



## **38 Witnessed Her Death, I Witnessed Her Love: The Lonely Secret of Mary Ann Zielonko (Kitty Genovese Story)**

### **New York International Fringe Festival**

Reviewed by [Kelly Aliano](#) Aug 14, 2009

*38 Witnessed Her Death, I Witnessed Her Love: The Lonely Secret of Mary Ann Zielonko*

(*Kitty Genovese Story*), written and performed by Lulu Lolo, tells the disturbing tale of how Kitty Genovese was brutally murdered in Kew Gardens in March of 1964 while 38 people looked on and did nothing. Rather than merely reenacting the event for the audience, the piece takes a unique approach. Incorporating a theatre-of-fact aesthetic—one in which the performance uses actual text from articles, testimony, and interviews as its source material—the story is told through both the presentation of the spoken word and the manipulation of the human body in space. Lulu Lolo plays all the speaking roles in the piece herself, including Mary Ann Zielonko, Kitty's lover at the time of her death. Four dancers accompany her, who perform as characters and as symbolic manifestations.

The first half of the performance focuses on the details of the night of the crime, told through monologues as well as interpretive dance. An attempt is made both to factually recount the event and to present the audience with a sense of the cruelty inherent in the onlookers' apathy. The audience is able to view the event from numerous angles simultaneously: that of Kitty being brutalized, that of the murderer in the throes of his crime, and that of the bystanders contemplating action and choosing inaction.

The dance/movement sections, choreographed by Jody Oberfelder, are effective, compelling, and creative storytelling. In particular, the dancers perform as the Kew Gardens residents who turned their backs on Kitty's cries for help with poignancy. The dancers also tackle symbolically representing Kitty's death in a "Chalk Dance" in which they trace their own chalk outlines on the black stage floor. The scene is haunting and the performers complete each precise movement with grace and pain. Even the sound of the chalk hitting the ground, in order to begin each trace, is made to echo in the audiences' ears; there is no ignoring this terrible death, no matter how hard one might try,

The piece could benefit from some polishing and tightening up throughout. Lulu Lolo performs each role distinctly, but she seems more confident in some roles than in others. Her portrayal of Mary Ann Zielonko is powerful but at the performance reviewed the effect was tempered by a few instances in which Lulu Lolo appeared affected by a lack of assurance. In addition, some of the dance sequences are a tad lengthy, notably the "Duet for Mary Ann and Kitty" in which the meaning is clear to the audience within the first portion of the number, yet it extends over a substantial period of time, considering the play's overall short length.

All in all, however, the work brings to light an important feature of a well-known case. The piece validates and dignifies the experience of Mary Ann Zielonko. Her story is one that deserves recognition and this show is a worthy form of such acknowledgment.

**Producer: LuLu LoLo Productions Author: LuLu LoLo Director: Jody Oberfelder**