



Brooklyn On the Fringe: 'Two Girls': When an Actress Plays a Village

by Mary Frost (mfrost@brooklyneagle.net), published online 08-20-2010

The New York International Fringe Festival continues to offer memorable performances from all over the world this week. One we can recommend is "Two Girls," written and performed by Brooklyn's Gabrielle Maisels.

After several minutes watching this brilliantly written play about a friendship between two girls in South Africa – one black, one Jewish – you'll soon forget that just one person is playing all of the characters.

Like a Japanese Bunraku puppeteer, the play's author and performer Gabrielle Maisels performs in full view of the audience but is somehow invisible. The stage is peopled instead by her creations: a young Jewish girl (Corinne) and a young African girl (Lindiwe), an African mother and a Jewish mother, a nitwit house guest, a rebellious classmate, a wife, a husband, a pregnant woman, a cheering village, a cheering country.

In *Two Girls* we squirm as we watch a friendship where one girl is allowed to drink a glass of guava juice while the other is only allowed to drink water. As the girls grow the pain caused by apartheid seeps into every aspect of their lives, until a new South Africa dawns, with its own joys and disappointments.

The two girls, women now with children of their own, end up in America and experience the excitement of the election of Barack Obama. "They're acting like he's Nelson Mandela!" Corinne says. "Even Nelson Mandela isn't Nelson Mandela," Lindiwe wisely observes.

Gabrielle Maisels is the granddaughter of Israel Aaron Maisels, leader of the defense team that secured Nelson Mandela's acquittal in the Treason Trial of 1956-61.

Two Girls runs through Wednesday, August 25 at the Connelly Theater. Produced by Gabrielle Maisels; directed by Joey Brenneman; lighting by Marciel Greene. Visit www.fringenyc.org for more details.

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