

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Libby Skala
(917) 783-1174 libby@libbyskala.com



A Time to Dance

Written and Performed by Libby Skala

Produced in association with Artistic New Directions

*"...A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance..."*
- ECCLESIASTES 3:4

WINNER 'BEST SOLO PERFORMER' AWARD

London Fringe Theatre Festival

*"Funny...captivating...charming!
Ms. Skala's convincing portrayal is the reason
Polk is brought to life with such vibrancy."*
-THE NEW YORK TIMES

[Presenting organization] proudly presents three performances of *A Time to Dance*, a magical fusion of storytelling and creative dance written and performed by Libby Skala. Performances are *[dates and times]* at *[venue and address]*. Tickets are *[price]* and can be purchased at *[website]* or by calling *[phone number]*. For more information visit ATimetoDance.homestead.com.

In *A Time to Dance*, Skala offers glimpses into the rich life and inexhaustible spirit of her great aunt Elizabeth "Lisl" Polk, who transcends poverty, artistic repression and the rise of Hitler through the power of dance to become a renowned dance therapy pioneer. Born in 1902 Vienna, Polk survives a premature birth, withholding parents, tuberculosis, two world wars, a more famous sister (Oscar-nominated actress Lilia Skala), and unexpectedly steals the show. In 1995, at the age of 93, she was honored with a lifetime achievement award from the American Dance Therapy Association.

"The show was sparked by an interview I did with my great aunt while researching *Lilia!*, a play about her actress sister, my grandmother. I discovered this modern dancer's stories stood on their own, proving her to be the riotous and controversial star of her own life. Lisl's honesty is intoxicating," says Libby Skala (Playwright/ Actress).

Skala has performed *A Time to Dance* at FringeNYC, Pacific Theatre in Vancouver, Theater im Greenhouse in Berlin and at the London Fringe Theatre Festival where she won "Best Solo Performer" Award. The show received an award from The Pandella Cultural Fund in Switzerland. Skala charmed audiences with her internationally acclaimed solo play *Lilia!* about her relationship with her Oscar-nominated grandmother Lilia Skala. It was produced in New York by Mirror Repertory Company and ran for three weeks in London and at the Edinburgh Fringe. Non-solo work includes Viola in St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival's *Twelfth Night*. Film work includes appearing with Nicole Kidman in *Birth*.

(Subject of the show) Elizabeth Polk's broad professional background marked her as one of the country's authorities in teaching the joy of movement to emotionally, physically and mentally handicapped children. She had a long and rich career, teaching dance at every age level from preschoolers to adult education classes and in settings ranging from housing projects to college campuses. Born and educated in Vienna, Austria, her early music and dance studies included not only ballet, but Dalcroze eurhythmics, modern dance and gymnastics. She performed as a concert dancer and later acquired a physical education license enabling her to launch her own dance studio in Austria. In the United States, she pioneered creative dance and worked with children at the Children's Center for Creative Arts at Adelphi University, as well as in her own studio. She was a charter member of the American Dance Therapy Association, co-founded the National Dance Teachers Guild and taught methodology in teaching dance to children in Adelphi's dance department. In 1995, at the age of 93, she was honored with a lifetime achievement award as a chief pioneer in dance/movement therapy at the American Dance Therapy Association's 30th annual convention.

RUNNING TIME: 70 MIN. / GENERAL AUDIENCE / WWW.LIBBYSKALA.COM

A Time to Dance

Press Quotes

"*A Time to Dance* provides a worthwhile reason to bask in the company of a tenacious woman who fled Nazi-occupied Austria for New York. Funny...captivating...charming...Ms. Skala's convincing portrayal is the reason Polk is brought to life with such vibrancy."

- Gia Kourlas, *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

"Best of the NY Fringe Fest. A sparkling one-woman show. A vivacious actor, Skala brings childlike exuberance and lots of freeform expressive dance movement to her poignant portrayal of an undaunted survivor. Critics Pick."

- Lisa Jo Sagolla, *BACK STAGE*

"A beautiful life story worth telling, and hearing. Skala skillfully portrays her great aunt Elizabeth Polk... exuberantly with dance and drama. The music is fanciful and expressive - much like the performance by Skala, whose face speaks 1,000 words. (Four Stars)"

- Kathy Rumleski, *THE LONDON FREE PRESS*

"With elegant triumph, Skala manages to hold the audience's attention—and keep it smiling—with a pointed tale of hardship.... She ultimately leaves the audience with a...message of belief in a great and invisible love, and of faith in the strength of one's 'core' that nothing can touch (Four Stars)"

- Katy Reddin, *TIME OUT NEW YORK*

"*A Time to Dance* testifies to the theatrical power of a charismatic performer...[Skala's] extraordinary charm and skill brings to vivid life her great-aunt, captivating the audience and drawing them into Polk's extraordinary life...filled with humor."

- Miriam Rinn, *THE JEWISH STANDARD*

"This is Libby Skala's much-applauded one-woman show...interweaving narrative and motion, the successor to her knock-'em-dead *Lilia!* of nine years ago."

- Jerry Tallmer, *CHELSEA NOW & DOWNTOWN EXPRESS*

"The elegant one-person play depicted the rich life of Austrian dancer Elizabeth Polk...A lovely dancer, Skala skillfully wove modern dance into glimpses of how her great-aunt, who lived to be 99, survived by never allowing severe disappointments to cloud the vibrancy and beauty of life."

- Dottie Ashley, *THE POST AND COURIER*

"This one-woman play is a portrait of a woman so full of love...that she danced her way through life. Events that made others shudder and give up, she was able to take as gifts. Ms. Skala has an excellent sense of dramatic rhythm...a polished gem."

- R. Pikser, *THEATRE SCENE*

"Libby Skala glows in her poignant portrayal of a zany great aunt. Skala captivates from the moment she leaps on stage...Her gift as storyteller is undeniable and the intensity of her energy unrelenting. Lisl's (Skala's) anecdotes are generously embellished with outrageous...comic commentary.... Her riotous sense of humor and...honesty...further endear us to this electric woman. By the show's conclusion she has the audience enthusiastically clapping to the rhythm of her final dance number. **GRADE A-**"

- Rachel Ward, *THE CHARLESTON CITY PAPER*

"Enchanting and flawless! You charmed our socks off the minute you stepped out on stage. I don't know how you could improve on the performance. "

- Jordan R. Young, Author of *Acting Solo: The Art of One-man Shows*

"It's difficult to explain accurately the charm of this show. As played by her niece, Polk was clearly one of the world's rarities - a deeply happy person who possessed the gift of bringing joy to others. Skala is an extraordinary performer. This is a great story, told with economy, verve and just a grain of the magical. It's for everyone."

- Carolyn Raship, *CAVIGLIA'S CABINET OF CURIOSITIES*

A Time to Dance

Production History

Times Square International Theater Festival	New York, NY	January 2012
Fire Exit Theatre	Calgary, AB	September 2011
The Marsh	San Francisco, CA	September 2010
Sarah Lawrence College / Hillels of Westchester	Bronxville, NY	April 2010
Rhode Island Community College	Warwick, RI	March 2010
New York International Fringe Festival	New York, NY	August 2009
Piccolo Spoleto Festival (Footlight Players Theatre)	Charleston, SC	June 2009
Pacific Theatre	Vancouver, BC	Mar-Apr 2009
Desert Foothills Theater	Scottsdale, AZ	January 2009
Theater im Greenhouse	Berlin, Germany	July 2008
The Shantigar Foundation	Rowe, MA	July 2008
Lapham Community Center	New Canaan, CT	April 2008
Sundays at JASA (Jewish Assoc. Services for the Aged)	New York, NY	March 2008
Theater im Greenhouse	Berlin, Germany	November 2007
Die Buehne Theatre, Technische Universität Dresden	Dresden, Germany	November 2007
American Dance Therapy Assoc. Annual Conference	Brooklyn, NY	September 2007
London Fringe Theatre Festival	London, ON	Jul-Aug 2007
Principia College Summer Session	Elsah, IL	July 2007
Emerging Artists Theatre, One Woman Standing Series	New York, NY	April 2007
78 th Street Theatre Lab	New York, NY	September 2006
St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival	Prescott, ON	July 2006
Toronto Fringe Theatre Festival	Toronto, ON	July 2006

A Time to Dance

Technical Specs

STAGE

The playing area should ideally be at least 12 feet by 15 feet, though *A Time to Dance* has been effectively performed in both smaller and larger spaces.

SET

The set consists of a small table (or bench) for placing props (rhythm instruments: tambourine, maracas, and drum).

Optional: When a piano is available, it adds to the dance studio atmosphere. Its bench is used in place of the table above.

LIGHTS

The lighting plot requires four light settings.*

1. A general wash;
2. A spot or focused light center stage;
3. A spot or focused light highlighting the table (or bench) downstage left; and
4. A pre-show and post-show setting consisting of a combination of the two spots at a very low level, with wash lights even lower.

* When a lighting plot is not available, the show has been effectively performed in a general wash of light from beginning to end.

SOUND

There is a CD containing music sound cues used throughout the show. The script contains cue placement.

PROPS

A tambourine, maracas, and a drum.

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2009

A Therapist Who Fled the Nazis, and Other Characters in Motion



MICHAEL NAGLE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Libby Skala in "A Time to Dance" at Theaters at 45 Bleecker Street

"A Time to Dance" continues through Monday at the Theaters at 45 Bleecker Street, at Lafayette Street, East Village.

Above all, "A Time to Dance" provides a worthwhile reason to bask in the company of a tenacious woman who fled Nazi-occupied Austria for New York and

DANCE

GIA
KOURLAS

who also, it should be noted, didn't sweat the small stuff. In her latest solo piece, Libby Skala becomes the captivating Elizabeth Polk, a leading dance therapist who was known as Lisl and who specialized in working with emotionally, physically and mentally disabled children. A family connection helps with the transformation; Polk was Ms. Skala's great-aunt.

Ms. Skala's hourlong work, produced by Artistic New Directions, was seen on Saturday afternoon at the Theaters at 45 Bleecker Street as part of the New York International Fringe Festival. It will be repeated, along with two other Fringe shows reviewed here, at various times as the festival continues through Aug. 30.

In "A Time to Dance" the balance is tipped more toward speaking than moving; what seems to be missing from this mainly charming visual portrait is what made Polk, who died in 2001, such a magnetic teacher. The program is set to a CD that Polk produced as part of her dance-therapy practice, but the choreography is limited.

Ms. Skala is trained as an actress, not a dancer, and much of the movement involves instru-

ments (a tambourine, a drum, a pair of maracas) and barefoot prances on demi-point in circular patterns. A pink scarf flaps from her neck. Her cheeks are rosy. It's not terrible, yet it's a little bit like watching someone imitate Isadora Duncan.

Still, Ms. Skala, who speaks with a thick Austrian accent throughout the work, is a charming presence and her material — though it would improve with tightening — is beguiling. Her last production focused on Polk's sister and Ms. Skala's grandmother, the Academy Award-nominated actress Lilia Skala. "A Time to Dance," Libby Skala writes in her program notes, began when she interviewed Polk for that piece: "To my frustration, Lisl diverted each question with stories from her own life."

She learned that Polk was jealous of her older sister. ("Lili has a fine, thin nose," Ms. Skala said in the piece. "I have a potato nose.") During World War I, Polk was sent to live in Denmark, where she ended up teaching music to the children of the richest woman in town. Her wages allowed her to pay for dance classes when she returned to Vienna. As one story glides into the next, it's clear that Polk is a glass-half-full kind of woman; in Ms. Skala's tale, she manages to evoke the bright side of tuberculosis and to even make Nazis funny. Ms. Skala's convincing portrayal is the reason Polk is brought to life with such vibrancy.

LIFESTYLES TODAY

A beautiful life story worth telling, and hearing

KATHY RUMLESKI, Free Press Reporter



INSPIRED BY PAST: Libby Skala skillfully portrays her great aunt in *A Time to Dance*.

With her cheerfulness, Austrian accent and music-making, you might think you're watching Maria von Trapp.

But our entertainer is writer/performer Libby Skala, who skillfully portrays her great aunt Elizabeth Polk (Lisl), an Austrian-born dancer, in *A Time to Dance* at the London Fringe Festival.

Polk, who later lived in New York, taught dance and became a leading authority in dance therapy, working with emotionally, physically and mentally handicapped children. She seems like a remarkable woman.

Her life story is worth telling and Skala does so exuberantly with dance and drama.

Sometimes overshadowed by her big sister Lilia Skala (an Oscar-nominated actor, who is the focus of Libby Skala's first one-woman show

Lilia), Lisl reaches out to let her own light shine.

The music in *A Time to Dance* is a recording produced by Lisl that she used when working with children.

It's fanciful and expressive — much like the performance by Skala, whose face speaks 1,000 words.

While Lisl's life wasn't easy — she survived poverty, Hitler and the war and a husband who was "crazy" — her life story ends with her niece saying she had no regrets.

There are definitely no regrets in seeing this show.

IF YOU GO

What: *A Time to Dance*

Where: Spriet Family Theatre (Covent Garden Market)

Rating: ★★☆☆



Fringe Benefit: waltz, tango, ballet, modern dance

BACKSTAGE

NATIONAL EDITION

AUGUST 20-26, 2009

BEST OF THE NY FRINGE FEST

A TIME TO DANCE

Artistic New Directions at the Lafayette Street Theatre as part of the NYIFF

Don't be scared off; this is not a play about dance therapy.

CRITIC'S PICK

"A Time to Dance" is a sparkling one-woman show about writer-performer Libby Skala's great aunt Elizabeth "Lisl" Polk, an award-winning dance therapist and pioneer in the field of creative-dance education.

Rather than focus on professional accomplishments, Skala delves into the absorbing stories of Lisl's early life in Vienna as a member of a Jewish family during the years spanning the two world wars. The tales of her premature birth in 1902, the rise and fall of her father's fortune, her unhappy 27-year marriage, and the family's eventual emigration to the United States are told with abundant humor and an uplifting message of hopefulness and belief in the protective power of love.

DAMON CALDERWOOD



Steps in 'Time': Libby Skala

A vivacious actor, Skala brings child-like exuberance and lots of freeform expressive dance movement to her poignant portrayal of an undaunted survivor.

Presented by Artistic New Directions as part of the New York International Fringe Festival at the Lafayette Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St., NYC.

Reviewed by Lisa Jo Sagolla