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DIARY

She Remembers her Amnesia

Arts on Site

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By Mark Kappel

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Versatile modern dance artist Janis Brenner, former soloist of the Murray Louis Dance Company, and artistic director of Janis Brenner and Dancers, is now performing in yet another of her outstanding and informed one-woman shows, She Remembers her Amnesia (based on true stories) on November 9 & 10, 2022 at Arts On Site in New York City.

Described as a personal narrative, a dance-opera-play, and a comic drama, Janis Brenner is responsible for the concept of this piece including direction, choreography, improvisation, text, lyrics, vocals – and most important -- performance. Besides Brenner's contribution to this piece, Jerome Begin's especially composed vocal narration and original arias have an important place in She Remembers her Amnesia as does the enhancement of Mitchell Bogard's succinct and expert lighting design.

In the intimate space of Arts on Site Brenner relates her true stories associated with a medical incident that she had experienced -- and that in spite of what caused her temporary amnesia -- motivated her to look back on the history of connected medical incidents. In fact in the Folk Song section of this piece, Brenner sings of a description of TGA, and the alphabet soup of tests, medical conditions and treatments – and in Concussion Aria connects the dots of the many incidents of minor concussions she experienced in her lifetime – even going back to her childhood. Also depicted was a doctor's visit which explains what TGA is, what treatment might be suggested – but filled with vagueness – and in all of this chaos Brenner looks upon this with comedy and humor. Definitely, Brenner's piece is not maudlin.

The fact is that Brenner feels the need to speak, sing and dance about these experiences, reflecting on how dancers are trained to dance through pain and discomfort, and to power through it all in order to make it possible for the show to go on. In fact it is in Brenner's movement that she cleverly expresses how she feels going through this process and where she is now – and how effectively she tells this involving story.

Brenner's She Remembers her Amnesia can be described as the link of bizarre incidents or merely fate. But for Brenner it is in the telling of the story and how it makes for an involving entertainment – while also being thought-provoking – that is Brenner's art and when she is at her best.