



Puppet Showplace Theater

September 1, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Lisa Sturz represents the finest in American puppetry, with experience that spans everything from major motion picture performance to grand opera design. Lisa also excels in intimate theater spaces, and her warmth, wisdom, and ingenuity are on display in her newest show, *My Grandfather's Prayers*.

My Grandfather's Prayers is a deeply moving production about the improbable life of Cantor Izso Glickstein. Lisa pursues her grandfather's journey from Shtetl to stardom, following puppet likenesses of the "rock star" Jewish cantor through iconic and sometimes harrowing moments in European and American history. The past comes to life on an intricately designed "crankie," a hand-cranked moving mural that doubles as a shadow screen. Charming marionette figures, witty oversize props, and scenic transformations keep us leaning in throughout the show, and open our hearts to the human story that accompanies the audio recordings of Izso's extraordinary and haunting voice. A humorous animation takes us into the present day, where Lisa imagines an encounter with her grandfather's likeness and deftly connects the digital world back to the shadows of her past.

Lisa herself is a character in the story, and her achingly honest questions about faith and family resonate far beyond her tribe. The entire show is written in verse, and Lisa's moments of direct address to the audience reveal her power as a performer as well as a puppeteer. The entire show begins wrapped up as a Torah scroll, and her brave declarations give this object sacred power. When she finally unfurls the scroll and transforms it into her stage, the impact is breathtaking, magical, and divine.

My Grandfather's Prayers was a restorative gift to our audiences as images of hatred from Charlottesville, VA spread across that weekend's news. Lisa's subject is the past, but her work has a fierce relevance as we all look to our ancestors for lessons on how to live through the present day. *My Grandfather's Prayers* succeeds by excavating and animating the complex tones of one man's powerful voice, and inviting us all to listen.

Sincerely,

Roxanna Myhrum

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