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## They Call Me Q

Posted By Stefie Gan  
on Jun 5, 2014



A story  
about a  
young



immigrant growing up in a new country with pulling forces from a traditional family and urban America, in the Bronx, the protagonist tries to find her own special identity. We all know the immigrant identity crisis story. The difference here is the performance Qurrat Ann Kadwani gives as she brings her personal story to life in her character Q with bold confidence and a radiant smile. We are captivated by her presence on stage, her burst of energy, but the storyline has holes here and there that makes the performance more of a meander of thoughts. For example, young Q gets slapped in the face by her school teacher and beat up by her neighbors, yet we wonder how we should interpret these incidents. It is, nonetheless, entertaining to see Kadwani impersonate teenage Q with a Puerto Rican accent to emulate her neighbors and a typical Indian mother.

Kadwani captures the personalities—more like caricatures—of her characters in this one-woman show by varying the glimmer of her eyes and the smirk of her lips. No other props needed but a flip of a sweater and two large gold hoop earrings. At some point, you stop noticing that it's played by the same person, simply because her facial expressions vary so much from character to character. We get hooked into Kadwani's roles and it's hilarious. Sometimes it hits you when you're not expecting it.

Each of the characters she portrays play a part in shaping the life and being of Q: Q's Indian mother who believes in traditional gender roles and arranged marriages, Puerto Rican friends and neighbors out to get her, and a dominating Bronx school teacher with her own twisted sense of justice. Events in Q's life unfold with lack of connection or a conclusion to the meaning of such events. It is merely a recount of her childhood and teenage years, the ups and the downs. An entertaining comedy regardless. Not the heart-wrenching heavy immigrant story, but a lighthearted one, Bronx-style. We don't get her family story; instead we have a story of a child growing up in a mixed neighborhood. Though there was an overly solemn tragedy that takes place without much connection to the flow of the story.

We know this is a growing up story, but what does she learn that she wants to share with us? Q never tells us how her name changed from her traditional






hard to pronounce Indian name to a letter of the alphabet. A missed opportunity to suggest the title and how it ties into the larger meaning of the play. Although there are many quirky characters, they come and go without much development; even Q herself doesn't come to much of a revelation. Perhaps she does after the play is over; we're sure of it because she seems so determined to figure out what she wants to do with her life. Through a series of events and fable-like stories, we as the audience need to process her anecdotes ourselves to create meaning as it is not clearly stated.

As we are viewing her growing up story and reflections. Ultimately, this is a quest of a young immigrant girl trying to accept herself and take a path she chooses for the future. We don't know where Q is headed, but know she is self-aware and determined to make her own choices.

**They Call Me Q**—Written and performed by Qurrat Ann Kadwani, directed by Obaid Kadwani and Claudia Gaspar, developed with Ellery Schaar.

Presented by Obaid Kadwani in association with Edmund Gaynes; Jim Randolph, press representative, Jessimeg productions, general manager, Paul Bourgeois, stage manager. At St. Luke's Theatre, 308 West 46<sup>th</sup> Street (just west of Eighth Ave.) Performed Mondays at 7 PM and Wednesdays at 8 PM. Tickets are \$39.50 – \$59.50 and are available through [www.Telecharge.com](http://www.Telecharge.com) or by calling 212-239-6200. Running time 60 minutes.

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**Author:** Stefie Gan

Stefie Gan recently received a BA from Barnard College. She has also taken courses in figure drawing, watercolor painting, and animation at SVA and the Art Students League. At Barnard, she finished her first animated short film titled A Day in Kuala Lumpur, a film documenting the lives of inhabitants of the city. She is currently writing a feature length screenplay. As a new reviewer for Front Row Center, she is craving for a good story and performance. A native New Yorker.



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