

# Powerful *Beirut* explores love, rage in a time of plague

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Special to The Herald

Playwright Alan Bowne's *Beirut* offers a horrifying vision of the future — a world where paranoia and mistrust have replaced reason and compassion. The Thread Theater Group at Art-Act in Miami Beach offers a solid interpretation of this controversial work about love and sexuality in the midst of a universal epidemic. It should be said at the outset that the play, inspired by the AIDS epidemic, is not for everyone. It is peppered with profanity and includes nudity.

*Beirut* is set in a not-too-distant future where misconception and fear surrounding the virus of a mysterious sexually transmitted

## THEATER REVIEW

### BEIRUT

**Cast:** Albert Martel, Laura Medley, Vince Mrazovich, Howard Ferre.  
**Playwright:** Alan Bowne.  
**Director:** Albert J. Acevedo.  
**Set Design:** Art-Act.

At Art-Act, 1024 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach; 8:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Sunday; \$8 general admission, \$6 students and senior citizens; through Nov. 12; 531-8912.

disease have convinced the United States government to quarantine all those who have tested positive for the virus. Beirut is the name given to the section of New York City where all virus carriers are forced

to live in abandoned, burned-out buildings.

It is a world where carriers can be executed for having sex with the uninfected. Just outside Beirut, several offenders are hanged for attempted sexual contact. Within the confines of the ghetto, everyone is checked daily by brutal police known as sex detectives. All carriers must strip on command and reveal a label that brands them for life.

No one is in Beirut for a visit; they have come there only to die. Most live in alleys or crowded rooms, but Torch, a young man who has recently arrived, has found his own room. It is littered with graffiti and smells of urine, but it offers some semblance of privacy.

Torch is nervously awaiting a visit from his girlfriend, Blue, who has il-

legally entered the quarantined area. Blue cannot exist without love, and has decided the risk of death with Torch is better than the synthetic existence left to the survivors in the outside world.

Albert Martel is persuasive as Torch, delivering a performance of force and imagination, if somewhat lacking in nuance. Laura Medley as Blue manages to whip up a storm of fury with great conviction, and also captures the reflective, quizzical nature of her character.

Albert J. Acevedo's direction fully conveys the pathos and desolation of the playwright's vision of human endurance. Howard Ferre's original music effectively depicts the work's shifting moods, and Art-Act's set

design articulates the hopelessness of the play's protagonists.

Vigorous writing makes *Beirut* a powerful dramatic work peopled with characters locked forever in their private hells.

N.Y. school considers Soviet exchange