



FringeNYC 2011 Review Roundup #8

By [Dan Bacalzo](#), [Andy Buck](#), [David Finkle](#) • Aug 25, 2011 • [New York](#)



Gabrielle Maisels in *Bongani*
(© Dixie Sheridan)

South Africa's difficult transition from apartheid to a racially integrated society is explored in Gabrielle Maisels' moving solo performance, *Bongani*, at Manhattan Theatre Source. The writer/performer does not present any easy solutions to the lingering racism within the country, but instead chooses to create layered characters in a complex situation. Spanning the years 1989 to 2002, the work tracks the relationship between Corinne Levitt, a white Jewish woman from a privileged background, and Bongani Dhlamini, a black man whose mother is the housekeeper in the Levitt household. As children, Corinne tutored and befriended Bongani, but as adults they find that no amount of good will can gloss over their differences.

Maisels takes on a dozen characters of various ages and races within her show. At times, it's not immediately clear which one she's playing, but the context usually comes into focus soon enough. She is particularly adept at portraying her two central characters, and the show's bittersweet conclusion packs a powerful punch.

- Dan Bacalzo