

Women who achieve parody

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In the "olde" days, when women misbehaved they got run out of town.

Now they get a Playbill.

Take scandal-plagued domestic diva Martha Stewart. Like chocolate chips folded into Toll House Cookie dough, Stewart's ups and downs have been baked into "Martha! The Unauthorized Musical."

Last night, theater pros attended a reading of the show's first act and saw Sally Wilfert ("Assassins") act up as the thinly disguised Martha Blake, who "rises from her working-class Polish roots to become doyenne of American domesticity."

"We did [the reading] to get the show up on its feet," says co-writer John G. Ekizian, who won't confirm that Stewart is the model for his musical.

The jam-making jailbird is just the latest in a parade of fallen females who've gone from castigated to celebrated. Bad girls are indeed the stuff that plays and musicals are made of.

Co-writers Winston Beigel and Melissa Rauch are candid about the rebellious young woman who inspired "The Miss Education of Jenna Bush," which will premiere in August at the New York International Fringe Festival.

Set on the eve of Jenna's first day on the job as a schoolteacher, the show exploits "her scandalous past," says Beigel. "We cover the underage drinking and the alleged pot-smoking."

Bush's thong-clad "butt dance" is also explored. Show props include a bong and Pabst Blue Ribbon beer.

"It's all in good fun," says Rauch, who also stars in the one-woman show. "Jenna would laugh. But I don't think her parents would be totally thrilled."

Odds are Monica Lewinsky's mom and dad wouldn't approve of everything in "Monica! The Musical," based on the intern's sexual shenanigans with Presi-

dent Bill Clinton. After a number of workshop versions, it bows at the New York Musical Theater Festival in September.

Meanwhile, Kathy Hilton might blanch at the blue language peppering "I Love Paris," which plays Monday nights at the Blue Heron Arts Center in Gramercy Park. It's been running there since last July.

"The play takes you inside the rambling mind of Paris Hilton," says director Timothy Haskell. Yes, Hilton's tacky sex tape is mused about in detail — she laments about the crummy lighting.

One interesting twist in "Paris" is that the title character is played by a dude. The conceit "helps send up the character and makes it more of a study of celebrity," says Haskell. "Paris says a lot of very filthy things. It's a bit less upsetting coming out of a man's mouth."

Then again, creating discomfort is the point of these theatrical exercises, according to Los Angeles sociologist and author B.J. Gallagher.

"These satires are modern-day versions of the pillory," she says. "By shaming and poking fun at women this way, it's a warning. It's as if [the show's creators] are saying, 'Look, this is what happens to women who are not good girls.'"

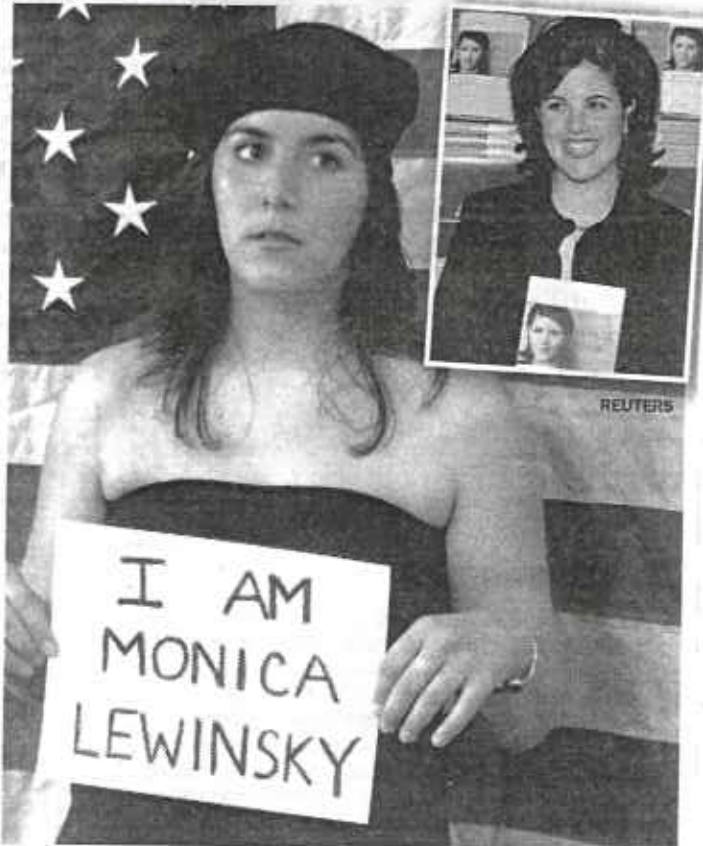
On the other hand, Rauch and Beigel say writing about the First Bad Girl was fraught with danger.

"Winston and the director and I were having a meeting," says Rauch, "and we were sure we were being watched from a window across the street."

"At this point, I'm sure we're on a list."



TWIN BILL: Melissa Rauch in "The Miss Education of Jenna Bush"



SIGN OF THE TIMES: Christine DiGiallonardo in "Monica! The Musical" and the real-life former White House intern (inset)

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