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A Shot Away

nytheatre.com review

[Ed Malin](#) · April 9, 2011

Four years of research went into the play *A Shot Away: Personal Accounts of Military Sexual Trauma*. Playwright Donna Fiumano-Farley incorporates verbatim interviews with armed forces women (and those men who came forward later in the process) who experienced not only sexual abuse but also a skeptical bureaucracy intent on covering up these incidents. Downstage we have the mother and sister of Tina Priest, who was sexually assaulted in Iraq and, while she was supposed to have support against her rapist, supposedly committed suicide. The investigation becomes more complicated when all the military witnesses disappear out of fear, and the gunshot wounds from the "suicide" are seen to have been caused by someone else.

More soldiers tell their stories of abuse, which they fear to report. Many of the abusers threaten to kill the victims if they speak. Those who do speak up are shamed for disrespecting the military. Part of filing a complaint is the completion of the 57-question McDowell Checklist, with questions such as "Does victim describe her assailant as having an unsavory appearance?" Any positive answer adds points to the total, and so the victim's complaint gets graded either "equivocal," "allegation probably false," "false allegation," or "overkill." More stories explain how a convicted rapist can get merely a demotion or forced retirement with pension. More likely, the victim's diagnosis will be downgraded from post traumatic stress disorder, which would result in insurance payments, to "adjustment disorder." One victim is told her rapist had a background check before entering the military and is therefore clear of suspicion. Two male

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victims relate how it took them 15 years of active duty before they could tell anyone.

The glimmer of hope comes from the story of Panayiota Bertzikis, who founded the Military Rape Crisis Center and continues to extend help to victims and those who care about them. Sadly, Tina's family, coming up against a wall of conflicting information from the military, has given up on getting justice and has decided to move on with their lives.

The first thing you see in the theater is Katherine Akiko Day's set, an interpretation of the American flag. All performers stay on stage the whole time, highlighted by Marie Yokoyama's lighting. These choices from director Melanie Moyer Williams convey a sense of community. Elizabeth Barrett Groth has costumed the victims in civilian clothes, allowing the audience to identify easily with their stories. That and the diversity of the characters (Tina's family from Texas, a Filipino man, an African American woman, and more) show how, like any abuse, this is a problem for all of society to deal with. We also see the strength and dignity of each soldier and hear why they joined up in the first place and their disappointment in not being able to serve their country. All the performances are strong but I was particularly impressed with Jackie Sanders (Joy Priest), Tara Ricasa (Dani Priest), Grant Chang (Armando), Dana Berger (KC), and Jessica Myhr (Marianne). Red Fern Theatre Company is to be commended for their mission of fostering this kind of documentary performance.

Opened: April 2, 2011

Closes: April 17, 2011

Show Info

Synopsis: A docudrama about sexual assault in the US military, based entirely on interviews with American soldiers who have been sexually assaulted by their "fellow" soldiers.

[More Info...](#)

Venue: [LABA Theatre at the 14th Street Y](#)

Running Time: 1 hour, 15 minutes; no intermission

Prices: \$25.00

Ticketing Info

Box Office/Info: 212-352-3101

Tickets On Sale Thru: April 17, 2011

Performance Schedule:

Thu at 8:00pm

Fri at 8:00pm

Sat at 8:00pm

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Elephants on Parade 2011
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Baghdad Zoo
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Venues with Assisted
Listening Devices

Sun at 3:00pm
also Apr 11 at 7pm

Equity Showcases

Artists Involved

Cast: Laura Anderson, Dana Berger, Grant Chang, Elizabeth Flax, Jessica Myhr, Jeff Pierce, Tara Ricasa, Jackie Sanders, Rafe Terrizzi, Ian Way

Author: Donna Fiumano-Farley

Director: Melanie Moyer Williams

Costumes: Elizabeth Barrett Groth

Lighting: Marie Yokoyama

Sets: Katharine Akiko Day

Sound: Colin J. Whitely

Producer: Red Fern Theatre Company

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