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## HEART-FELT ILLUMINATIONS

PRINT VERSION



### GLORIA

Amy Waller, Catherine Waller, Naomi Bisley  
The Vintage Collective

at TAPAC Theatre, Western Springs - return season,  
Auckland  
Until 30 Nov 2013

Reviewed by [Kate Ward-Smythe](#), 24 Nov 2013

*Gloria* is a lovely, nostalgic and genuine tribute to a remarkable woman, created with all the care, detail and love that you would expect from proud grand daughters Amy and Catherine Waller.

Their empathy and admiration for her strong-willed war-bride grandmother Gloria Stanford is apparent, through both the meticulous script and a compassionate, warm, polished performance.

Amy Waller takes on the story telling in the form of a solo-show, and 1940s upbeat swing and dance is employed, to break up the narrative. She moves with wonderful grace and aplomb, rising to the challenge of performing couples' moves from just one dancer's perspective.

The pace, politeness and domesticity of the 1940s is alive and well in Waller's hands, as she takes us through everyday routines and tasks with flow and precision.

Set design by Naomi Bisley is authentic, practical as well as inventive, with many props used cleverly throughout the play. Sound design by Ben King adds great texture to the story. King captures the waves and seascape of Aotearoa perfectly. Voice-overs from Adam Gardiner and Tim Carlsen do the same with fine 1940s enunciation and tone.

My dates are two bright enquiring ten-year-olds, and I'm pleased both girls now have a good grasp of how things were on the home front for some Kiwi women during WW2. From Morse code in Mount Eden to films and flirtations at the Moodabe's residence; from the arrival of the Yanks to save us from the Japs to the telling cultural divide and tyranny of distance between America and New Zealand, *Gloria* is a thorough and enlightening personal perspective from a fascinating time in New Zealand's recent war history.

The girls do get bit fidgety at the 60-minute mark, as do others in the audience (including myself), indicating that perhaps either a small trim and edit here and there, or greater variation in pace, might better serve this one act show.

However both girls remark that the play is very clever and that "Amy is a really good actor." We all enjoy the way the journey ends the same way it starts, plus both girls really enjoy Gloria's actual poems, which slip into the script, from time to time.

We are also all in agreement that the most engaging scene is when Gloria's husband's bullying friend Bernie threatens to do the unthinkable with one of the things Gloria treasures the most.

This is by far Waller's strongest moment on stage and in script, as the jeopardy and emotion is palpable. If the same intensity had been employed during other life-changing moments in the narrative, perhaps it could have a positive impact on the pace and atmosphere of the journey.

Amy Waller has truly given this production and plays her all – she is its co-creator, choreographer, actor, co-producer, co-collaborator and co-designer of lighting. Without wanting to take anything away from that dedication and passion, perhaps sharing her wonderful work with the outside eye and perspective of a director might help to find more tangible moments within this illuminating story.

We feel very privileged to meet and share scones with four generations of Waller woman, including Gloria herself, before and after this heart-felt work. Thank you so much for sharing your story.

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