

Back Stage West

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2.5 MINUTE RIDE at the Tiffany Theatre



Reviewed by Claudia Grazioso

In a country with citizens from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, and a range of cultural traditions—OK, I'll say it, in such a *melting pot*—you would think that storytelling would be something of a national pastime. Or rather, you'd hope. Alas, we Americans have taken stories and, like everything else, homogenized them into neat, quick-sell packages. But anyone who does hope to hear stories—real stories—should treat themselves to Lisa Kron's alternately heartbreaking and hilarious solo show.

Directed by Mark Brokaw, *2.5 Minute Ride* (the title refers to a particularly harrowing roller coaster that Kron rides with her roller-coaster-enthusiast father) alternates between three stories: Kron's brother's marriage to a woman he met on the Internet, her family's annual outing to an Ohio amusement park, and her trip to Auschwitz with her father, who was evacuated from Germany as a young boy but whose own parents perished at Auschwitz.

Kron moves from one narrative to the

other with varying degrees of smoothness. At times her transitions are a bit jarring, but it never takes long for her to bring the audience completely into whichever story she's telling. Her writing is so rich in detail that it's impossible not to be drawn in, whether she's describing her family (all of whom seem to suffer some physical handicap) as they enjoy "the river ride," or her hysteria over her father losing his "bag of glasses" (he uses several pairs) at Auschwitz—she was horrified, she explains, at the prospect of leaving any piece of him there.

As a performer, Kron has the rare ability to make us *feel* along with her. (I was relieved they found his glasses.) Many performance artists lead with their neuroses—they want you to admire the intricacy of their own twisted minds. Kron wants the audience to experience and understand those neuroses with her. She is a more accessible performer, a more engaging performer, and a braver performer than most: She doesn't use humor or pith to hide from emotion, but rather to enhance it.

Looking at my notes, I see that at one point I wrote, "Starting to feel a bit long." I now have no idea when I felt that. I do know that when I realized the show was about to end, my first thought was, Can't she just call home, get some more stories, work them out, and keep going? Sure, it might have taken a while. But I'd have waited.

Technically, the show relies on spare but inventive lighting: Kron occasionally uses a slide show to introduce us to family members or places, but the "slides" are just simple rectangles of light. Designed by Kenneth Posner, it's a brilliant conceit—by the end of the evening, we really feel that we've seen a whole cast of characters.

"2.5 Minute Ride," presented by and at the Tiffany Theatre, 8532 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood. Wed.-Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 3 & 7:30 p.m. Jan. 15-Mar. 5. \$25-28.50. (310) 289-2999.