

THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

A dream ends in nightmare: Two friends grow up in Nazi Berlin

THEATRE

By BERWYN LEWIS

The Enemy Within, by Grazyna Monvid.
Cast: Sabina Dunn, Ana Lee, Hilary Larkum,
Glenda Linscott. Director: Margaret Davis.
Ensemble Sunday Theatre, 8 pm, January
9, 16 and 23.

SET IN Berlin between 1932 and 1945, this intriguing and powerful work is based on the experiences of the playwright's family and friends.

Born in Poland, raised in London, now in her mid-30s, her play is a sad and horrifying tale told through the politically conflicting lives of

two passionate and intelligent schoolgirls. One, the daughter of a communist family, the other the daughter of a well-to-do pastry shop owner, their friendship outlives the politics of Nazi Germany.

They are forced to question their roles as brains or fertility machines, their priorities of conscience versus expedience, compassion versus conditioning. Finally the answer, or lack of it, comes. Society has turned on itself. The dream ends in a nightmare. Surrender and destruction are inevitable but at the same time ennobling.

With its military music the play does not sink into a tautological Nazi bash. It is directed with simplicity and cold restraint. The stark, swastika-dominated sets emphasise the moral breakdown which insinuates itself offstage, remaining sufficiently remote for cast and audience to enter into a familiar con-

spiracy of indifference for reasons of self-preservation.

The cast serves the spare and sensitive writing of this play.

Mrs Kellerman, cold, rapacious, instinctual and selectively blind to the labour camps on which the pastry shop empire depends.

Magda, over-protected, bright child of the bourgeoisie, in a torment of pressure from parents, teachers and friends.

Sophie, sturdy, self-reliant, a sacrifice to the collective guilt.

And the multiplicity of characters portrayed by Glenda Linscott from passionate young teacher, Mrs Braun, bursting with neo-Nazi enthusiasm, and later as Renate von Seefeld, contemplating a nose job so she can acquire the fashionable Aryan look.

The provocative material of Monvid's play is finely supported by this resourceful production.