



# Two on the Aisle

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

## Defense of Lee Harvey Oswald

"The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald," which opened last night at the ANTA Theater, assumes that Oswald wasn't killed by Jack Ruby but lived to stand trial for the murder of John F. Kennedy. The testimony of witnesses, ballistic experts and the FBI is presented, the accused man appears on his own behalf, and the attorneys for the prosecution and the defence make their appeals. The verdict is left to the audience, which is supposed to be the jury in the case.

It is clearly a work for the theater that cannot be judged by the customary critical standards applied to plays. Its interest lies in its painful subject matter, its detailed contemplation of a national tragedy still close to us, the official solution to which has left so many people throughout the world uncertain and dissatisfied. Courtroom dramas are never without a touch of fascination, but this is one that aims, not at excitement, but at being disturbing.

### Taking Sides

Amram Ducovny and Leon Friedman, who wrote the script, insist that the testimony they present is based on actual evidence, but I think there can be little doubt that the production is slanted toward the side of Oswald. One sign of this is in the casting of the two attorneys. Ralph Waite makes the defense counsel an idealistic young man dedicated to the cause of justice, while Clifton James' prosecutor seems one of those Southern bigots out of racial melodramas.

Yet, rather surprisnigly, the case for Oswald appears weakest when he is on the stand testifying for himself. His story about a conspiracy against Kennedy in which he was innocently trapped, a murder plot hatched by some mysterious Cubans sup-

porting Castro or perhaps a double cross schemed up by the CIA, does sound like a pretty tall tale. Indeed, it warrants the scornful skepticism understand-

### 'The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald'

A drama by Amram Ducovny and Leon Friedman was presented last night at the ANTA Theater by Gene Persson. It was staged by Tunc Yalman, the setting was by Robin Wagner, and the costumes by Theoni V. Aldredge. The cast included Peter Masterton, Clifton James, Ralph Waite, John Gerstad, Glenn Kezer, William Leach, Dan Priest, Charles Randall, Garrett Saunders, Anne Shropshire, Douglas Stark, Barton Stone and Louise Stubbs.

ably heaped on it by the disagreeable prosecuting attorney.

### Missing Report

More mystifying than illuminating is the brief mention of a missing report. I gathered that the defense counsel felt it would help exonerate his client, but he said it couldn't be recorded because it had been passed to the Kennedy family. It struck me as adding another puzzling element to the case. Such matters

add to the difficulty of thinking of the evening as a drama, but obviously its chief concern is with its disturbing aspects, even at the cost of repetition.

When you enter the theater, Peter Masterton, who has the title role, is already sitting on the stage, and he has nothing else to do until the second half.

But he has eventually that long scene in which he testifies, and he handles it with modest sincerity. He also looks strikingly like the photographs of Oswald. I doubt that the documentary play makes a very persuasive case for his innocence, but it serves its purpose of being thought-provoking about it.