

**TRUMPET OF FREEDOM: THE SAGA OF JOHN BROWN**  
reviewed by David Lipfert

If there ever was a man with a mission, it was John Brown. This mission to entirely abolish slavery in the South he saw as divinely ordained, so no compromises were in order. Freeing slaves a few at a time only increased his zeal for larger actions. For starters he would capture the poorly-defended fort at Harpers Ferry in West Virginia and its desirable munitions. It was a good strategy, but Brown lacked the manpower to achieve it. He was captured, left to rot in jail with untreated wounds, speedily tried and hung. Brown's was an opening move in the American Civil War, which the North fought and won more for economic reasons than humanitarian ones. Where Brown parted company with Northern activists was his "hands-on" approach and yearn for martyrdom. Although we have seen plenty of comparable examples in the twentieth century, we still don't appreciate the depth of conviction that someone like Brown possessed.

The monologue *Trumpet of Freedom* by George Wolf Reily and Norman Thomas Marshall and performed by Marshall presents the subject without apologies. In it, Brown speaks to the world after his death in what seems to be largely his own words. Marshall is a superb actor, and he finds well-differentiated voices for all the characters in the saga. He is able to transport the audience to the mid-nineteenth century with gesture and cadence, even within the straightjacket of Southern accents. Well-chosen costumes by Yvonne Skaggs further underline the convincing illusion. The script is full of lively description, Marshall is completely convincing as John Brown and Reily's direction maintains theatrical tension.