



REVIEW

Broadway World - Barry Lenny

STORIES I WANT TO TELL YOU IN PERSON Hilariously Relates A Crazy Tale

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Reviewed by Barry Lenny, Thursday 30th October 2014

Award winning playwright, Lally Katz, whose play, **Neighbourhood Watch**, was recently presented by the State Theatre Company of South Australia, starring Miriam Margolyes, turns out to be a performer, too. She is in Adelaide at the Bakehouse Theatre with Brink Productions, presenting her Belvoir and Malthouse Theatre production, **Stories I Want to Tell You in Person**. The intimacy of the Bakehouse is perfect for this production, as Katz tells of being commissioned to write a play about the global financial crisis, and of her own series of crises that ensued, spending her commission money, and more, on dodgy fortune tellers, who informed her that she was cursed, but that they could help her, at a price.

Katz explains that she is not a highly trained actress, although she attended the Australian Theatre for Young People in 2000, and she plays on that fact right from the start by moving to her opening mark which, like the marks for positioning a chair, is somewhat more noticeable than normal. A brief biography tells us that she was born in the USA and moved to Canberra when she was eight. She has since become a successful playwright, drawing on herself and people that she meets as the characters and situations in her works.

From the moment that she appears, with a smile that could have lit the theatre without needing the help of the lighting design from Damien Cooper, Katz has the audience in the palm of her hand. Her endearingly quirky sense of humour would surely win over even the grumpiest person in the world, and so she had no difficulty at all in keeping the opening night audience in fits of laughter from start to finish.

As Katz tells her stories she drops into the numerous characters, allowing them to speak their own lines in their own voices, a very nice feat of exaggerated mimicry that extends to all of their physicality: facial expressions, movements, and postures. By exaggerating them just a little, Katz lampoons them superbly, turning them into extremely comical characters. Katz might not consider herself an actress, but she convinces in these various and highly diverse roles.

Katz has excellent comic timing, and her lively and enthusiastic delivery of her stories captivates the audience. She is a very energetic performer and her vibrant personality is irresistible, carrying all before her as she weaves her storytelling magic.



As this is all a true story, believe it or not, there is no surprise that her eccentric Hungarian neighbour, Ana, the subject of Neighbourhood Watch, is one of those who turns up along the way. As a bonus, The Apocalypse Bear puts in an appearance for a dance routine, and Katz gives an unforgettable karaoke performance. No, I am not going to tell you about The Apocalypse Bear, nor The Hope Dolphin. You will just have to go and see for yourself.

The set, by Ralph Myers, is a screen of glittering gold ribbons the full width of the stage, and a chair, plus some place markings on the floor. Director, Anne-Louise Sarks, keeps the pace and energy up, and injects enough relevant movement to avoid things becoming static, making good use of the chair as Katz transform into the various people in her narrative. Max Lyandvert provided the sound and music plot.

If you are looking for a really good laugh, and who isn't at the moment with the world seeming to be going to Hell in a handbag, you'd be hard put to find anything funnier than this performance. Opening night was sold out and I suspect that you will need to be quick to get tickets as it finishes in a week.

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