

'Beatbox Journey' a clear-eyed look at Mideast issues; [North Final Edition]

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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Full Text (421 words)

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PERFORMANCE ART REVIEW.

From an extraordinarily heated subject, that of Israeli/ Palestinian relations, writer-director Rachel Havrelock and performer Yuri Lane have fashioned a coolly extraordinary 55 minutes titled "From Tel Aviv to Ramallah: A Beatbox Journey," now at the Viaduct Theater.

That title may be unwieldy. But Lane -- born in Holland, raised in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood -- is, in fact, a human beatbox, precisely as he bills himself. He is a superb sound effects man, as well as a subtle and glancing creator of characters. (Too glancing, perhaps: The piece could be a bit longer.)

Lane is above all an observer clear-eyed and big-hearted enough not to offer facile solutions to a political situation that seems so insoluble to so many, on both sides of the border.

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From the head-miked voice of Lane, the sounds keep coming: The whop-whop-whop of a helicopter segues into the dizzying, Ecstasy- fueled party atmosphere of a hip-hop club. Along with Amir and Khalid "From Tel Aviv to Ramallah" paints charcoal sketch portraits of a dozen other characters.

Scenically the piece resembles charcoal sketches in perpetual motion; Sharif Ezzat is credited with the live visuals, a rapidly dissolving and slow-zooming series of black-and-white photographic images, locating the action at the Tel Aviv beach, the cafe, or in the thick of a riot.

The sum total is broader than it is deep.

Lane and Havrelock, who are married, sometimes settle for aural and storytelling ambience when the subject cries out for fully shaped drama.

Yet there's undeniable artistry in how "From Tel Aviv to Ramallah" deals with subjects the evening news has turned into numbing generalities. They're all here: Suicide bombers, Israeli soldiers muttering "no comment" to the press, civilians on both sides of the fence brought to the breaking point.

Near the end the deejay hears of a suicide attack -- the news coming not from Tel Aviv, but from his Uncle Max in New York. It's a sharp detail, one of many in this absorbing mosaic.

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"From Tel Aviv to Ramallah: A Beatbox Journey"

When: Through Dec. 12

Where: The Viaduct Theater, 3111 N. Western Ave.

Running time: 55 minutes

Tickets: \$15 at 773-296-6024

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