

Fortunate Daughter

By Thao P. Nguyen

nytheatre.com review

reviewed by Montserrat Mendez · August 12, 2012

To miss *Fortunate Daughter*, playing at the 2012 New York International Fringe Festival would be a great disservice to yourself and to the artist who performs it, because this is a terrific one-person show. Sure to go on my top ten list of the year.

The set: a chair. The actress: a prop-less Thao P. Nguyen. The challenge: the musical rehearsing full voiced right next door. (I would suggest 440 Studios does some sound proofing!) And yet it all came together in a terrific evening of theatre, with a central story I will not soon forget.

The play opens with Thao, on a boat, on her way to a village to meet her Vietnamese grandmother for the first time. Having been raised in America, she is afraid to embarrass herself and her mother by not properly greeting her Vietnamese family in a proper manner. She stops the scene, and then explains to the audience that in order to follow her journey, we have to forget all the pre-conceptions of what Vietnam is; she then went on to play all those misconceptions out. Guess what, as the play had begun, I had already in my head gone through at least 90% of those pre-conceptions. "Okay, Thao, you got my attention," I thought. And what followed was theatrical magic; a pure story, with heart, passion and humor. I promised myself that I would remember each quotable line as I heard them, but alas, I would have had to memorize the entire script.



FORTUNATE DAUGHTER
 The secret to keeping your family happy is ... keeping your other family secret. A one-dyke show about the difference between coming out and coming home.

Written and performed by Thao P. Nguyen
 Directed by Martha Rynberg
 Originally directed by W. Kamau Bell
www.ThaoSolo.com

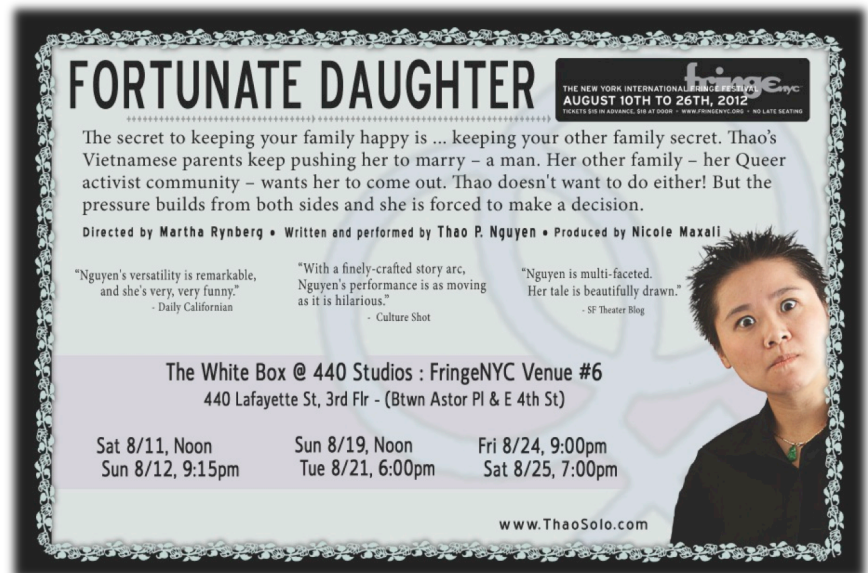
The White Box
 @ 440 Studios
 FringeNYC Venue #6
 440 Lafayette St, 3rd Flr
 Btwn Astor Pl & E 4th St

Sat 8/11, Noon
 Sun 8/12, 9:15pm
 Sun 8/19, Noon
 Tue 8/21, 6:00pm
 Fri 8/24, 9:00pm
 Sat 8/25, 7:00pm

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 AUGUST 10TH TO 26TH, 2012
 TICKETS \$15 IN ADVANCE, \$18 AT DOOR • WWW.FRINGENYC.ORG • NO LATE SEATING

And at the center of it is a heart soaring performance by Thao P. Nguyen. I laughed so loud that faces turned my way, and my grin was so wide, my face actually hurt at the end of the shows 80 minutes.

What Thao's one-person masterpiece has that most one-person shows don't, is a cast of characters fully realized, all of whom have their own intentions and desires; and then she goes on to play them out, imagining what their reactions will be and then playing out their actual reactions. Because we're not told what the characters are thinking, she manages to surprise us. There is a brilliant encounter with Thao and her sister Lynn, in which Lynn realizes that her sister has chosen the day of her wedding to come out. "You have your coming out face on!" says Lynn, and you so forget that you're watching one actress play both roles. Their desires are so opposite, Lynn doesn't want her day ruined, but Thao has reached that point where she has to share her secret. It is a thrilling scene, a battle of wills - only to have Thao's mother introduce an entirely different agenda to the wedding of Lynn Nguyen and David Rosenberg, which steals both their thunders in the most hilarious and heart-warming way.



The central conflict in Thao's life is between being out to her friends and being in the closet to her family, and through this we get to meet both of her family's, her real one and the one which allows her to be real.

I am thrilled that I got to see *Fortunate Daughter*; it is my second tale of identity at FringeNYC. Yet, both couldn't be more different. *Linda Means to Wait* was a story well told, in an affecting manner of one person's journey, with characters added in that reflected that journey. *Fortunate Daughter* was a fully theatrical experience, with a full cast of characters expertly played by one person; and with an award winning performance at the center of it. Both journeys are well worth taking.

<http://www.nytheatre.com/NytheatreNow/Review/fringenyc2012-fortunate-daughter>