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East
Off-Off Broadway July 25, 2005

Invisible Child

Reviewed By Jeanette Toomer

Written and performed by consummate actor Lisa Barri, "Invisible Child" dramatizes the story of one woman's self-realization through compelling characters and elegant dance sequences. The 90-minute play travels back and forth between the childhood and adult life of a character known as Ginger. Barri skillfully brings a dominating mother, uncaring friends, and an abusive lover to life in captivating scenes.

Integrated between the monologues and short exchanges are beautifully rendered dances principally choreographed by Don Johanson, Kimberly Morris, Tabitha Boulding, and Roberta Mathes. Three dancers -- Boulding, Mathes, and Karlen Schreiber -- perform seamless movements incorporating ballet and modern dance vocabulary to represent the "invisible child" who wants to be accepted by her friends. Excluded more often than not, young Ginger settles on pleasing her mother, which leads her to become a lawyer in spite of her deeper inclination to art and painting.

Barri delivers several evocative moments that surprise, including the loss on a subway train of Ginger's cat, Hope, right before she is raped at knifepoint and the play's climax of lyrical poetry and dance, when the adult Ginger realizes that she can be happy living on her own terms. Ginger's self-absorbed Jewish mother provides touches of humor in the overbearing excesses she exhibits in conversations with her sister and adult daughter. As a prosecuting attorney, Ginger delivers a speech to the jury, which returns with a guilty verdict for a mother who killed her young daughter ostensibly by accident.

The creative direction by Steven Day brings this all together in a unified progression that builds to Ginger's epiphany of self-determination. Schreiber portrays Ginger as a young child, dancing elegantly on pointe and capably joining Mathes and Boulding in duets, including one with Mathes as Ginger's mother that consists of a push and pull between them.

William Catanzaro's original score perfectly supports the dance and provides a necessary bridge between scenes.

"Invisible Child"

Presented by Horizon Theatrical Productions as part of the Midtown International Theatre Festival at the WorkShop Theater, 312 W. 36th St., NYC, July 20-Aug. 5.

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