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I AM A MOON

nytheatre.com review by Cory Conley
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According to playwright Zhu Yi, her new work *I AM A MOON* is about the experience of shame. Specifically, "the shame of being overweight, the shame of liberated sexuality, the shame of physical disability, the shame of physical scars, the shame of being a victim of sexual harassment, and the shame of aging." That might sound like a rather grim evening, or at least an indulgent one. But instead, by lingering on the inner vulnerabilities of its isolated characters, this lyrical play celebrates the beauty and pain of living inside your own body.

It's a bit difficult to sum up what happens, and I suppose you'd have to see it to really know for sure. The script is divided into several extended monologues, punctuated by occasional brief encounters. We begin with a quiet man (known simply as The Man) who lives in an apartment without curtains, as he details the history of his sexual awakening. After that, we drift over to Angela, the woman living across the hall, who speaks of this "weird Asian guy" and then admits that she watches his (solo) sexual encounters all the time. From there, Angela heads to the bus stop, where she bumps into her rock star idol, Justin Wilson, and coyly denies being a fan (we soon learn of her undying worship.) Soon enough, our attention moves to Justin, who has a body full of hickeys and a secret of his own. These interludes--- which also eventually feature a man named Jimmy and a fruit-seller named Mei--- are interlaced with a recorded interview of a Chinese astronaut headed for the moon.

Each of the actors successfully fills his or her time in the spotlight, especially Kurt Uy as the Man, Victoria Tucci as Angela, and Seth Moore as Justin. (Angela and Justin's imaginary courtship is particularly well-acted.) The direction, by Marios Theocharous, is peaceful, while Yi-Chung Chen's lighting design is crisp. The theater at 45 Bleecker is well-suited to this particular story, and by the end of the show, you might be surprised to discover that you were not, in fact, on the moon.

Zhu Yi's play, which was reportedly censored four times in China, does require a bit of patience. The speeches have a detailed novelistic quality that can sometimes invite zoning out. At the performance I attended, there were several walkouts--- a bafflingly disrespectful gesture for a performance at FringeNYC, of all places. But if taken seriously, and given its proper investment, *I AM A MOON* lands as a compassionate portrait of good and lonely people that you won't likely forget.



A scene from *I AM A MOON*

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