

## Document Citation

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Author(s)	Alfred Greason
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# THE HURRICANE

Richard Herndon presents Olga Petrova in her own play, designated the "story of a life in four episodes." It has four acts and as many scenes, several of which are elaborate and well done. Ten people are concerned in the cast. Given at the Frolic theatre, atop the New Amsterdam, Sunday night before an invited audience.

Martha Olczewski ..... Camilla Dalberg  
Masha ..... Katharine Roberts  
John Arkwright ..... Lewis Willoughby  
Richard Peterson ..... Manuel A. Alexander  
Rose Peterson ..... Dorothy Ellin  
Ilka ..... Olga Petrova  
Joe Jennings ..... Joseph Granby  
Michael Deeney ..... Patrick S. Barrett  
Walter Welch, M. D. .... Percy Carr  
Butler ..... Dan O'Brien

"The Hurricane" would have been a play of immense dramatic power if it had fulfilled the promise of its first and second acts, particularly the first, a grim introduction to the life of a backwoods family being crushed by a brutal father until the older girl revolts and runs away, practically announcing her intention to enter a life of shame in the city.

Here was a climax that had a hard-boiled audience sitting up straight.

The second act slipped a little, but it had a certain flavor of spicy comedy in the sophisticated demi-mondaine who shrewdly had decided to give up her mode of living and go in for a respectable job. That is, there was some fun in the episode, but also a lot of boredom in a sentimental doctor who mooned about loving the girl and seeking to reveal to her her soul.

Up to the middle of this act the play was rich in promise. From there it steadily progressed into final disaster. The ending of the second act is false and sloppy twaddle. On top of that the third stanza is the dullest and most tedious act that has struck Broadway this season. Our lady of the Kansas City place has now become a successful "interior decorator" in the astonishingly short space of five years and is rich enough by her own efforts to spend the winter in Florida, where she falls in love with the bromidic hero. He proposes marriage and she reveals her past.

This extraordinary young man registers brief emotions of fury and grief, but, as the saying is, "love conquers all," and he enters into an agreement to leave for three months, returning to renew his proposal on the first rainy day in March—"rainy day in March" is positively specified.

Comes the rainy day, all is set for the lover's appearance. The heroine is discovered chatting with the sentimental doctor before the fireplace of her Long Island home. Out of this friendly chat there bursts upon the unsuspecting audience the doctor's conviction that the heroine is a victim of a loathsome disease. The doctor even conducts a clinic in plain sight of the audience, including trial for nervous reaction from a blow just below the knee cap and intimate questions about falling out of hair. It suddenly dawns upon the woman what the doctor is driving at, and she commits suicide by taking morphine. But wait, maybe she didn't succeed. The audience couldn't tell. Her deathlike form was laid on a

day-bed and the doctor bent over her in hushed silence.

"She's still breathing," he said sententiously, and the curtain dropped on that speech. Take it or leave it. That's what the doctor said.

No play could long survive that third act. It is the apex and apogee, also the pinnacle and altitude record of dullness. One of the longest speeches of the play is given over to a humorless discourse by a deadly old bore about his symptoms of illness. The play is full of such time killers as:

"How are you?"

"Fit as a fiddle. How are you?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"And your father?"

"Oh, father has a new disease."

Mme. Petrova was splendid in the big scene of the first act. After that she tapered off with the play into an indifferent impersonation of Florence Reed, except for that odd alien twist to her speech. It was an altogether inauspicious occasion for the actress. None of the supporting players stood out. The play was tested last spring on a six weeks' tour, partly spent in Chicago. Report has it that Miss Petrova used the first act as a sketch, playing in vaudeville for a time.

The first act may yet be salvaged for a playlet, but otherwise the play is a dead loss. *Rush.*