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Brava's turkey baster drama defies the elements needed for a dang good show

By Annie Berman | Feb 18, 2019 | Art, Featured, Front Page, Mobile | 0

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Tina D'Elia in her one-woman show at the Brava Theater.

When many of us think “good theater,” what immediately comes to mind is not, perhaps, a live telenovela with a lone actress in Adidas warm-up pants. But Overlooked Latinas at the Brava Theater through March 3, proves you don't need a full cast, an elaborate set, or costume changes to put on a dang good show.

Tina D'Elia's newest one-woman show celebrates queer culture, friendship and Latinx history. It also defies all theater going expectations of what makes a good show.

Meet Angel and Carla, two childhood best friends who've just pitched their telenovela to an NBC executive, Bill. When Bill hesitatingly green lights the project, Angel is sure her dreams have come true – but nothing comes easy, and drama ensues. How will Angel juggle her blossoming career in New York and her Los Angeles-based wife who wants to start a family immediately? What will she do when her ex-girlfriend auditions for a leading role?

In true telenovela style, “Overlooked” asks, when tested, can love survive? It culminates with a dramatic scene at the Black Cat Hotel involving a turkey baster, a silly misunderstanding, and a reminder of how

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many forms true love can take.



At its heart, though, this is a hopeful tale of two self-described working-class Puerto Rican butch dykes from Staten Island who are, notably, thriving. “Hey lady, my life is dope as shit!” Angel joyfully shouts at the Statue of Liberty on the day she gets good news. It’s also about the revolutionary power of bringing little-known stories of marginalized trailblazers to mainstream audiences – including Angel and Carla, who rarely see people who look like themselves on TV. And it is a show about how hard it has traditionally been for LGBTQ people to thrive at all – still, the performance is full of humor and hope.

“Dear U.S. government,” says one of the characters portrayed in the telenovela, who has been denied entry into the United States during the Communist scare in the early 1900s. “In response to your kaka, I cheer for world

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peace.”

All the characters D’Elia portrays are loveable, but especially Angel’s best friend Carla, who stress-eats cookies out of her bra and holds Angel together. The only character I had a bit of a problem with is NBC executive producer Bill Moskowitz, who fits stereotypes about Jewish people a bit too well, but still made me smile when he offers support to Angel when she’s going through difficult times. “You’re like the son I never had BUT I WISH I DID! Let’s chat, Angel – man to butch, butch to man,” he says exuberantly.

At the end of her show, in one of many meta moments, D’Elia, portraying Carla, stands to speak at an award show at Radio City Music Hall. She holds up her award for her “best, queer telenovela of our time!” and dedicates it to audience members who, too, “have been overlooked.”

For a moment, the audience is given the opportunity to act, too. What would it feel like to witness mainstream success for a show like this?

We clap. D’Elia bows.

“Overlooked Latinas” will be playing at Brava Theater in San Francisco February 16 thru

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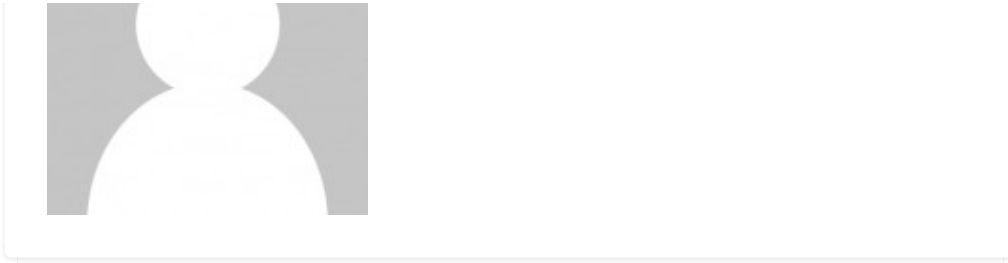
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