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# Requiem for New Orleans: A Hip Hop Eulogy

nytheatre.com review by J Jordan  
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Requiem for New Orleans which is, in its own words, a hip-hop eulogy. It promises dancing, singing, a live DJ, spoken word, and video, all inspired by New Orleans before, during, and after Katrina. And that's exactly what's delivered.

The show is introduced by a captivating character, the MC, painted with a half-black, half-white face and dressed in a top hat and tails. He informs us of all the beloved things of New Orleans past, making sure to hit on things most people already know about New Orleans (Mardi Gras and Lake Pontchartrain come to mind) and even referring to the city as *chére*, but in that reminiscent way only known as nostalgia, which one cannot have without love for the thing one misses.

Ok, I thought, this guy seems reasonable enough, although he did faintly remind me of a demented vaudevillian tempting me into a funhouse with no exit. Before long the rest of the cast—and there are a lot of them—joined him on stage and began to dance. And they sang. One of them, a peppy, streetwise gal, began to rap with gusto. This performer, Jennifer Roberts, would prove to be my favorite.

I thought the seven main scenes of dancing, singing, and rapping might result in something contrived, but they didn't. Sure, at times the show is a little uneven, like the scene that cuts back and forth between live rapping and edited video clips, which creates some awkward pauses, but overall the show seems well-rehearsed and the performers comfortable with their roles.

What I saw more than anything, and what makes this show different than

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some allegedly more professional shows I've seen, is the performers' level of commitment. They are totally into what they were doing, and, as a result, so was I.

One scene in particular for me illustrates why at times dance is the best storyteller. The MC reappears with a large black sequined umbrella and shoos the performers off the stage. He touches each of them and they begin writhing around, ending up on the floor. They continue shaking and rolling around, all while scenes of the destruction caused by Katrina loom in the background. Their bodies are contorted in the way that peoples' lives became contorted by such disaster, and it was captivating.

This show is full of love, sadness, devastation, and anger. In short, it is a gut reaction to what happened in New Orleans, not just to the places, but to the people. While the images and news clips being shown on the screen behind the performers are sad and, at times, the people in them pitiable, the performers lift spirits and provide a sense of hope.

Don't go to this show to learn something you don't know about New Orleans. This show doesn't really offer anything new in terms of the city or the disaster. Luckily, that's not the point. This show is one of awareness and action.

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