

I Came Away From “The Jewish Dog” Wounded

NOVEMBER 10, 2018 REVIEWS 3



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By Austin Kaiser

With his long fur coat and hat, he looks like a Jewish dog. But he's not. He's a man. He's a man who's been asked many times and in many ways, Josh, spiritually broken and uninterested in excuses, is livid and demands answers from God. Finally Josh promises not to bring up the questions to which he feels owed answers. He only asks that his dog be admitted. God, unwilling to answer Josh's questions, accepts the bargain and lets Cyrus enter.

I am a person who thinks of history as a series of causes and effects. I don't seek spiritual answers to the question, “Why?” But this production scraped apart and re-skinned my brain. In this show, God isn't sure. God is ashamed. God is like a child hiding his hand. This show transformed my thoughts and feelings. It was a treat to be affected like this by a work of art.

This play takes place during World War II. When Jews are forbidden to own dogs, Cyrus changes hands, moving from owner to owner. Mr. Rodman played a convincing dog. He howled, scratched his flea-bitten hide, and wagged his tail. He ran across the floor with his fingernails scraping. He flipped over and laid on his back happily when he heard his name called.

Mr. Rodman wore a big, brown furry coat and a furry hat with ear flaps. He pulled the coat closed when he hid in trees. He lifted his hat to simulate being pulled by his ears. When Mr. Rodman acted as a Nazi soldier, he used the waist tie on the coat as a gun simulator, aiming it at a target. Mr. Rodman's characters include ruthless Nazis, gay men, boys growing up too quickly, pleading prisoners, and, of course, the dog, expressing unconditional love.

It was amazing to see a dog happy in the midst of atrocities. The plot contains a dog fight, a gun fight, people being murdered or sent away to be murdered, children separated from parents and dogs separated from owners. “The Jewish Dog” is a marvel of empathy. See it if you like war stories, animal stories, stories of escape, or whatever your preferences are.

Cyrus is eventually owned by a Nazi officer who trains him to be a search dog. When he is brought to the ruins of a city, he proudly sniffs a rag and finds the origin of the scent. Expecting his Nazi commander to be happy, Cyrus is confused when the commander screams at the Jewish people he discovers. The dog cannot comprehend this. There are many interesting scenes in which the dog tries to understand what is going on in people's heads. Cyrus often asks, “How are dogs and people different? Whom am I more alike?” In this show, these questions are part of a struggle to make sense of history's injustices.

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“The Jewish Dog”

Performed by Miha Rodman

Nov. 3 at 4pm & 9pm

Playwright: Asher Kravitz

Director, Concept, Adaptation, & Design: Yonatan Esterkin

Co-Producers: Preseren Theatre Kranj and Mini Theatre Ljubljana, Slovenia

Dramaturg: Anja Krusnik Cetinski

Translator: Katja Smid

Photo: courtesy of the production

United Solo 2018

Theatre Row

410 West 42nd Street

New York City



AUSTIN KAISER is a writer with an expertise in art and the creative process. His writing is about improving your imagination and exercising your empathy muscle. Kaiser is currently writing a book called, “100 Questions Every Artist Should Have The Answers To.” His other book, “How To Go Viral & Put Wings On Ideas: A Book For Content Creators & Young Artists,” explains how ideas travel and which ideas travel best. More at www.medium.com/@KaiserMane.

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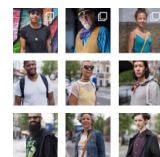
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A PERFORMANCE FOR
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AND SAD

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