

# Good Grief! Hilarity Begins at Home

## THEATER REVIEW

**2.5 MINUTE RIDE.** Written and performed by Lisa Kron, directed by Mark Brokaw. With sets by Allen Moyer, costume by Jess Goldstein, lights by Kenneth Posner. Joseph Papp Public Theater, Lafayette Street south of Astor Place. Seen at Thursday's preview.

By Linda Winer

STAFF WRITER

**I**'M MAKING a video about my father," says Lisa Kron, standing pleasantly onstage at the Joseph Papp Public Theater with a laser pointer in her hand and the light from a slide projector behind her. The intentions are familiar to most adult children of a certain age, grown kids with cameras, gripped with the sudden urgency to freeze the family stories before they disappear with the flesh that lived them.

Except the slides she made for her video are blank. And Kron, who cheerfully fails to acknowledge this fact in her descriptions of each detail, has managed



Photo by Michael Daniel

**Daughter knows best: Lisa Kron's father is a Holocaust survivor. What's so funny about that? In her horribly humorous show at the Papp Theater, plenty.**

something more extraordinary than a mere home movie. In "2.5 Minute Ride," the sly, wise and wonderful solo that opened last night, she has made not just an unforgettable portrait of the

unknowables in the life of her Holocaust-survivor father. In 70 wildly funny and terrible minutes, she demonstrates with disarming simplicity that humor and horror can share the same human moment.

Kron, a founding member of the beloved Five Lesbian Brothers, is a blissfully comfortable woman with smiling eyes and perceptions as uncompromising and lively as that darting laser she pretends to use on her family foibles. With Mark Brokaw as her unfussy director, she stands up there and simply presents one of the most tender and discerning family tragicomedies in recent memory.

At first, we are worried. You see, she is moving back and forth — actually, onstage from side to side — between reports of her trip with her father to Auschwitz and one of her Michigan family's in-bizarre annual visits to an amusement park in Ohio. And we think, uh-oh, this cannot work. Before long, however, we are altogether trusting companions on the surreal journeys of family

love, impatience and hilarity.

We go with her to the amusement park where her father, a "75-year-old blind, diabetic Holocaust survivor" accepts the uncontrollable pushes and pulls of the roller coasters of his life. This time, she takes friends, including Peg — whom she helplessly tries to describe — "girlfriend, my companion." And, as Kron so knowingly puts it, "Nothing like watching your friends watch your family to really give you some perspective."

She sweetly describes her family as "all either dead or crippled" — that is, this is a daughter with an altogether recognizable combination of ambivalence, awe, humiliation and respect. She also takes us gleefully to the wedding between her brother and the woman he met on the Internet. Most of all, she shares the peculiar joy of Polish pizza and the unfathomable reality of the gas chambers — and the human hungers that try to process both.

Next Monday at 7:30 p.m., the Public Theater will present a panel with the timely title, "Healing and the Holocaust: Grieving Through Humor." The discussion, which is free, will, of course, include the mixed reactions to the Oscar-winning Holocaust comedy, "Life Is Beautiful." The broad promise is "to address how art might truthfully represent the Holocaust with humor without diminishing or trivializing it." Watch Kron. ■