

They Call Me Q!

nytheatre.com review by Di Jayawickrema

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A solo show is always tough to pull off. A solo show that traces the evolution of a multicultural identity from birth to adulthood? That's a gargantuan task. And yet, it's the one Qurrat Ann Kadwani has boldly set herself in the first play she has written, and it's a testament to her poise and charisma as an actress that she pulls it off competently. In *They Call Me Q!*, Kadwani charts the rocky path to self-discovery as a culturally-confused Indian girl raised in the Bronx. It's a skillful though somewhat cursory ride.

Kadwani plays 13 characters, including herself, transitioning between her traditional Indian mother to tough-talking Latina friends with aplomb. As a New York-raised South Asian, I can attest to the authenticity of her impeccable accents and the simultaneous comfort and claustrophobia she experiences growing up in a culture "where your business is everybody's business." However, Kadwani has so much emotional ground to cover that her narrative often seems rushed and her characters don't often graduate from the one-dimensional. While currently a nimble, polished production, what *They Call Me Q!* could really use is some breathing room. The ideas and the actress deserve it.

While Kadwani vividly impersonates a host of colorful characters, she rarely conveys a sense of their inner lives. Her characters play their parts--a bully punches her, her father threatens to send her to India--and then they exit the stage, leaving behind little trace of their presence. While the blueprints for the characters are interesting, I have a hard time recalling more than a few of them now. Similarly, she moves through her childhood to college to India and back at such a rapid pace, the anecdotes she tells don't really have time to sink in. Still, despite the play's flaws, the lifelong process of shedding countries, shedding skins is one any third culture kid will recognize as something like their own.

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