

British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

Well

Lisa Kron
Trafalgar Studios
(2008)

This delightfully funny play features two characters with the same names as the author and her mother, played here by Sarah Miles and Natalie Casey, and is cast in the form of the author presenting her work to us - in the character's own words - 'a sort of solo with other people in it' that forms not so much a play as 'a multi-character exploration of illness and wellness.' Along the way it also explores mother-daughter relations, racial integration, what happens when you turn life into fiction, and the nature of character-actor-audience relations. Who is this character Lisa? Is Kron writing as she talks? It plays like a satire of American speech and thinking by a writer with an outsider's ear which is emphasised in this production when actors come out of character and speak with their native British accents.

Mother Anna is sick, has been nonstop for years, every since her daughter can remember; most of the time she is too ill to do more than rest with her feet up in a Lazy Boy chair when she is not pushing her pain-wracked body into doing things. She has two states of activity: all or none. Daughter Lisa was sick but is now well. In much of the play she introduces scenes set in the Allergic Centre where she went through tests and came out well. She also tells us about her mother's role building community relations and organising social events for the neighbourhood. Though Lisa keeps insisting to her mother that the play is not about the two of them and its not a play its an exploration, Anna, described by Lisa at one point as 'a housewife savant', is not supposed to be part of the play, she is there as some sort of symbolic demonstration but she can't help speaking out wanting to offer the audience a drink, to correct errors that are slipping into the narrative, insisting Lisa includes things she'd rather ignore.

Is it autobiography or fiction? What is Kron trying to tell us? I don't think even she knows that. It is, after all, an exploration - not a play. But that doesn't stop it from being beautifully played not just by Miles and Casey and the whole cast (Thomas Morrison, Jason Rowe, Hannah Stokely and Zara Tempest-Walters) who double as allergy sufferers, their medics, Lisa's brother and the family's neighbours, including one bullying child whom Lisa desperately wants to exclude from the story. It is not all laughs but mostly the tears streaming down not just my cheeks were from sheer hilarity and the seats were rocking so much they will need reinforcing,

Until 27th September 2008

Philip Fisher [reviewed](#) this production when its transferred to the Apollo, Shaftesbury Avenue

Reviewer: [Howard Loxton](#)