

BACK STAGE

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Wisconsin

The early weeks of the new year were marked by firsts for Wisconsin theatre. The most impressive were the premiere of a new stage adaptation of Daniel Defoe's 1722 novel *Moll Flanders*, written by Milwaukee actress and playwright Marie Kohler, and the first American production of Irish actress and dramatist Marie Jones' *A Night in November*. Kohler, working closely with director Norma Saldivar, has written a clear, sure-handed adaptation that stays true to Defoe's story while emphasizing the question of what most influences a person's life—circumstances or free will.

Titled *Midnight and Moll Flanders*, the piece preserves Moll's strong voice from the novel as she justifies her criminal behavior. Emma Bates and Laurie Birmingham capture, respectively, the essence of the young Moll (ingenueness blended with determined ambition) and the old Moll (street-savvy cynicism). The production, which continues

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REGIONAL Roundup

Wisconsin

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through Feb. 27, is a collaboration between Renaissance Theaterworks and the Professional Theatre Training Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



(Top) Emma Bates (l.) and Laurie Birmingham in "Midnight and Moll Flanders" in Milwaukee; (above)