



# Deus Ex Machina and The Hands of the Beholder

*Richard S. Bailey*

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## **Deus Ex Machina and The Hands of the Beholder** Richard S. Bailey

The Hollywood Drama-Logue raved about "Deus Ex Machina" saying, "The play is a delight, it wonderfully places in perspective the more commercial aspects of the business of belief. ...wonderful vaudeville schtick, outright camp, and a fine understanding of man. ...comic and somehow touching characters in difficult outrageous comedy sequences creating a feeling of real people caught in a surrealistic future space. ...wit, wisdom and downright fun. Bailey makes his point clearly." The San Francisco Bay Guardian called it "One of the best original plays of the year." when it was presented in Berkeley and at the Pacific School of Religion. "Deus Ex Machina" and its prologue piece, "The Hands of the Beholder" are absurd, dark comedies about true believers, religious fundamentalists, and mystics who claim special knowledge of God. They take place in a rapidly approaching future when uncontrollable fervor is leading to a vaudevillian Armageddon. "Deus Ex Machina" is based on the biblical story of "Abraham and Issac". The nuclear family has split on how to find God and save the world. Father and son join on a rampage to unleash the power that is supposed to be contained in calling out the true name of God. The wife and mother warns of the impending disaster that will be the result of their quest. Ignoring her, they rush headlong through a hilarious melee of mystical, religious, and scientific information as they seek to recreate the days when the money flowed and God smiled upon them. "The Hands of the Beholder" sets the stage for the end of the world when anarchist historians urge that each and every person remain vigilant and become aggressively active in choosing the tools to use in creating history they way they think it should be. Together, they describe a time that has become increasing real and menacing, leaving us only with the ability to tell a few jokes and laugh as the world crumbles around us.

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