

STAGE



MAGE

BOB: Blessed Be the Dysfunction that Binds

by Jon Sobel

This powerful one-woman show by the talented **Anne Pasquale** deserves a larger venue than the tiny 78th Street Theatre Lab. But the cramped quarters stress the intimacy of Ms. Pasquale's memoir of growing up in a family ravaged by the presence of a mentally disturbed brother. In the course of the evening Ms. Pasquale, who wrote and performs the piece, gives voice and shape not only to herself but to her sisters, her parents, her grandparents, others, and the brother himself. It's a bravura performance, somehow both large and compressed, big-hearted and pained – tense and welcoming.

Ms. Pasquale does a yeoman's job of churning through a large amount of emotional material in a smooth hour and a half, directed sensitively and concisely by Mary Ann Hay. Props and quickly-donned and shed bits of clothing illustrate the chiaroscuro of our heroine's memories and the memorable characters that populate them. A Mother's Day gift for her hapless, super-religious mother. A pair of underpants. A baseball cap. A musically non-gifted Anne strumming "the sound of time passing" on her autoharp.



"Crying and craziness – that said home to me." The craziness includes evocatively staged violence and worse ("I hit him so hard my hand hurts," growls their father at one point), and Bob's saga continues through the siblings' adulthood and to the present day, but there's love through it all. A scene in which Bob visits their sister in the hospital is one of a number of especially touching moments, balanced by impressively staged one-woman playings-out of some very rough scenes.

It's rare to see a show that's a real, acted-out drama but also essentially nonfiction. **BOB: Blessed Be the Dysfunction that Binds** is a fine example of what the well-polished staged memoir can accomplish.