



Matthew Gurewitsch



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Culture shock: Cue kudos for Qurrat Ann Kadwani

by Matthew Gurewitsch • Mar 11, 2013 at 11:01 pm

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A Muslim couple from India pulls up stakes and moves to New York in search of opportunity for the next generation. But do they settle among compatriots in Queens? No. They land in the Bronx, where blacks and Hispanics are taking over from whites in full flight. Dropped into grade school little Qurrat Ann Kadwani, whose name no one can pronounce, tries on identities like costumes, trying to blend in, trying to be herself, braving gang violence, giving as good as she gets... Autobiographical solo shows are a dime a dozen, but jazzy gems like this are rare. "[They Call Me Q!](#)"--a whirlwind chronicle of the author's first 20-something years--ranks with the monodramas of John Leguizamo, Spalding Gray, Camryn Manheim... The script--a patchwork of intensely personal voices by turns caustic, rebellious, bewildered, jubilant--never meanders. Over a dozen characters emerge with total clarity, brought to life in performances that glow with grace and heart and hungry hope. Have I mentioned that Q is a great beauty and a great mimic, as wonderful to watch in perpetual motion as in stillness? And that her crystalline diction renders even the least familiar accents instantly intelligible?

At the Maui Fringe Theater Festival, where I caught her act in February, Q she swept the top prizes. Now it's on to Orlando (May), Montreal (June), and D.C. (July), where the competition may be a whole lot stiffer. I'd say she has nothing to fear.

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