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## Theatre review: Gloria, Tapac

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Amy Waller brings her family history to life in Gloria.

Amy Waller's one-woman show addresses the widely felt yearning to keep alive the stories of our immediate ancestors and demonstrates how intimate family history can be translated into the language of theatrical storytelling.

In a moving tribute to her grandmother, Waller vividly captures the swirling emotions of a wartime romance that became front page news when 21-year-old Gloria Stanford abruptly disembarked from a ship that was departing for America with a cargo of Kiwi war brides.

The story comes to us in a jumbled collage of sharply defined memories and anecdotes that echoes the haphazard process by which children develop an awareness of the experiences that shaped their parents and grandparents.

By focusing on the mundane details of domestic life, the staging reveals how the vast epoch-making events of world history intersect with the singular and deeply personal experiences of ordinary people.

Waller's finely choreographed performance captures the bubbly vivacity of her grandmother with an impressive recreation of the wildly energetic dance styles that fuelled the live-for-the-moment spirit of wartime romance.

She also conveys the steely determination of an extraordinary young woman who wrote poetry and somehow found the audacity to stand up against the pervasive conformity of New Zealand society in the 1940s.

At times one senses that playwrights Amy and Catherine Waller may be too close to their subject, as some of the more interesting story elements are left unresolved, and the precise motivation behind the impulsive action at the heart of the play remains something of a mystery.

This could be seen as a deliberate strategy to show that there is always something unknowable in the lives of those we feel close to, and the play certainly expresses the complex ambiguity of a real human being.

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