

Story tells vivid picture

When Lisa Kron took her father on a trip from his Michigan home to the German town where he was born, and then to Poland, she snapped plenty of photos. She stands in the Pit's pit, a middle-aged American in brown jacket and baggy black slacks, contriving to look like a slightly underdressed geography teacher as she points to a screen behind her. The oddity is that every single slide, whether it is meant to be of places or of people, is a silvery blank.

Yet it is not so surprising. Kron's holiday with Pa was a fulfilment of a promise to take him to the camp where his own parents perished. The drive ended in Auschwitz where, she tells us, they charge a fee for parking but not for entry to the rooms where they keep the mounds of hair,

THEATRE 2.5 Minute Ride Barbican Pit

artificial limbs, and so on. She has an eye, does Kron, for wry, dry and sometimes terrible detail. But she also knows that observation and explication have their limits. Reticence, confusion, emptiness take over. How can you show snaps of a wiped-out family, an erased past?

Not that Kron is as portentous as that. She is a professional actress who has done time with New York's WOW Cafe Theatre Collective and Five Lesbian Brothers. She has even won a Robert Chesley Gay and Lesbian Playwriting Award. But I am willing to bet that she has

never displayed her professional qualities to finer effect than here. I would say she dares to be amateurish, if it didn't sound rude. You go to see a performer and you meet a person.

There is a structure to what it would be too grand to call a confession, too trivialising to call reminiscence. She moves about a stage furnished only with a plain chair and stool, her narrative shifting from the Auschwitz vacation to the annual family trip to an Ohio amusement park to her brother's wedding.

She is very funny about both these last events, summoning up mental pictures of herself and her partner as unwilling bridesmaids, and of sickly, complaining relatives en route to the rollercoaster. Yet the wedding was terrific. And her father, who was too blind to

read that those who (like him) suffered from diabetes, heart trouble and old age should shun such experiences, emerged from the Demon Drop a happy man.

The point, I suppose, is that the past must be confronted, but there is a present and future, too. Yet it is the evening's vividly evoked moments I shall remember. Suddenly Kron recalls her father remembering that, as an interrogator after the war, he felt an odd kinship with the bewildered Gestapo officer he helped to send to his death. At school in the 1930s, didn't all but he and one brave German boy belong to the Hitler Youth?

"If it weren't for the good fortune of being a Jew," he said, "I might have ended up a Nazi." A man with the mind and soul to feel that is worth celebrating.

BENEDICT
NIGHTINGALE