

Review of RE:ViSiON: A State of Emergence

--Brent Buell

“RE:ViSiON: A State of Emergence” is the third play of a trilogy by the astonishing Truthworker Theatre Company—a hip-hop based theater under the direction of Artistic Director Samara Gaev.

“RE:ViSiON,” chronicles the lives of three individuals as they are released from prison and seek to redefine and reshape their lives on the outside; as they seek to reintegrate themselves with family and friends from whom they have been long absent. The stories, written in their entirety by the cast of Truthworker and based on their own experiences, achieve something remarkable. Let me explain.

Arising from a hip-hop structure—rhythmic, interspersed with rhyme, dance and always in tune with the dust of the streets—“RE:ViSiON” somehow maintains an authenticity that refuses to have a genre dictate its sincerity. It never lets rap sensibility sacrifice a moment of sincerity, realness or street insight in order to serve hip hop.

Truth is at the center of “RE:ViSiON,” and I applaud the young people—ages 16-22 or so—who make up Truthworker’s cast.

Under the direction of Gaev, with stunning visuals by Technical Director Alixa Garcia and driving, immersive musical environments by cast member Jay Forza, “RE:ViSiON” brings us not only to the story of people struggling to find their way in society, but takes us into their dreams, their nightmares, their internal batterings.

When entering the theater, a lone figure constrained by chains (Carnell Keith Steward, Jr.) is standing silently midstage—seemingly lost in resignation. When the show begins—we hear loud rhythmic stomping as the cast comes onstage—and each takes an end of four chains that become the prison from which Steward speaks. And then he begins to dance—as he does throughout the play—and we see/feel/experience the agony of incarceration that maintains a hold after release. As chains wrap and unwrap, as struggle becomes triumph without complete joy, we begin to understand, we stop being observers and become experiential participants.

Dance remains integral to the storytelling, and soon Steward is joined by Donnay Edmund who both breaks our hearts and lifts us to the heights through her dance.

Three stories, three individuals—a father returning home to a son after many years in prison; a mother struggling with addiction, incarceration and two small children; a teenager who witnesses his brother’s murder, but is arrested for weapons possession—all illustrate the power of a community to restore life.

While never turning eyes away from the pain in the lives in these narratives, the humor of human goodness is here in abundant supply. There is one character who is central to all three stories, Mr. G., played to sweet hysterical perfection by Ricky Matos. He is a shopkeeper in the community who opens his heart and home to those in need. When he

says “I love you,” to one of his charges and they don’t return the phrase, all hell breaks loose. And when his house is filled with far too many people, there is appropriate Benny Hill chaos.

Every performance is strong—and I want to underline again, authentic. Cast members assume multiple roles with equal conviction. In addition to those highlighted above, they are Cory Fletcher, Jazmin Luperena, Enlil McRae, Rebecca Oliver, Desi Ramos, Nethaneel “Ethan Black” Romero, with assistance from Zafar Mohammed.

There are two performances remaining: Saturday, May 6 | 7:30pm and Sunday, May 7 | 2:30pm.

All performances are at JACK, the wonderful performance space at 505 1/2 Waverly Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11238. Tickets available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2919433>