

A Discovery at Last

San Francisco International Arts Festival: Rachael Lincoln and Leslie Seiters' *An Attic An Exit*, Shlomit Fundaminsky's *Inner Pocket*, Leyya Tawill's *LAND* (excerpt), *Capital Life*

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One of the perennial thrills in attending arts festivals is coming across a work that had never registered strongly in the blizzard of pre-festival publicity. After the hype, comes the discovery. So it has been with the fifth San Francisco International Arts Festival. There was little buzz before hand about Lean To Productions' *An Attic An Exit*, but the premiere of this 50-minute dance theater work (more mime than dance) at Dance Mission Theatre Friday (May 30) proved a rare pleasure and, for this festival habitué, one of the highlights of the past two weeks.

Lean To is the joint company of Rachael Lincoln, who currently performs with Project Bandaloop, and Leslie Seiters, who teaches at San Diego State University. These long-time collaborators here cavort through a domestic tragicomedy with a wit, focus, invention and genuine charm, qualities that have been in somewhat short supply this past fortnight. That the duo

deploy all the elements of theater—music, props, costumes, even their matching dyed blonde coiffures—in the service of their quasi-narrative and make those ingredients mean something removes this opus from the slapped together state of some of the other festival entries. These people actually have respect for their audience.

An Attic An Exit may be a fable about two sisters or two lovers, or perhaps, two warring factions of the same personality and about how one half of that dichotomy finally establishes her individuality. Clothing and household objects clutter the performance space. At the start, Lincoln and Seiters, both barefoot and topless, slip into matching peajackets, suspended from the rigging. They travel the space and they gesture in unison. Two suitcases (an object I had previously hoped I would never see again in a performance piece) figure prominently. No reason, however, to scream "cliché alert"; a dancer extracts a long rope from the valise, and wanders off, trailing the cord, which binds her to her mate and to the household.

Later, after a crash of crockery, that rope will metamorphose into a clump of spaghetti; later, too, the couple will sit down to dinner, their table demarcated by trails of sugar. Everyday objects suddenly acquire totemic properties. An array of duct tape stuck on the floor is raised and becomes a door frame. Another rope is transformed into a string of pearls, but not for long before it changes again. This pair knows their Looney Tunes.

Seiters and Lincoln move through this dream landscape with eminent good cheer, terrific empathy and without once playing their hand. There's theater magic here, conjured in part by Tyler Crosser's wry score, amended by bits from other composers, *An Attic An Exit* will play Los Angeles' Unknown Theater July 17-27. However, it also deserves a second Bay Area run.