

Doubles, Demons, and Dreamers

by Michael Cox

Contributor

Friday Jun 20, 2014



Cesar Muñoz , Veronica Wiseman, Margarita Martinez, James Barton, Kervin Germain in 'Talk To At Me' (Source: David Marshall)

Sleeping Weazel's two-part production "**Doubles, Demons, and Dreamers**" is billed as a "collection of gender-bending music performances and experimental theater." From what this correspondent saw, the show lives up to the "experimental theater" part of its thumbnail description. Having only been able to attend the second part, I missed out on last week's presentation of singer Johnny Blazes in a cabaret-style performance that was paired with Kenneth Prestininzi's short play "Ugmo and Eenie Go Down the Ruski Hole." This week's production similarly consists of a one-act play and a short presentation that falls into the general theatrical genre. One is like an explosion in reverse, with shards fusing into a whole; the other erupts into a noteworthy conflagration of refuse. The former would be "Lava Fossil," performance artist Beth Nixon's meditation on mortality, loss, and time. The evening begins with Nixon, who, surrounded by suitcases, seems ready to embark on a journey -- and so she does, into her own childhood, not to mention the extinction of the dinosaurs and the volcano-riddled primeval Earth. Nixon recounts tales of her marine biologist father, finding unexpected ties between his life and

death and the world at large. Her approach is that of the fairy tale and the puppet show, complete with several rather ingeniously presented miniature volcanoes and paper scrolls that illustrate her story.



Beth Nixon in 'Lava Fossil' (Source:Erin X. Smithers)

Nixon follows in the tradition of modern monologists like Mike Daisy, whose far-reaching, esoteric observations draw disparate strands into a luminous unity; the illustrations may scroll in the usual linear manner, but the narration is kaleidoscopic, and Nixon brings an artless, but instantly commanding presence to the stage: She keeps you riveted for a full hour with her raw charm, unpolished delivery, and natural comic timing. She also delivers a insightful synthesis of the personal and the philosophical, disguising a keenly intelligent essay as a form of child's play that's been gussied up with Rube Goldberg-esque props. (There's more to those suitcases that you'd first suspect!) The second half of the evening is the world premiere of Adara Meyers' one-act play "Talk To At Me," which features a cast of five: Cesar Muñoz, Veronica Wiseman, Margarita Martinez, James Barton, and Kervin Germain, with Barton taking a memorable turn as a rat with a romantic soul. But the anthropomorphism also works in reverse, as the men played by Muñoz and Germain transform into rats themselves. The play is dense with volleys of dialogue that never quite coalesces into conversation, and blizzards of asides. The very first moments warn us about this: The actors, except for Barton, clutch oversized coffee cups and their language (bodily as well as verbal) is jittery. So is this play, which explodes in a writhing torrent of ideas and a plethora of strewn rubbish. What to make of it all? Anything you like, perhaps; or, maybe, nothing at all. I came away feeling I'd been treated to a master class in the meaning (and meaninglessness) behind Shakespeare's famously despairing comment that life is "sound and fury, signifying nothing." Except, that is, the human capacity for

making a mess. *"Doubles, Demons and Dreamers"* continues at the BCA through July 21. For tickets and more information, please visit www.sleepingweazel.com/upcoming-events