



gue

NIKITA SCHOEN, author

San Francisco, CA

ABOUT NIKITA SCHOEN

To summarize Nikita Schoen as simply a writer is a bit like saying that da Vinci drew a little. Yet, from all her myriad skills—she choreographs, paints, acts, creates poetry and is an avid scholar of film history—it is her writing that is proving, at present, to be both her driving passion and her greatest promise for a career in the arts. Foul Play Productions, with whom Schoen has worked previously as a performer, were so engaged by her singular vision that she has been chosen to inaugurate their New Writer’s Workshop, a playwright mentorship program that seeks out unique new voices in Bay Area theatre. The year-long program culminates in a full production of the new writer’s finished script, and as her sojourn through the land of workshops and rewrites transition into production meetings and press interviews, Schoen eagerly awaits the birth of her delightfully malformed offspring, Left-Handed Darling.



ject

The title is drawn from a Special Features DVD (and Left-Handed Darling proves unequivocally Schoen’s love for “special features”) for Tod Browning’s film “Freaks,” since it was Schoen’s ardent attachment to the conjoined, the limbless and the hirsute that led her to create Left-Handed Darling, the story of a remarkable young girl whose own curious upbringing allows her to feel no aversion when she stumbles into a circus sideshow. Schoen’s clearly done her research regarding the now largely defunct world of the sideshow, and the result is a play that brims with compassion and respect for those performers once billed under the heading “Nature’s Mistakes.” Enthusiastic responses from workshop audiences and Bay Area performers (including a handful of fellow circus aficionados) have encouraged Foul Play’s co-founders Cameron Eng and Sean Owens to make this world premiere their most lavish and ambitious to date. Fundamentally, however, it is the quality of the script and the talent of the playwright that audiences are destined to remember.

All of Schoen’s passions—the physical, the visual, and the cerebral—collide in the world of LHD. The script hints at a mad, funhouse-like dreamscape: grubby canvas flaps and mylar mirrors; a magician forever conjoined to his assistant; a courtroom scene presided over by freaks, complete with a

puppet show detailing a night of bloody misdeeds. Scenes in LHD vacillate between the grandiloquent—Sugarchurch, the sideshow's sinister barker, doubles as D.A., mesmerizing the jury with a pitch that drips poetry—to the quietly endearing domesticity of a scene entitled "He'll Always Be Here," in which the play's heroine Calliope finds a rat born with its heart on the outside of its body and carries its dying form back to her father, who reveals a collection of specimen jars filled with other misshaped, lifeless creatures. Unlike the barker's booming bravado, the scene is almost entirely silent, and relies on the power of the actors, along with director Michelle Talgarow's precision and restraint, to convey the delicate father-daughter relationship that blossoms therein. Talgarow heads an impressive team of artists—costumers, puppeteers, and even a horror make-up specialist for some of the play's more gruesome moments—to bring Calliope's (and Schoen's) world to life. Schoen's tendrils have even reached into the realm of early film to borrow the voice of Charlie Chaplin singing the theme he wrote for his 1928 film "The Circus." Left-Handed Darling has already earned Schoen some well-deserved success: she included one of the scenes from her play into her application for the California College of the Arts, and was accepted for Fall 2011 with a three-year Faculty Merit Award scholarship.

Left-Handed Darling premieres at the EXIT Theatre, arguably San Francisco's most vital haven for new play development, and will open July 14, 2011, in EXIT Stage Left. For more information about the performances and the author herself, please visit foulplaysf.com.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2011, *Left Handed Darling*

CONTACT INFORMATION

You can reach Nikita Schoen through:

Foul Play Productions

985 Folsom Street

San Francisco, CA 94107

foulplaysf@gmail.com

415-EXCITED



