

NEW REVIEW LONDON'S SCARS The preshow announcement in the style of the London Underground's famous "mind the gap" admonition takes us to Thurloe Square, the site of a recent bus bombing in the world premiere of Richard Martin Hirsch's latest work. The bombing is discussed by psychologists Bronwyn (Imelda Corcoran) and Margaret (Ann Noble); the former is an art therapist and becomes saddled with Mary (Meredith Bishop), a young woman who witnessed the tragedy and is consequently a person of interest to MI5 field agent Dowd (Rob Nagle). In their sessions, Mary is initially reticent, responding only with book quotations. As Bronwyn uses art to delve into Mary's psyche, however, Mary opens up, revealing her occupation as a call girl and her association with Habib (Ammar Ramzi), the Pakistani man thought to be responsible for the bombing. Hirsch's ear for the British idiom, especially London slang, is undeniable, and his characters are fascinating -- especially the tortured souls of Mary and Habib. However the simmering tension Hirsch strives to build into "explosive" (sorry) moments unfortunately lacks the requisite danger and menace to keep us in anticipation. Director Darin Anthony employs creative staging of the numerous flashbacks and movements in space and time, aided by Christie Wright's nimble lighting, Stephen Gifford's flexible set, and Bill Froggatt's soundscape of London calling. The solid cast is punctuated by standouts Nagle, notable for his chameleonic shifts in playing two other minor characters as well, and Bishop, whose tortured intensity is palpable. Odyssey Theatre, 2005 S. Sepulveda Blvd., W.L.A.; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; through June 27. (310) 477-2055. A Coffeehouse Production (Mayank Keshaviah)