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Ludic Proxy

Written and Directed by Aya Ogawa
Produced by The Play Company

Off Broadway, New Play
Runs Through 5.2.15
Walkerspace, 46 Walker Street



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by *Zahra Sadjadi* (../../About/staff.php) on 4.12.15



BOTTOM LINE: An acute and aesthetically arresting experience of life projected onto the space of theater.

There is a way in which *Ludic Proxy* begins the moment you walk into the theater, and while Aya Ogawa is definitely the writer-director-artisan that has carved out the work using the perfect tools (i.e. an “integration of text/narrative, physical movement, music/sound, lights/video, and spatial configuration”), she’s using you to craft her non-linear narrative as well. For me, I began to get excited the moment each audience member populated the mismatched chairs placed around the perimeter of an all-white, seemingly closed room and were handed paddles labeled 1 through 3 that we were told would “be used in the second act.” Not gonna lie: also loved being warned a couple of times not to place anything on the tables next to me and to watch out for cables that attach to visual elements that would be utilized later on.

All of that is to say that *Ludic Proxy* begins to unfold, from the beginning, as an adventure. At certain points, the production literally becomes a choose-your-own-adventure, and it is this aspect of theater-as-life (unexpected, uncontrollable, odd, scary) that makes it easy for me to advocate that you go see this production while simultaneously being secretive about what exactly it is that you are going to see.

On a conceptual level, *Ludic Proxy* is a play in three thematically related though narratively disjointed acts. You are not following the same characters throughout the play and you are jumping around in both time and location from act to act. Cleverly, the same devices which make the play seem fragmented evoke exactly those themes that tie the dramatic elements together namely fractured identity, crisis, human responsibility to act, multiplicity of perspectives, environmental upheaval, breakdowns of systems, multilingual narratives, to name just a few. So, confusion is par for the course in *Ludic Proxy* even to the extent that a technical glitch in the beginning of the second act the night I attended was almost indiscernible because I was in the midst of trying to suss out whether everything that was happening was supposed to be happening.

While I do feel the need to include a disclaimer that *Ludic Proxy* contains all the elements of what I love about theater-as-art installation (e.g. that it is immersive, that it relies upon an acute visual and aural sense, that it incorporates all the signposts of living in an ever-evolving, technology-dependent era), the only reason I would include such a disclaimer is to call out my stylistic biases in favor of *Ludic Proxy* as not just an experience of theater but an experience of witnessing what it is like to be alive. *Ludic Proxy* is a lot of things: it is a roller coaster of emotion, it is bizarre, it is melancholic, and it doesn’t entire coalesce in one evening, but it is also not just a show that you can read about and know. You’ve gotta go.

(*Ludic Proxy* plays at Walkerspace, 46 Walker Street, through May 2, 2015. Performances are Mondays at 7:30PM; Wednesdays through Fridays at 7:30PM; Saturdays at 3PM and 7:30PM; and Sundays at 4PM. Tickets are \$35 General Admission; Student Tickets \$15 advance/\$10 Rush with ID and are available at **playco.org** (<http://www.playco.org/tickets>) or by calling 866.811.4111.)

