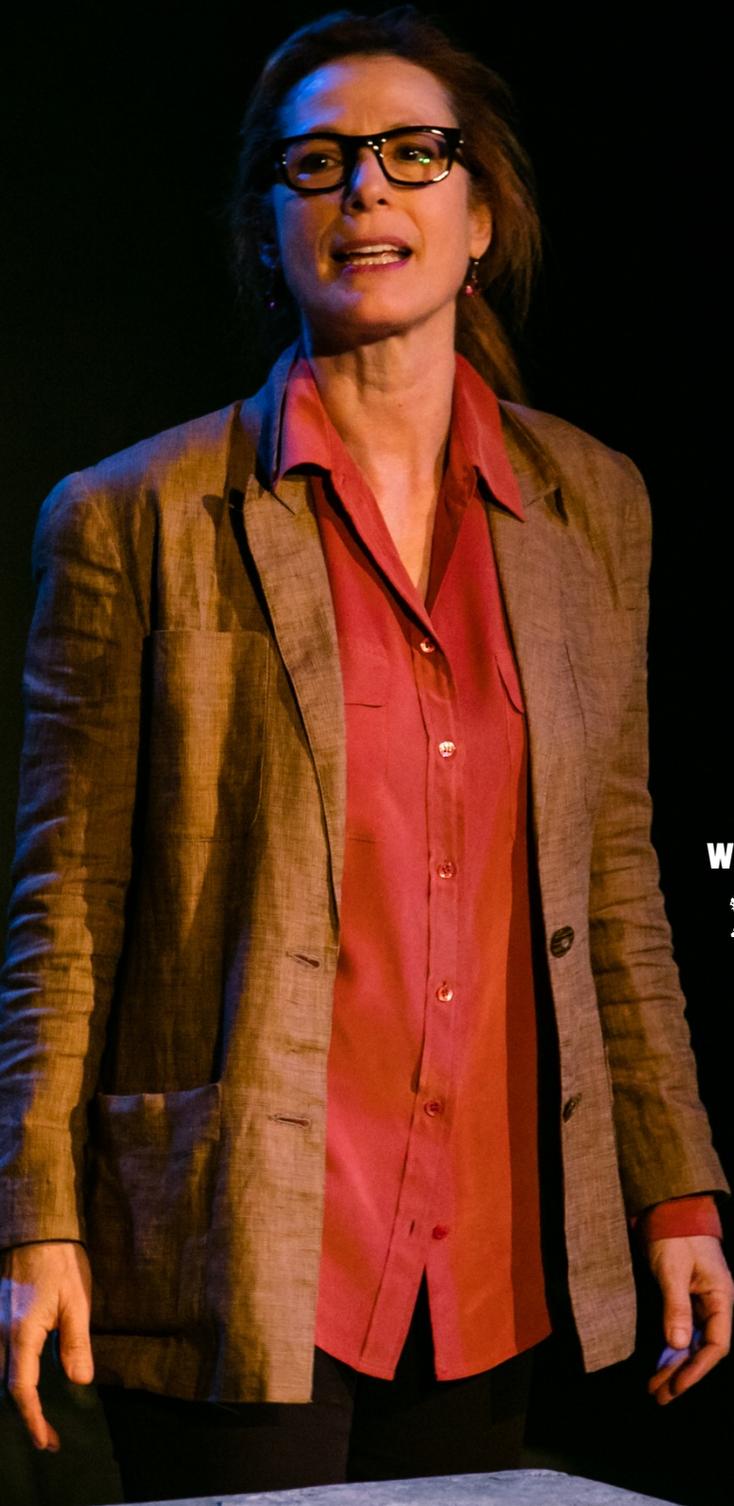


**"moving and deeply satisfying
... a seamless piece of work."**



**NEAL WEAVER
STAGE RAW - TOP TEN
OVATION RECOMMENDED**



THE
DIG

**death + genesis
+ the double helix**

a play for a woman + a reptile

written + performed by

stacie chaiken

directed by

pamela berlin



"unusual + riveting ...

ELAINE L MURA, LA SPLASH

AN AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGIST IS SUMMONED TO A DIG IN **JAFFA**

THE **ISRAELIS** HAVE FOUND SOMETHING —
SOMETHING THAT MIGHT **CHANGE** EVERYTHING

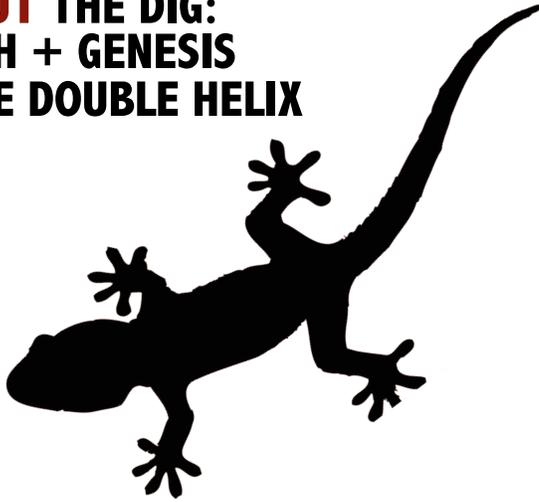
SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TELL THEM WHAT IT IS

AND HER **MOTHER** JUST DIED

AND THERE'S A **LIZARD** IN HER **BATHTUB**



ABOUT THE DIG: DEATH + GENESIS + THE DOUBLE HELIX



We call *The DIG* a play for “a woman and a reptile” because the lizard archaeologist Sally Jenkins finds in her hotel bathtub changes her life, and her sense of what is possible.

Although he/she is seen only briefly in the play, the lizard Mo is ever-present in Dmitry Kmelnitsky's lush video backdrop, which transports audiences from the the Jordan Valley to the beach at Tel Aviv to the streets of the ancient city of Jaffa, down into the tomb deep below.

Writer-performer Stacie Chaiken embodies Sally, and channels the other characters—former Israeli army officer, David; his mysterious Palestinian colleague, Rashid.

The play is built on polarities— woman and reptile; women and men; Israeli and Palestinian; Muslim and Jew—set against the backdrop of the Middle East during the Second Intifada.

+ SYNOPSIS

Los Angeles-based archaeologist Sally Jenkins is world-renowned for her ground-breaking work in the analysis of ancient DNA. She loves bones, knows everything about bones, knows everything about everything—except how to get along with other people.

Sally's mother dies after a long illness. Moments later, she gets a call from Jerusalem—Israeli Antiquities. The Israelis found something buried under a monastery in Jaffa. They have a ticket for her on the next flight out, and they're willing to pay a small fortune to get her there. Sally happily skips her mom's funeral and flies.

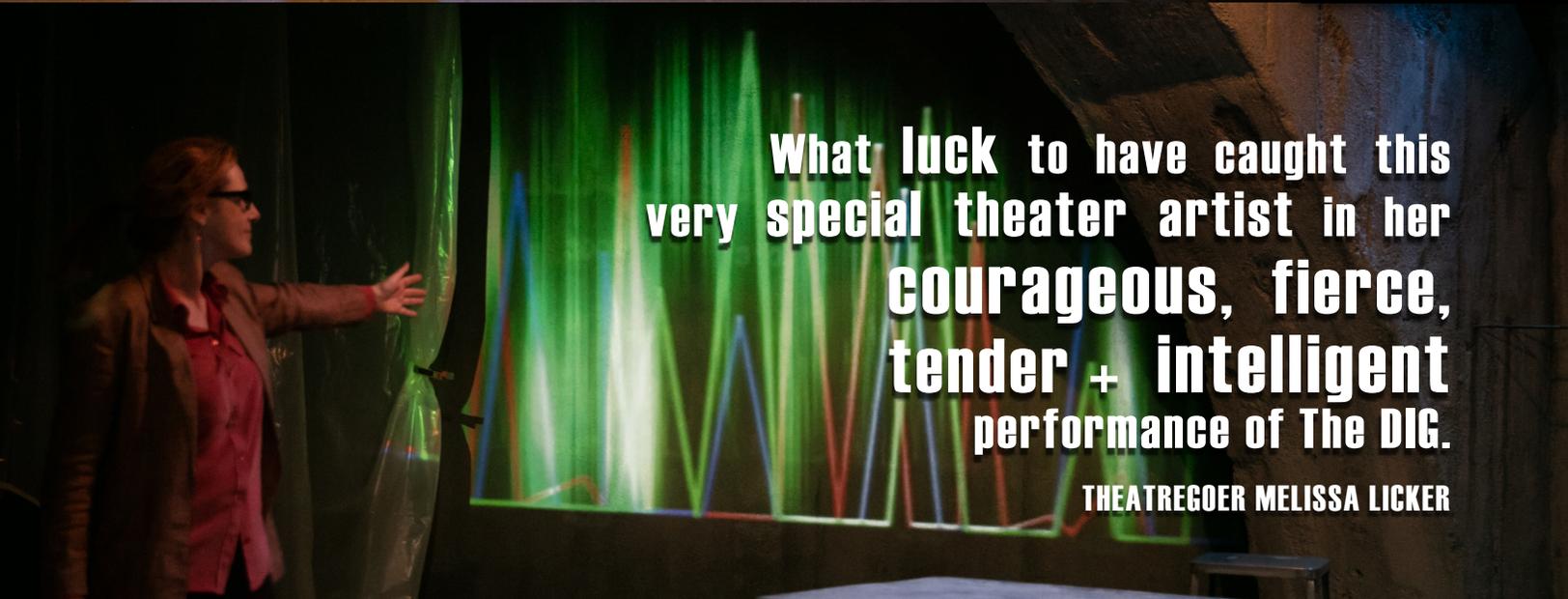
Sally's arrival is cloaked in secrecy. No one, they tell her, must know why you are here.

There's a lizard in the bathtub in her five-star hotel. Male or female? Hard to tell. She names it Mo—for Mom—and goes to work with her Israeli wrangler David (Daveed) and his mysterious Palestinian partner Rashid, in an underground tomb in the ancient city.

They've discovered a stone sarcophagus—unheard of in Israel. The three of them lift the lid to reveal an extraordinary 4000-year-old burial. The Israelis have reason to believe this find might prove the validity of ancient texts, and challenge already fragile boundaries in this shaking world.

Sally's innovation—based on real cutting-edge science—is a methodology for cleaning away eons of dust and dirt, and isolating the genetic material necessary for identification of ancient bones. Her analysis of the DNA in the Israeli corpse is suggestive, but inconclusive, and Sally finds herself in a situation where the mess of history—her own history and that of the land where she is working—cannot be so easily cleaned away.

A decision must be made. Sally and her colleagues Rashid and David come to an astonishing meeting of minds, and hearts. And David—ever master of global machinations—figures out a way for Sally to sneak her new best friend Mo straight past Customs, and home with her to LA.



What luck to have caught this very special theater artist in her **courageous, fierce, tender + intelligent** performance of *The Dig*.

THEATREGOER MELISSA LICKER

PROGRAMMING + TALK-BACKS

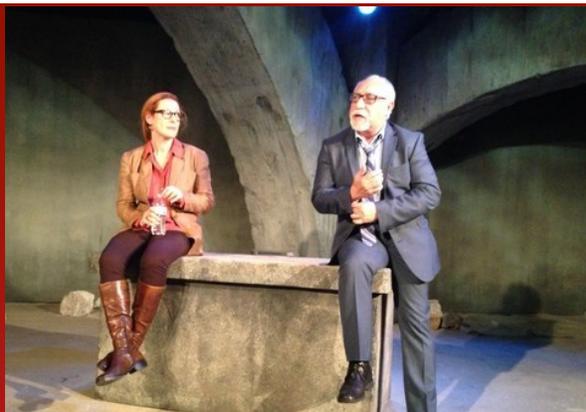
The intent of The DIG is to entertain, to bring audiences into worlds they have never seen—the passion of the scientist; the exoticism of the Middle East. But we also want to provoke thought and conversation. Audiences want to talk about what they have seen. And while the backdrop may be Israel, and the central character a secular American Jew, the issues raised in The DIG are universal.

The Latino Theater Company, which produced the Los Angeles premiere, took advantage of the wide range of themes addressed in The DIG to appeal to a broad range of interest groups. Experts from faith and inter-faith groups, arts and activist organizations were invited to respond to the play and moderate the after-show conversations, and their groups bought blocks of seats. Other responders included historians, archaeologists and experts in family trauma.

Themes that came up during the conversations: genetic archaeology; the nature of Biblical text; archaeology and the Bible; epigenetics (the study of the inherited effects of trauma, as passed down through DNA); generational violence in cross-cultural immigrant families; the tangled mother-daughter dynamic; the tangled Muslim-Jewish dynamic; the history of Israeli and Palestine; and Middle Eastern culture; the meaning of the lizard.

An earlier workshop of The DIG, presented as part of the Visions and Voices program at the University of Southern California, offered a series of lectures by local specialists: Biblical Artifact and Ancient Text; The Political Ramifications of Archaeological Findings; Conflict Resolution, and Scientific Ethics. (Sally is a world-renown scientist, at the top of her field; she and her colleagues make a choice at the end of the play can be ethically challenging to some audiences.)

Opening night talk-back moderated by producer Jose Luis Valenzuela.



WORKSHOPS

Writer-performer Stacie Chaiken runs a workshop in Los Angeles for writers and performers who are creating work based on personal story. It's called What's the Story? because when you're dealing with stuff that happened—or may have happened—to you or anyone else, the question is, What's the story you want to tell?

There is something about an event, a place, a time, that calls to you: There is something in that experience that needs to be told.

As an adjunct to performances of The DIG, Stacie is eager to work with students or artists in your community. She can facilitate group-process writing workshops for people working in any genre.

She can also facilitate performance workshops, and offer Master Classes for students who are creating—or want to create—solo plays.

These workshops can be customized for writers and performers at any level of training or craft, working in a broad range of genres, from prose memoir, to autobiographical verse, to songwriting and solo performance.

**WHAT'S
THE
STORY?**

whatsthestoryLA.com

STUDENTS SAY:

Stacie has **the touch of a magician** in her ability to extract the very best from her students.

She is **unwaveringly supportive**, and has a **keen eye and ear for what works.**

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The DIG can be presented powerfully in venues ranging from the intimacy of a living room--without any visuals or sound—to theatres holding upwards of four hundred spectators.

The full production requires two video projectors. The projections were built in Millumin, which offers a fully-operative downloadable 30-day trial for both Mac and Windows. The sound score was built in QLab.

Put-in for the full production, with lights, projections and sound, requires a projection or specialist, sound tech and a lighting designer. Running crew: three operators, which may or may not include the production stage manager, depending on available personnel and the layout of your facility.

FOR DETAILS AND SCHEDULE OF FEES: info@theDIGplay.com





Writer-performer Stacie Chaiken's plays include *Looking for Louie*, about immigrant family secrets, *The Dig*, and *What She Left*, based on Holocaust narratives. As a performer, she has appeared in plays written by other people on and off-Broadway, regionally, and in Los Angeles. Her work has received the support of the Durfee Foundation; the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture; the LA Cultural Affairs Department; the Fulbright Foundation; and the USC Visions & Voices Program. She is a proud member of the performance and Dramatists Guild(s); Pen USA; NoPassport; Pacific Resident Theatre; and Rogue Machine. staciechaiken.com



Seymour is a crested gecko who plays the Mediterranean gecko named Mo, and serves as muse to the team.

New York-based director Pamela Berlin has worked extensively in the development of new plays and is an acclaimed director in regional theatre and opera. New York directing credits include *Steel Magnolias*, which she developed, and which ran for three years off-Broadway; *To Gillian*, on her 37th Birthday; *The Cemetery Club* (Broadway); *Crossing Delancey* and *The Adjustment* (Jewish Repertory Theatre); *Joined at the Head* and *Pretty Fire* (Manhattan Theatre Club); *The Family of Mann* and *The Red Address* (Second Stage); *Three in the Back*, *Two in the Head* (MCC); *Black Ink* and *Elm Circle* (Playwrights Horizons); *Snowing at Delphi* and *Club Soda* (WPA); *Vita and Virginia* (the Zipper Theatre); *Winners*, *Close Ties* (Ensemble Studio Theatre).



Production designer Yael Pardess started her theatre design career in Israel where she designed set and costumes for major Israeli theatres. She now lives in Los Angeles. Her designs have been seen on Broadway, London West End, Mark Taper Forum LA, The Guthrie, American Conservatory Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, American Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage and many more.

Productions include: *Blade to the Heat*, *Richard II*, *Scenes from an Execution*, *Stand Up Tragedy*, *Macbeth*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Julius Caesar*, *Death and the Maiden*, *George Gershwin Alone*, many of them award winning productions. She has collaborated with acclaimed directors like Joel Zwick, Oscar Eustis, Robert Egan, Jo Bonney, and recently worked with Plácido Domingo on *Dulce Rosa* performed at the Broad Stage. yaelpardessdesigns.com



Video designer Dmitry Kmelnitsky is an Associate Professor of Multimedia Arts at Loyola Marymount University and the founding director of Lustre, an art + design studio that develops concert visuals, music videos, animations, video art installations, and environmental projections. His work has been exhibited widely throughout the world. Kmelnitsky is also a composer/music producer, under the name Kemell.

lustrecreative.com



Sound designer Tim Labor is an Associate Professor of Music at the University of California Riverside. Recent classical compositions include Howl and Hunt for the UC Riverside Symphony), Blomidon – Tone Poem with Sound Design for Nova Scotia Youth Orchestra, and Shakespeare’s World: Olivia for Mira Costa Symphony Orchestra. He received an Ovation nomination for the sound design for Open Fist’s Papa, and the LA Weekly Award in intimate sound design for Sacred Fools’s Swine Show.

timlabor.com



Lighting designer Matthew Johns is a freelance Lighting and Video designer, based in Los Angeles. He has designed regionally with The Lake Effect for TheatreWorks and In a Word for SF playhouse, as well as The Memory Tax, off-Broadway. Currently the lighting designer at the REDCAT in Downtown Los Angeles, he also designed the interactive installation for the film premiere of Awaken by Balbinka Korzeniowska. Matthew received his MFA from UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television in 2014.

mattjohns.com



Projection designer Hsuan-Kuang’s stage works include: Until Until Until..., Performa 15 directed by Edgar Arceneaux, which won the Malcolm McLaren Award (3LD Technology and Art Center, NY); The Glue Factory Project- Parallel Lives by Corning Works, rated as the Top Ten (2/10) Dance Events of 2014 at New Hazzault Theater, Pittsburgh; Afterword by Sean Griffin at Festival: Ostrava Days, Ostrava, Czech Republic; Circle Jerk by Robert Cucuzza at REDCAT; Ameryka by Nancy Keystone at Shakespeare Center of Los Angeles); Dry Land by Joyce Lu at Pomona College. Hsuan-Kuang holds her MFA in Video for Performance, with a concentration in Integrated Media from California Institute of the Arts

(CalArts). hsuankuang.com





THE DIG

Reviewed by Neal Weaver - STAGE RAW

In her intriguing solo-drama, writer-performer Stacie Chaiken plays archeologist Sally Jenkins, who specializes in the study of ancient DNA. As she says, “It’s easy to extract the whole gene from soft tissue, but there is never soft tissue in ancient burials. I’ve managed to replicate the material I need from infinitesimal bits of really old bone.”

Sally has just been summoned back to Pittsburgh and the bedside of her dying mother, who was a close-mouthed Holocaust survivor. Mother-daughter relations are, to put it mildly, strained. But 20 minutes after the death of her mother, Sally receives a call from Israel Antiquities summoning her to a dig in Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv, to examine the bones of some 4,000 year old horses. Initially, she turns down the request, but it’s sweetened with promises of large cash rewards, a suite in a luxury hotel, and a chauffeured Mercedes. So she sets out for Israel.

In Jaffa Sally soon learns that it’s not horses she’s called upon to examine, but a 4,000 year old sealed sarcophagus, of a kind never before seen in Israel. Because Jewish orthodox laws forbid conducting scientific tests on human remains, there’s a necessary pretense that the case involves

Chaiken has created an intricate, multi-layered tale that combines archeology, religion, Israeli-Palestinian politics and personal issues, with each strand of the narrative reflecting back on the others.

animals rather than humans. And when the sarcophagus is unsealed and opened, it contains a 4,000 year-old, perfectly preserved woman.

Sally’s work is slowed by the urgent necessity of taking steps to preserve the remains, now that they have been exposed to air. The crypt must be sealed in plastic, and its temperature reduced to below freezing. After enduring the heat of Jaffa, she must now work in sub-zero temperatures while wearing a parka.

Gradually Sally’s co-workers — David, an Israeli colonel and Rashid, her Arab-Israeli driver — reveal the real nature of her task. It seems that, based on various pieces of evidence, this may or may not be the tomb of Sarah, the wife of the Biblical patriarch Abraham and the mother of Isaac. Sally becomes increasingly intrigued with the Biblical accounts of Sarah’s life, and begins to feel a personal kinship with the ancient corpse. She herself is half-Jewish and her middle name is Sarah. Her work and her personal life become inextricably entwined, leading her to personal insights and a greater understanding of her thorny, unforgiving mother.

Sally’s next task is to determine whether there is a genetic match between the corpse and the bones in Abraham’s tomb. This provides an even greater challenge, since the bones are revered by both Jews and Palestinians and must not be tampered with. Sally must analyze them by examining and testing only the dust of the decaying bones, not the bones themselves..

Chaiken has created an intricate, multi-layered tale that combines archeology, religion, Israeli-Palestinian politics and personal issues, with each strand of the narrative reflecting back on the others.

Her play deals with the complexities of Israel during the Second Intifada, her relations with her co-workers David and Rashid, and her growing relationship with the lizard she found in the bathtub of her luxury hotel: She names him/her Mo, and adopts the critter as a pet, who must be smuggled — with the help of her Israeli colleagues — back to her home in Los Angeles.

Chaiken has researched her subject deeply and meticulously, and performs her material with a brisk, humorous, no-nonsense attitude that compels belief. I had to keep reminding myself that this is a work of fiction, not a factual account, though the science is apparently real. The complicated genetics involved are not only made clear, but dramatic as well; the gradual unravelling of the DNA evidence is rendered

almost magical, while the underlying emotional issues make the narrative both moving and deeply satisfying.

Director Pamela Berlin has skillfully shaped the tale, weaving together seemingly unrelated elements and working closely with Chaiken and the design and technical crew to produce a seamless piece of work. Set designer Yael Pardess has utilized the architectural features of the intimate theatre deep in the bowels of the Los Angeles Theatre Center (which are augmented with huge simulated stone arches) to create a credible and beautiful underground vault.

Matthew Johns' lighting design, combined with projection designs by Dmitri Kmelnitsky and Hsuan-Kuang Hsieh, and the intricate sound design by Tim Labor, all combine to produce both a rich mood and a vivid picture of the genetic information.

DARK SECRETS OF THE HEART

By Elaine L. Mura - LA SPLASH

Playwright and actor Stacie Chaiken stars in this unusual and riveting one-woman play about genetics, archaeology, and how the past affects the present — and even the future. Chaiken began work on this piece in 2003, when she made her first trip to Israel and became intrigued by the findings of archaeologists who were digging everywhere in the country attempting to link DNA and history. What made the process even more challenging was that, rather than the soft tissue normally used when studying genes, geneticists were forced to trace DNA from mere bone fragments found in ancient sites.

The Dig tells the story of Sarah Jenkins (who changed her name to Sally after she left home), an American archaeologist who specializes in ancient DNA. Just after her mother's death, Sally is summoned by the Israeli government to become part of a top secret project. Even though she is struggling with the death of her mother from cancer only days before — and dealing with her mother's obvious disapproval of her isolated lifestyle — the offer is one which she cannot refuse. So off she goes to Israel — the land of equal-opportunity massacres over the millennia — where she is

thrown into the company of rigid Jewish government coordinator David and Arab-Israeli scientist Rashid. The trio arrives in Jaffa and goes deep through tunnels hidden underground until they are confronted with a room empty except for a huge stone sarcophagus — in the style of an Egyptian burial but not with the traditional mummy inside. The burial is easily at least 4,000 years old. Who can this be? And why is the burial such a secret?

In her hotel suite, Sally encounters a mysterious gecko which has taken up residence — even though the luxury hotel is notoriously bug-free. Tradition has it that geckos are good luck and sought after — and so Sally and a hotel employee secretly feed the little bugger and nurture him (or is it her? — hard to tell with a lizard). This cold-blooded little reptile may be the key to Sally's frozen heart. Especially after Sally follows Jewish tradition and names the minuscule gecko after her mother.

Director Pamela Berlin helms a brilliant performance by Stacie Chaiken, who is onstage every moment in this solo production. Yael Pardess's set design makes the most of the oddly shaped space, and Dmitry Kmelnitsky's video and projection expand the small area into an arena. The entire production team does a creative job of simulating a dig deep in the earth.

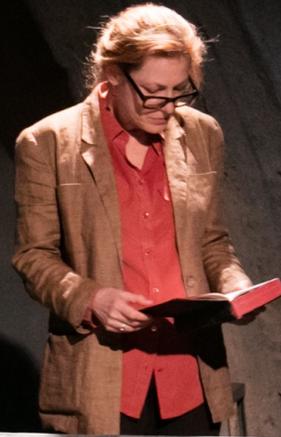
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