

theater

Becoming her mother

Lisa Kron's new show reaffirms her gift for turning family drama into universal comedy **By Michael Giltz**



Lisa Kron, the performer and writer who helped start comedy's Five Lesbian Brothers and explored her father's heritage of the Holocaust in her acclaimed 1997 solo piece *2.5 Minute Ride*, focuses on her mother's side of the family in her new show, *Well*, which just opened at the Public Theater in New York City. One of Kron's key story lines involves her mother's determination to raise her family in a racially integrated neighborhood in Lansing, Mich.

Telling stories on Mom doesn't mean taking her for granted. "I actually had a dream last night that she came to see it for 15 minutes and then walked out," laughs Kron, who admits her mother has to draw on a "natural generosity" to watch her life played out onstage.

"She's definitely nervous about it," Kron says. "But both of my parents have a great sense of humor. I was talking to them the other night, and I started to laugh and told her, 'I know I shouldn't say this, but there are times when you're talking when I think, *Wow, I really got her down.*'"

In *Well* she also tackles her mother's

chronic illness and Kron's own battles with chronic fatigue (which is "no longer an issue" for her) and mixes it all up with the natural insecurities of a girl who was determined to be known as the funniest kid in school but still had trouble fitting in. Mom's push for integration didn't help, of course.

"My mother in the show says, 'Well, honey, it's true you had some tension with some of the black kids, but you didn't get along particularly well with the white kids either.'

"My brother and I were complete social nerds," admits Kron. "Complete eggheads. We were never going to fit in. There's this character that keeps showing up in the play, this girl that tortured me [in school]. She's a 9-year-old girl, and I'm trying to do my show, and she completely humiliates me over and over again. We end up having this fight onstage, and it's totally wonderful."

And while Mom wasn't be there for opening night—that would be too "meta," jokes Kron—her parents will be seeing it soon after and then as many times as they can. "We're actually going to go to my girlfriend's parents' house for Passover, even though they're Irish Catholic," says Kron, who has been with her partner for 16 years. "And then my parents are going to stay in town for the rest of the week and come see the show. And I would imagine, knowing my mother, that she will see every performance while she's in town."

Will she give any notes? "She's given me quite a few notes so far," laughs Kron. ■

Giltz contributes regularly to publications including the New York Post.

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