

'Pandemonium! An Evening in Hell with David Mamet and Gertrude Stein' *Theatre Rhinoceros, 2926 16th St; 861-5079. \$12-15. Thurs/11-Sat/13, 8:30pm; Sun/14, 7:30pm.*

Custom Made Theatre presents two rare one-acts pondering purgatory in the distinctive manner of two American wordsmiths. David Mamet's *Bobby Gould in Hell* revisits the rapacious Hollywood exec from *Speed the Plow*, Gould (Jason Nagel), answering for past sins in an underworld interrogation by a folksy, I'd-rather-be-fishing version of the devil (Richard Wenzel) and his benign assistant (Keith Madden). The ensuing game of cat and mouse sparks a pleasing barrage of insults and prevarications, marred only by some uneven acting. Things pick up, however, with the tetchy testimony of Gould's ex-girlfriend (Jennifer Dean), which has even the devil playing defense. Strong ensemble work and vivid staging make for an even more worthwhile rendering of Gertrude Stein's *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights*, a minitragedy bathed in Stein's idiosyncratic nursery-rhymed drollery that suggests a bad dream by Dr. Seuss. Director Brian Katz updates the 1938 work slightly, casting Jeff Bredt's sympathetic Faust for the atomic age in shades of Einstein and Oppenheimer. A fine cast successfully puts across the drama in Stein's enigmatic repetitions, making a night in hell a lot sounder than it sounds. (Avila)