

**San Francisco International Arts Festival**  
**Sasha Waltz & Guests: TRAVELOGUE I -Twenty to eight**  
**May 27, 2009 Cowell Theater, Fort Mason, SF**

What a show! Here's the recipe for an event that take place in the 'kitchen." Take a large helping of silent movies, melodrama and grand guignol (theater to delight and chill the audience), add a large quantity of contemporary post-modern acrobatic and effective dance technique marvelously performed and a highly skilled cast of five, mix well with a set that looks simple - table, chairs, two doors, a window, a fridge, striped walls climbed by dancer Davide Campiani, and a pull-down bed for dancer Edivaldo Ernesto...and Voila! You have Sasha Waltz & Guests at the SF International Arts Festival.

It was certainly the funniest, well-executed dance/theater/mime work seen here since SF Performances brought Inbal Pinto to YBCA. This is more complex, more 'dancistic', combining dramatic satire on daily life, Pinteresque irony, sexual aggression and desperation and just plan fun.

Waltz says, "The simple events of daily life with comic turning points build the contrast to the dramatic and emotionally loaded parts. I concentrate on detail and the subtlety of gestures and action to create an intricate and rhythmic picture of our time."

After a short film interlude, (Waltz: "This piece started our passion for movies and their stars,") we meet dancer Mamajeang Kim talking on the phone in Korean, a perfectly ordinary daily life moment. After a fairly conventional dinner scene, the race goes into high gear; there is a door slamming dance between Kim and Florencia Lamarca; Lamarca dances a leg-twining sexy tango with Ernesto (probably the hit of the show); a chicken is grabbed from the fridge by Campiani and Yael Schnell displays various stages of teen-age isolation, including a bottle jumping exercise. One event follows another so fast, the audience can hardly finish ingesting what has happened when they're besieged with the next.

Sasha Waltz has been seen in San Francisco and Berkeley in previous performances, but none has been so effective as this at Cowell Theater. She works best in the small space Cowell provides and with this extraordinary cast. She is one of the directors of Berlin's Schaubühne Theater, has produced the opera and most recently music-theater, namely *Medea* and *Romeo et Juliette*. Although *Travelogue I - Twenty to eight* was produced first in 1993, Waltz' theater sense seems sharper in this production here than in previous Bay Area offerings. Her program note includes a poem entitled "The Kitchen" as well as the following: "Cliché and stereotype transform the characters into caricatures of themselves. The music is a driving force in the creation of my pieces. For *Travelogue*, the music is an original composition by Tristan Honsinger."

For this viewer, the driving force is the concentration and detail of kinetic energy and the dramatic projection of the dancers: Campiani, Ernesto, Kim, Schnell and Lamarca. Thank you, Andrew Wood for the SF International Arts Festival, the successful negotiation of visas for all and especially for Sasha Waltz & Guests.

**Joanna Harris**