeavor is to be commended for its hope and message to "abolish the concept that art is decorative, a luxury or form of mere entertainment..."

Their new production is resident writer Andrew Young's newest play, *The Execution*, directed by Anthony Di Pietro, the company's artistic director. While one must applaud the group's aims, there are some serious flaws in the final presentation. Set in a U.S. Marine Corps barracks, we face seven men's separate realities of dealing with the upcoming execution of a fellow Marine for murdering an officer. Our hope is that we will be rewarded with a strong and visceral production along the lines of The Living Theatre's *The Brig*, Ken Brown's 1963 examination of the traumatized occupants of a Marine prison.

What we are given is a psychological examination of each man's inability or rationalization of coping with the trauma they are about to face.

The first act is textbook playwrighting gleaming shards of lives, never revealing too much about any of the men or about the officer or marine who murdered him. Act two builds more profoundly with the revelation that some poor private cracked under training and freaked.

There are some powerful moments resulting from a number of very strong performances. Chase Harrell, Evan Michaels and Ivan Jourdain all give us more than credible, if not in fact, riveting portraits. Their consistency and commitment to their characters is unshakable. Mr. Harrell takes the particularly mundane role of Cartwright, and with steadfast believability, converts his matinee idol persona into a definitive character. Watch out for him. Gil Deeble and Paulus Kapteyn also have shining moments. Alas, not all the performances are up to their quality, and where we wish for a definitive ensemble, we must sometimes put up with amateurish theatrics.

The premise of the play, examining the vital issues of killing by order and the military's credo of following blindly without personal conscience, is an important one indeed, and many of these actors feel the commitment to its implications. Let us hope this company stays true to its aims and grows in stature, artistic commitment as well and social goals.