

## **The Treasure: A Rich Vision**

**Video Review by Chris Wixtrom © 1998**

### **The Treasure by Ella Mae Lentz ©1995 In Motion Press**

Ella Mae Lentz has aptly titled her masterpiece: The Treasure. American Sign Language - ASL - is the buried treasure she brings to full light.

With flowing artistry, exacting precision, and poetic power, Lentz explores her beloved language, and warns those who hold it against letting such wealth slip through their fingers. In the title poem, she who digs up the treasure chest cherishes each glimmering gem. But skeptical kin refuse to see the value of her find. They make excuses, turn up their noses, and toss dirt into her face and over the precious jewels. We wince, and instinctively reach to rescue the treasure.

Lentz's evocative poems awaken our emotions, please the eye and excite the mind. These sophisticated literary works draw new meaning from common experiences and easily win us to the artist's vision. Almost mathematic in their elegant, balanced structure and haunting musical beauty, the poems mold rhythm and rhyme in movement and image, rather than meter and letter. We are swept up with them into a world charged with visual electricity.

While the extensive narration describing the artist's development and introducing the selections is both signed and voice-interpreted, the poems are presented purely in ASL. People fortunate enough to have visual language skill may at least begin to appreciate the strong and delicate messages compressed into these complex, exquisite pieces. But even those for whom ASL is somewhat of a mystery are fascinated. I loaned the video to a friend who admires ASL but can't always comprehend it, and weeks went by before she returned my tape. The reason? She loved it so much, she showed it to another friend, who insisted someone else see it, and so on, and so on, until a long line of eager viewers finally relinquished my copy.

As a reviewer, I have prized many opportunities to evaluate videotapes featuring American Sign Language. I wish that everyone who loves sign language could see the riches I have seen. But if I were asked to select only one bit of original ASL literature to show the world, I would choose The Treasure.