

Theater

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* * * * Critic's Rating (4 stars)



Kitty and Lina

Manhattan Theatre Source. By Manuel Igrijas. Dir. Lory Henning. With Jennifer Boutell, Marilyn Bernard. 1hr 10mins. No intermission.



PISTOL HOT Bernard, left, and Boutell shoot for glory.

Manuel Igrijas likes to work on a small scale. The critically hailed *Shrinkage* (2004) consisted of a trio of one-acts; the new *Kitty and Lina* comprises two monologues—a pair of charming New York women strip themselves bare through words. But while the concept is slight, its execution is deeply affecting in the intimate Manhattan Theatre Source.

Texas-born looker Kitty (the comely Boutell) fancies herself a modern-day Marilyn Monroe and comes to the Big Apple in search of acting lessons and a Woody Allen-like paramour. Instead, she finds low-level day jobs, Shakespeare gigs in Inwood and a callous construction-worker boyfriend who manipulates her with calculated put-downs. Lina (the elegant Bernard) moved here from Portugal as a teen and carved out a career for herself in the male-dominated publishing industry using her smarts, her style and her sexuality (her two-decade-long affair with the boss first helped, then hindered, her success). Now a posh lady of a certain age, Lina feels invisible in a town obsessed with youth.

The only time the gals share the stage is at curtain call, yet their stories inform one another. Lina might envy Kitty's ripeness, but the young beauty is as lost and empty as her mature counterpart. They're both fascinating victims of a fast-paced city that routinely chews up and spits out its dreamers.

—Raven Snook

Two Generations Fading in Unforgiving New York

By [NEIL GENZLINGER](#)

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Grand sets and high-kicking chorus lines are nice, but a simple idea well executed is all you need for an engaging evening of theater. 'Kitty and Lina' at Manhattan Theater Source fills that bill nicely.



Elisha Schaefer

Marilyn Bernard as Lina in a scene from Manuel Igrijas's play 'Kitty and Lina.'

Manuel Igrijas pairs monologues by women at opposite ends of the generational spectrum, each telling a story of trying to make a place for herself in unforgiving New York. The Kitty half, about a would-be actress, sounds familiar, but is handled nicely by Jennifer Boutell. The Lina half, in the hands of Marilyn Bernard, is a gem.

Kitty is a young Texan in a fetching red dress who came to New York with the usual acting aspirations, drawn by an image she had from [Woody Allen](#) movies: "all those smart, edgy people, talking up a storm, taking their emotional temperatures every second of the day in glorious, art-filled apartments." She did not find instant stardom;

instead she found a married man. Ms. Boutell transforms before your eyes, her flirty optimism extinguished by the monologue's end.

Lina too had an affair with a married man, but her story comes with a lifetime of perspective. "It has been my experience that the sizzle of a hot romance lasts approximately three years," she says in one of the play's many savvy lines. "After that the pink clouds part and you get full control of your wits again. Every second after that is negotiated."

Her view of her past love life is clear-eyed and defiant, but now well into her senior years she has a different sort of vulnerability: the isolation of being old in a city driven by the young. Ms. Bernard manages to be both saucy and poignant, a difficult trick. And Mr. Igrejas, in his two scripts, paints keenly observed portraits of women watching themselves disappear.

'Kitty and Lina' continues through Saturday at Manhattan Theater Source, 177 Macdougall Street, Greenwich Village, (212) 352-3101, theatresource.org.