

## MY SISTER IN THIS HOUSE



*Photo by Theresa Halzle*

**GO!** In 1933 France, two submissive church-going maids named Christine and Lea Papin brutally murdered their employer and her daughter, a crime that riveted the country and set off a firestorm of debate about the conditions of the working poor. Handsomely staged, director Michael Unger's signed and spoken production of Wendy Kesselman's drama speculates around that event. Stockpiled with the minutiae of the maids' daily routine, it explores the increasingly bizarre psychological dynamics between the perpetrators - the fastidiously capable Christine (Deanne Bray, voiced by Darrin Revitz) and her clumsier dependent sister, Lea (Amber Zion, voiced by Lindsay Evans), as well as their relationship with their mean "Madame" (Casey Kramer) and her docile daughter, Isabelle (Jennifer Losi). Performed without an intermission, the plot's unhurried rhythm reflects the excruciatingly slow pace of life in the setting's time and place. Bray and Zion are lovely and expressive in communicating the sisters' bond, forged ever more tightly in response to Madame's nitpicking cruelty, though Christine's dark side could be underscored more emphatically. Kramer's villainess is so fulsomely drawn as to border on caricature; this apparent directorial choice, made to emphasize the melodrama, is handled by this performer with considerable skill. And Losi projects an effective foil as the petulant Isabelle, whose impulses towards kindness are ultimately annihilated by her mother. Designers Tom Buderwitz' set, Leigh Allen's lighting and A. Jeffrey Schoenberg's costumes create an ambience of musty money contrasting aptly with this dark disturbing tale. Deaf West Theater, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., N. Hlywd.; Thurs.- Sat., 8 p.m.,; Sun., 2 p.m.; thru May 30. (818) 762-2773. <http://www.deafwest.org> (Deborah Klugman)