

**DRAMA**

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## 'Sirhan Did Not Act Alone' --A View at the Julian Theater

By Bernard Weiner

**T**HE CONTINUING controversy over the assassinations of John F. and Robert Kennedy has spilled over into the world of art.

There have been two movies on the slaying of President Kennedy and the subsequent Warren Commission Report—the documentary "Rush to Judgment" and the fictionalized "Executive Action." A film on the Robert Kennedy assassination, "The Second Gun," came out last year, another one is in the works, and a new play by Easy Bay teacher Hans Steinkellner, "A Very Gentle Person", concerning the Sirhan Sirhan case, opens at 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday at the Julian Theater, 953 De Haro street.

Steinkellner, who wrote an earlier play, "Factfinders," about the Warren Commission Report, talked about his new work in a recent interview.

"The title is ambiguous," he said. "Ethel Kennedy described her husband with those words—'a very gentle person'—but I mean them to apply, in a sense, to Sirhan Sirhan as well.

"My year's research, and that of others who have spent much more time on it than I have, leads me to the conclusion that Sirhan was very definitely a patsy who was in a disassociated state—either hypnotized by

someone else or put into a trance by autohypnosis—from the time he entered the Ambassador Hotel (where the senator was slain) until sometime the next morning during questioning by the police.

"All the evidence points to a second-gun theory. Three witnesses who originally testified about seeing a girl in a polka-dot dress on the scene were forced, by subtle but definite pressure, to change their testimony. One of them, the maitre d', admitted that he'd been pressured by the police.

"But, even if there was but one gun—and I'm only suggesting that for argument's sake—it's irrelevant whether Sirhan shot Kenne-

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dy. If he was in a disassociated state, not responsible for his actions, then justice was not served by trying and convicting him. In a recent Norwegian case, a man was freed of a murder charge and the guy who hypnotized him was caught and tried."

Steinkellner has definite theories about who was behind the Kennedy assas-

sinations—and that of Martin Luther King and the attempt on George Wallace—"but I haven't attempted to draw conclusions in this play, merely to present the facts of Sirhan's arrest and interrogation based on the record.

"The point of the play is to show that Sirhan did not act alone, that he is a victim, a patsy, of someone—and to help build public pressure to get the case re-opened, so we can at last find out the truth."

He noted that a recent Gallup Poll showed that two-thirds of Americans do not believe the Warren Commission Report's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy, and that Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.) recently introduced the first bill in the House of Representatives calling for a re-opening of all the investigation of recent assassinations and attempts.

Steinkellner, a former Catholic priest who now teaches German at Clayton Valley High School in Concord, said he received almost automatic rejections when he first sent out his manuscripts to potential producers. But, time has passed, and now the mere press release about the play has brought out news-



PLAYWRIGHT HANS STEINKELLNER

paper people and TV reporters by the score, he said.

Steinkellner, who had his play "The Garbage Collector" performed in 1972 at New York's Cubiculo Theater, has also co-authored (with Donald Freed) a play about the Symbionese Liberation Army and its abduction and conversion of Patricia Hearst. He hopes

to premiere "A Let-Burn Situation" in Europe this year.

"A Very Gentle Person," with Paul Willis as Sirhan, is being co-directed by Richard Reinnecius and Edward Weingold. It will also play at 8:30 p.m. the following Friday and Saturday, June 20-21, as part of the Julian's New Plays Series.