

# Bolinas Hearsay . News

Monday, April 14, 2014

50 cent

## CONFESSIONS WITH A SIDE OF CHEESE by Robin Bradford

A review of Vivien Straus's *"E-i-E-i-Oy! In Bed With the Farmer's Daughter"*

I'm sometimes wary of one-person performance pieces, in which an actor must take on the guises of multiple personalities on stage without creating cringe-inducing, timepiece-checking moments that must be endured by the audience. Transitioning from one gender to another, or from a young woman to a crusty old dairyman, or from a confused country girl into a world-wise psychiatrist is a daunting proposition, even for the most experienced TONY Award winner. In her show *"E-i- E-i-Oy! In Bed With the Farmer's Daughter,"* West Marin's own Vivien Straus has proven herself a first-rate performer by embodying 15 separate characters, without the use of costume changes, wigs, hats, or other gimmicks - although she does pull a bedspread over her shoulders at one particularly poignant moment.

Vivien weaves a colorful story of moving from tiny Marshall, where "...the population minus elevation equals the speed limit," into the epicenter of peace, (free) love, and brown rice: San Francisco in the late 70's. Vivien happily participates in everything the era offers, from concerts in the park to wild nights of disco dancing. One night she meets an exotic, non-English speaking Czech refugee and back in her little apartment (complete with groovy orange shag-carpeting) they revel in each other's company with abandon, just like young 20-somethings do the world over. And then, he refuses to leave.

With the use of a simple set, excellent direction by Brian Glenn Bryson, and clever sound design by Dan Adamsky, Vivien exaggerates the follies of her youth; after all, real life can be banal and that's why we gravitate to theatre to begin with. But *"E-i-E- i-Oy!"* is "...true -- at least 85% of it," Vivien says. We can identify with Vivien's desire to escape her controlling parents while simultaneously craving their approval, despite the bad choices she may make. *"E-i-E-i-Oy!"* is a lively coming-of- age portrait that's good fun, with an honest quality of self-deprecation underscoring the joyous, bittersweet quality of the play.

Vivien romps all over the stage, like the bovine creatures she's grown up with on the farm and from whom she draws parallels to the human behaviors she encounters in the larger world. She manages to retain intimacy in her storytelling by layering the entire saga into the character's voices, burrowing brilliantly and deeply into their points of view with her body language, tone and distinct accents. The 15 characters --even those with cameo appearances--come vividly alive. Most remarkably, despite the situation she gets herself into, Vivien manages to not lose sight of her dreams.

*"E-i-E-i-Oy"* is a spirited theatrical experience pulled off with great finesse and humor. It's hard to resist, and I happily jumped aboard the hay wagon for the ride.

### San Francisco shows:

April 4-May 10 -- Friday and Saturday nights, at 8:00 pm

NOHSpace, 2840 Mariposa Street, San Francisco, 94110 Price:\$20

**Nightly receptions feature local artisan cheeses, cheese makers and wines.**

### Point Reyes Station show:

Saturday, June 7, at 8:00 pm

Dance Palace Community Center, 503 B St, Point Reyes Station, CA 94956 Price: \$25 (a

special benefit for "Farm Field Studies", a project of the *Marin Agricultural Land Trust* and *Marin Organic*.

Tickets: [www.eieiOY.com](http://www.eieiOY.com)