

Agnes of God

Royal Park Theater

Since it is still comparatively rare for a woman to have the lead role in a movie, the sight of three actresses with *all* major roles of a film is something to behold.

That is the spectacle of *Agnes of God*, a provocative movie starring Jane Fonda, Anne Bancroft and Meg Tilly. It tackles such weighty topics as the place of religion in the modern world and the definition of insanity — through the story of Agnes, a young woman studying in a convent to be a nun.

Agnes secretly gives birth to a baby and then apparently strangles it. However, during the ensuing scandal, she insists that she has no recollection of the child. "I don't believe in the baby," she says.

Consequently, a court-appointed psychiatrist is sent to the convent to determine whether she is insane. As Dr. Martha Livingston, Jane Fonda must contend with an irascible Mother Superior, played warmly by Anne Bancroft.

Mother Superior sees Agnes as an innocent and possibly as a saint. Agnes knows little about the outside world and Mother Superior feels she could be cared for better in the convent, where she would be safe and happy.

Livingston thinks Agnes has been cheated and duped by the church because she has never been given a chance to see the outside world, never been given a chance to choose.

Meg Tilly plays Agnes remarkably, with depth *and* simplicity. We feel we understand Agnes completely, and yet she remains a tantalizing mystery.

Unfortunately, *Agnes of God* is based on a Broadway play, and some explanations, especially concerning Livingston's past experience with the church, seem to have been lost in the transition.

By Michael Giltz