

NO MORE RAISINS, NO MORE ALMONDS

Bina attends a performance

by Linda Peck



The Bina girls were fortunate to attend a special performance of *No More Raisins, No More Almonds* at the new Sandler Performing Arts Center. Written by Holocaust survivor Batia Bettman, the musical presents the desperate lives of children and teenagers in an unnamed ghetto during the war. The cast of high school students from Young Actors for Young Audiences in Montreal did an outstanding job of portraying the lives of children forced to endure unimaginable hardships. Various vignettes were interspersed with Yiddish songs translated into English supertitles. With a live band incorporated into the scenery and actors realistically dressed in rags, the play transported the audience consisting of students from area middle and high schools back in time.

The show takes its name from a famous Yiddish song in which a mother soothes her children with the promise that their father will return from his business trip with special treats like raisins and almonds. In the ghetto version of this song the father is taken away so there will be "no more raisins, no more almonds."

Various vignettes portrayed the lives of the child struggling to live in a world that didn't want them. The audience meets

the exhausted children after a day of slave labor, the industrious smuggler who risks his life to bring in food, hears the sounds of loneliness and grief.

The Bina students found it easy to relate to the children's stories. As Gila Schwartz says, "I realize more than ever before that the children in the ghetto weren't very different at all from my friends, my siblings, and me."

After the play, Bettman and the director welcomed questions from the audience, which were eye-opening for the Bina girls who have grown up with stories and lessons of the Holocaust. "It was sad that some people are really ignorant [about the Holocaust]," said Avigail Silver to Bettman. "However, the answers given by the cast were true, meaningful and whole-hearted, which I hope helped these children. People walk away from your play with more understanding and education."

Avigail Mostofsky wrote Bettman, "Your play is so much more than a play... it is the truth—the words that were spoken, the songs that were sung, the cries never heard."

Unanimously, the highlight of the day was meeting Bettman. The girls got to thank her for her inspirational work. For some, it was the first time to shake a survivor's hand.

Chana Brooke says, "This play not only taught me that we have to remember the Holocaust, but we have to take action so that it never happens again."