

## THE ALDERMAN RISES

I was not so impressed with playwright Wayne Frank's early work, but the Milwaukee alderman is rapidly refining his ear for language, to judge by his adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. This world premiere by the Milwaukee Chamber Theatre (October 14-29; Broadway Theatre Center) was well-crafted and notably dramatic. Director Montgomery Davis created an atmospheric yet fast-moving production with strong acting, particularly by Carrie Hitchcock and Jim Butchart. Yet the play seemed a bit hollow, lacking in point of view. In simply stripping the novel down to its most active dialogue, Frank lost much of the characters' complexity. (Frank and Davis had particular problems handling the characters' anti-Semitism.) The central performance by Brian Robert Mani (as Jake Barnes) seemed emblematic: Mani deftly captured the stance and rhythms of the character but not much of his inner life. Still, an interesting production. (Bruce Murphy)

## SIGMUND'S THIRD

Accusations of elitism would die if more classical music groups followed the example of the **Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra** in its season opener (October 11; Pabst Theater) and put at least one genuinely newsworthy item on every program. The headliner here was Sigmund Snopek's "Pale Sun." The third in a series of three-song cycles by Snopek, these settings of steamily sensual poems by Milwaukee native Cynthia d'Este, in soprano Marlee Sabo's expert rendering, left the audience cheering and hooting in delight. Snopek's passionate tone painting is invigorating precisely because he joyfully embraces music's essential communicative features — uncompromised tonality, straightforward melody, lively rhythms and clear-cut form — that

have been shunned as simplistic by hardened academicians of this century. In the rest of the concert, conductor Stephen Colburn offered a witty Haydn (Symphony No. 82), a sympathetic rendition of Ives' Symphony No. 3 and two Handel excerpts that proved monochromatic and utterly lacking in the lightness of spirit that defines this idiom. (Nancy Raabe)

## New works from Wayne Frank and Sigmund Snopek.

## TRICK OR TREAT

### 70 Scenes of Hal-

*loween* is about 30 scenes too many. This dark comedy might seem like perfect fare for Theatre X (whose production ran October 11-29), but playwright Jeffrey Jones is merely trafficking in tragicomedy, repeating the same riffs rather than developing them. His tired concept portrays a troubled marriage (the man and woman zone out on TV while failing to listen to each other — quite a new



Linda Kimpeel

concept, that) and throws in some Halloween spooks and postmodern packaging for flavoring. But Jones lacks enough interest in his characters to develop them any further. Guest director Maria Mileaf did a solid job, considering the material, but you have to wonder why she chose the play. Supporting actress Flora Coker somehow made her lines pop, which was quite a feat, but this show was otherwise more trick than treat. (Bruce Murphy)