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“TASHA” TACKLES RAW RACISM—AT 3GIRLS

📅 March 13, 2023 (<https://Theatrius.Com/2023/03/13/Tasha-Tackles-Raw-Racism-At-3girls/>) 👤 Patricia L. Morin (<https://Theatrius.Com/Author/Pmorin/>)

Cat Brooks Offers One Woman’s View of Horrifying Police Brutality

by Patricia L. Morin and Karen Marguerite Caronna

We are immediately greeted, entering Z Below's intimate space, to a photo slideshow of deceased Black women and men, all murdered victims of police brutality. Solemn music plays and screams can be heard.

We are warned there will be more screams and a TOY gun aimed towards the audience. Gunshots. There will be video scenes of torture with Taser guns.

Using archival projections by Elijah Collins and Jeunée Simon's genuine, spectacular solo performance, the narrative quickly careens into the disastrously inevitable collision of race, mental health, and hostile law enforcement.



Jeunée Simon (Natasha McKenna) in "Tasha." Photos: Katie Grubbs

Beyond any superlatives, Jeunée Simon's authentic portrayal of six separate characters heightens the story of doomed Natasha McKenna. Simon also plays her mother, an enraged shooter, cynical police officer, a nurse, and sheriff. She embodies each with nuanced transitions and gestures, so each voice is unique.

Simon leaves us breathless. We feel each character's anxieties, frustrations, and rationalizations.

Ayodele Nzinga's powerful and sensitive direction weaves every aspect of this show into the whole harrowing American tragedy. The narrative evolves from headlines past, present and future, and we are soon united in the thought that this travesty is never-ending.

Jeunée Simon introduces Natasha, 'Tasha, who asserts, "Who wants a "na" in front of their name?" We fall in love with young, funny, warm, and playful 'Tasha.

However, we soon realize that she's a schizophrenic. Her loving but frustrated mother tries to find "cures," but in 1982, what can be done for her daughter who lives in a world of her own?



Jeunée Simon ('Tasha)

'Tasha steals for her demanding invisible friend, Josephine, and is arrested. She is Black in Virginia. She is released after a brutal beating from the police, who say they are only trying to "help" her.

But mostly, we feel for 'Tasha, not a "Na" person, a schizophrenic child, grown to adulthood, without necessary mental health care, a family social worker, or the understanding that she is not alone. Through Simon's art, we live in 'Tasha's skin.

Sound Designer Jules Indelicato creates the perfect atmospheres for the unfolding incidents. Lighting Designer Stephanie Johnson illuminates the characters' varying moods, lending reality to the scenes.

Once you get over your heartbreak, let your righteous outrage lead you to action dictated by this all too American injustice. We will cry, "What is wrong with this country?" And yet, wailing racism to the heavens is not enough.

The acting is superb, the show heart-wrenching. You can still see the last weekend of this show. Let us think together what we can do to right these continuing injustices.

“**Tasha**” by **Cat Brooks**, directed by **Ayodele Nzinga**, by **3Girls Theatre**, at Z Below, San Francisco. Info: **3GirlsTheatre.org** (<https://www.3girlstheatre.org/tasha-2023>) – to Sunday, March 18, 2023.

Cast: **Jeunée Simon** (as many people)

Banner photo: Jeunée Simon. Photos by Katie Grubbs

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