

DOWNLOAD THE NEW TCPALM APP

NEWS

Two new stars shine bright with 'Waking Kya'



@VBNW CUTLINE CREDIT:Photos by Brenda Sposato Playwright Siobhan Fitzpatrick Austin and actress Linda Obasi.

By L.L. Angell

Posted: Dec. 11, 2013



No special effects, sex or zombies, just great writing, great acting and one-woman’s powerful story of perseverance and healing in the face of unbearable violence. That’s the original play, “Waking Kya.”

Two new stars shone their lights at the Vero Beach Theatre Guild’s one-night-only performance last Wednesday, Dec. 4. Quite simply the playwright, Siobhan Fitzpatrick Austin and the actress, Linda Obasi rocked the house.



applauding.

Nobody wanted “Waking Kya” to end. “She needs to write more,” someone said, referring to the playwright. “What happens next?”

And, “I wish it were playing longer. I want more people to see this.”

It’s the story of Abeba, a young woman who’s escaped Sierra Leone’s Civil War in 2000 and now lives in a refugee camp in Liberia. Rebels killed her parents and repeatedly raped her sister, whose internal injuries are so severe, she’s incontinent and no longer speaks. Abeba’s only family is the damaged Kya and her aged grandmother.

The play’s performance was part of the annual “UN Women in Support of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence,” which ran from Nov. 25 to Dec. 10.

In her opening remarks, Lalita Janke, executive board president of the East Florida Chapter, United States National Committee for UN women laid out the facts.

“Look around you,” said Janke. “Seven out of 10 women in the US experience some kind of violence. Together we can make a difference.”

Remarkably, “Waking Kya” isn’t depressing. In the end, Abeba and Kya are healed and making a new start. And we’re ready to do what we can to end the cycle of violence.

The gifted playwright Fitzpatrick Austin, actress Obasi and director Pamela Warwick make this story as real and intimate as a friend sitting at your kitchen table telling her tale.

Abeba walks onto an empty stage and sits cross-legged looking straight at us with the wide eyes of a child.

“Where I grew up, our grandmothers told large stories passed down from their grandmothers and theirs before,” Abeba says.



sharing secrets with her beautiful sister, Kya. This was life before the civil war.

Right away, we're hooked. This is no preachy social studies lesson. This is real life.

Since Fitzpatrick Austin wrote "Waking Kya" approximately 10 years ago, the play's been performed more than a dozen times throughout the country. Its one and only director, Warwick, believes the format is the perfect way to engage the audience.

By talking to us directly, "Waking Kya" breaks the fourth wall (the imaginary wall of a box set separating actors from audience) in a way that the traditionally staged show does not.

"This personalizes the relationship between the actor and the audience," Warwick said in a phone interview from New York.

"A show based on true historical events that's so emotionally charged, motivates people to leave that theater asking questions and determined to raise awareness about that particular problem," Warwick said.

That's the hope of Janke and members of the East Florida Chapter, US National Committee for UN Women. Janke and her husband, Walter, sponsored the Vero Beach Theatre Guild's performance of "Waking Kya."

"When people are repeatedly moved by something, they decide to act," says Janke.

Obasi agrees. Born in Nigeria and raised in the US since the age of five, she regularly returns there.

"Violence against women is prevalent in both places," says Obasi, who currently lives in the Bronx.

Interwoven with Obasi's performances are three dances choreographed by Stacey Miller and performed by Miller, Laura Guttridge and Tammie

Mark Wygonik, the Guild’s board president was happy to offer the use of the theater at a discount.

“This is a great opportunity for us to present this play,” said Wygonik before the show. “As a nonprofit, we want to assist others.”

FitzpatrickAustin wrote “Waking Kya” in a single weekend. The former social worker, who also writes for The Newsweekly, wanted to pen something to raise funds for Sierra Leone refugees.

“I contacted a grassroots organization in New York that teaches refugees to make batik fabric and soap. Originally, the play raised \$2,000 that went directly to these women and girls,” says the playwright.

She hopes “Waking Kya” will continue to be performed throughout the country.

All ticket sales from the performance went to the East Florida Chapter, US National Committee for UN Women, which supports the UN chapter.

For more information, contact www.unwomen-usnc.org. and www.sistersgeographic.org.



PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

News Sports Business Opinion Entertainment Specialty Lifestyle

Connect With Us

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Newsletters

Useful Links

- Submit Your Stuff
- Legal Notices
- Print Ads
- Newspaper Archive

About Us

- Contact Us
- Legal Info
- Advertise with Us
- Jobs at TCP
- We Sponsor the Treasure Coast

Mobile Apps

- iPhone & iPad
- Kindle
- Android

