

APRIL 10, 2008

The Long Shadow Of Tragedy

A Holocaust story gets a dose of uplift in Laura Zam's play

STAGE | Eighteen characters, one actor, a dose of comedy, the Holocaust — an unlikely mix. Yet playwright Laura Zam tackles these with humor and grace through her one-woman play, "Collaterally Damaged."

The nonfiction performance focuses on the life of Zam's mother under the shadow of Nazism. It traces her travails as she is deported from towns throughout Poland, enslaved in Auschwitz and forced to march into Germany.

As Zam puts it, the Holocaust "is this seminal story that's supposed to have taught us that we can't have these kinds of crimes against humanity, and yet we have [them]," as evidenced in Darfur. "'Never again' doesn't really make sense."

In the narrative (and in life), Zam goes back to Poland to follow her mother's path. She ends up traveling with an ex-boyfriend videog-



Laura Zam traced her mother's path through Poland and even to Auschwitz.

rapher across Europe, interviewing people about war, fighting with the ex, visiting Auschwitz, and trying to find the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust.

It's a enthralling story, and all true, and even — improbably — funny. "I don't go into many graphic details."

Her mother was ultimately liberated by British soldiers and went on to have a daughter, and to tenderly berate her about the hardships she missed out on. "Eighteen buttons I had to sew on those Nazi uniforms, every day! Eighteen buttons!"

→ *Busboys & Poets*, 2021 14th St. NW; Sun., 7:30 p.m., \$20 suggested donation directly benefits "Books for Burundi"; 202-387-7638. (U St.-Cardozo)