

# THE PRAGUE POST

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## REVIEWS

### Zam! Pow! Socko!

#### REVIEW THEATER

**Big Knees (on Rebecca): 3 Chunks of Zam** by Laura Zam. In English. Divadlo v Celetné at 9. Next performance: May 22.

Gentle hearts, take cover. Laura Zam has brought performance comedy, New York-style, to Prague. Contemporary and original, innovative and gutsy, Zam has introduced hot sauce to the kitchen table of Prague drama. And no concessions have been made for weak-stomached viewers, judging from the April 24 performance of *3 Chunks of Zam* at Divadlo v Celetné.

Written and performed by Zam, directed by Misery Loves Company's David Nykl and co-starring Chris Clarke, *3 Chunks of Zam* comprises three short plays that take a no-holds-barred look at male-female relationships.

In *Dominica*, *Seven Maxims* and *The Mystery of Trees*, Zam treats her audience to quirky, one-scene sketches that are as well-executed as they are well-written. Sex is the central theme, and Zam is incorrigible throughout, moving effortlessly from one eccentric female character to another.

In the first short play Zam is a Hispanic sexpot obsessed with her breasts. In another she's a confused visionary with Big Conspiracy theories.

Chris Clarke, who is steadily gaining a good reputation in Prague as an actor, plays opposite each of Zam's characters with confidence and style.

In *Dominica* Clarke triumphs as the well-meaning, bespectacled nerd who attempts to con-



Courtesy photo

Chris Clarke (right) is Laura Zam's bewildered foil in the latest from *Big Knees*.

vince his neurotic friend of the biological and psychological undesirability of breast implants. In a fit of self-loathing *Dominica* rejects his friendship, leaving Clarke to ponder why in the play's final speech. His confusion is genuinely moving as his conclusions run astray.

But sentiment plays a minor part in these plays. Zam doesn't intend to rouse her audience's finer feelings — this is comedy written with a obscene imagination and intent on shocking its audience.

Zam doesn't so much ferret around in the undergrowth as belly flop into the sewers of human nasty stuff. Nothing is sacred: Nipple neurosis, urination secrets, food fetishes and orgasm scrutiny all are fair game. Zam balks at nothing.

Even those who find her subject matter too strong cannot help but marvel at her nerve.

In the opening scene of *Dominica*, Zam stands

center stage. A spotlight picks out a slight figure dressed in a red leotard and short skirt. Zam raises her arms above her head and shrieks, "Look at my breasts!"

Although her handling of the material is original, Zam could be accused of laziness. Like Charles Dickens' characters, Zam's are defined solely by what type of humor she has chosen to target. Neurotic hippies and Zen followers are easy targets, and feminists may object to her treatment of the American female-empowerment movement in *Dominica*.

But homesick expats starved for dirty humor and strong language should make a note in their diaries to reserve tickets well in advance for the next performance — the premiere sold out. Don't mix Zam with a pajama party; no evening is meant to be that much fun.

— Emma McClune