

Willamette Week

October 23, 2002

The Zoo Story with The American Dream

WW PICK Profile Theatre opens its sixth season with two of Edward Albee's first one-act plays, *The Zoo Story* and *The American Dream*. Both plays contemplate the failure of human communication within typically American settings. *The*

American Dream, the first piece of the evening, is a hilarious, wonderfully cast and costumed production that tackles the Americana Albee's play sets out to demolish. Mired in absurdity from beginning to end, the play exposes the illusion of the 1950s television-sitcom norm of domestic order—and the lack of connection it creates as truly nightmarish. Michele Mariana gives an inspired performance as a perfectly bitter old woman who survives the ridiculous madness she ultimately helped to beget. The evening's second piece, *The Zoo Story*, is a much darker examination of social interaction. Kevin Connell plays Peter, a married businessman with an affinity for a particular park bench, which he has reserved for quiet readings on pleasant New York Sunday afternoons for years. Peter's routine becomes disturbed when Jerry, an antagonistic transient, engages him in conversation. While David Berson's performance as Jerry can be eager during his longer monologues, Berson still manages to portray him as both disaffected and striving for a final connection. Both actors' performances contain the necessary amount of controlled rage that becomes increasingly primal and threatening in scope throughout this difficult play. Judging from this first production, Profile's upcoming season should be an exciting investigation into the plays of Albee. (KC)

Profile Theatre Project at Theater! Theatre!, 3430 SE Belmont Ave., 242-0080. 8 pm Thursdays-Saturdays, 2 pm Sundays. Opens Oct. 18. \$25.