

Hip Shot: *T-O-T-A-L-L-Y!*

Posted by Catherine McCarthy Washington City Paper Jul. 20, 2011

The Apothecary, 1013 7th Street NW

Remaining Performances:

Wednesday, July 20th, 10 p.m.
p.m.

Thursday, July 21st, 8:15 p.m.
Saturday, July 23rd, 8:15 p.m.

They Say: “Witness as Kimleigh Smith transforms from a young cheerleader into a powerful, sexual woman who reclaims her sexuality and lives as a whole, healthy superwoman who cheers for life! A fearless adventure that will make you laugh, cry and transform!”

Catherine’s Take: On its surface, *T-O-T-A-L-L-Y!* is a one-woman play about survival and empowerment. When experienced, it becomes an exercise in recognizing astounding inner strength. **Kimleigh Smith** embodies this power within as her “superhero,” the teenage version of her equally energetic adult self. Of her own show, Smith has said “You must be willing to sacrifice who you are for what you want to become.” Kimleigh the Younger uses her perfected cheerleading abilities to comically spell out that which she cannot utter aloud. In the same way, Kimleigh the Wiser moves through a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with her past, until she’s able to give up the ghost of what’s been lost to grasp something more tangible.

T-O-T-A-L-L-L-Y is divided neatly into two halves. We’re shown a self that folds in upon itself, and a self that seeks to

come undone and be reborn. This metamorphosis unfolds brilliantly against a bare stage with a single costume change. Elaborate production isn't needed; Smith's boundless energy is a riptide that sweeps us through time and space, from a Midwestern college football field, to the Windy City and on to Los Angeles. We watch her move from a shy, awkward teenage phase through a gauntlet of giving of herself until she reaches a contented stage of self-actualized sexuality. A veteran of Chicago and Los Angeles theater companies, Smith is performing her first one-woman autobiographical show here, and it lets her gifts as a performer shine through. It would be easy for a play by an actor about becoming an actor to become quickly overwrought, but Smith's penchant for performance is just one facet of a journey towards feeling human.

While Smith's story is uniquely her own, the themes are universal: self-preservation, adversity, and most importantly, desire. A thorough exploration of these is a heavy task, but Smith keeps it lighthearted with her innate ability for physical comedy. Whether she is dancing, singing, crawling across the stage or kicking her legs high, Smith's physical presence holds *T-O-T-A-L-L-Y* up and carries the weight of our eyes as we watch her persevere. Her triumph is not a quiet one. It's loud, it's piercing, and it stays with you long after Smith has left the stage.

See it: When you're seeking to feel uplifted and empowered.

Skip it: If you're looking for merely irreverent comedy. *T-O-T-A-L-L-Y!* deals with heavy themes.