

# Last Chance For Compassion?

***Miriam Kulick plays a number of characters, including a 90-year-old, in her one-woman show, "Open Hearts."***

**Tuesday, April 17, 2012**

## **Ted Merwin Special To The Jewish Week**

Is it ever too late to love and forgive? For Sadie Nussbaum, the crusty Jewish nonagenarian at the center of Miriam Kulick's new one-woman show, "Open Hearts," summoning up compassion may require every last ounce of her emotional strength. The one-hour play, which unfolds over a day in Nussbaum's life as she prepares for her 90th birthday party, obliges her to come to terms with her potential responsibility for the tragedies and crises that have beset the members of her extended family. It opens this week in the Studio Theatre at Theatre Row.

In the play, which is directed by Gretchen Cryer, Kulick plays six different characters in addition to the matriarch: Nussbaum's forlorn 8-year-old grandchild whose mother (Nussbaum's daughter) has committed suicide; a nephew who has been hospitalized for depression; a daughter who has come out as a lesbian; the lesbian daughter's British lover; a Hispanic maintenance man; and a Middle Eastern woman whom Nussbaum has met at a support group for refugees.

Nussbaum, who as a retired psychiatric nurse has spent her career nurturing others, wonders who will now take care of her as she enters the last phase of her life.

Kulick, who grew up in Stuyvesant Town in the East Village, enrolled at Northeastern University before she dropped out of college and became a hippie. She eventually graduated

from San Jose State, and then moved back to New York, where she became a professional dancer. After training as an actor, she landed roles in productions in New York, as well as in regional theaters in the Miami area, where she now resides.

An excerpt from Kulick's previous solo show, "Full Circle," was performed at Ensemble Studio Theatre's Octoberfest. "Open Hearts," first performed last year at the Washington, D.C. Fringe Festival, was named a "Pick of the Fringe" by D.C. Theatre Scene. After its New York run, Kulick hopes to tour colleges with the play and to market it to both Jewish and LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender) groups. The well-known director (whose son, Jon Cryer, is a star of the long-running CBS sitcom "Two and a Half Men"), has performed on Broadway in "Little Me," "110 in the Shade," and "1776." With Nancy Ford, she wrote the 1978 Off-Broadway hit, "I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking it On the Road." Her most recent musical with Ford, "Einstein and the Roosevelts," premiered at DePauw University in 2008.

In an interview with The Jewish Week, Kulick, who is producing and marketing "Open Hearts" on her own, described it as a "very New York play." She called Nussbaum a "feisty, salt-of-the-earth-character" who dips into Yiddish expressions to convey her rueful feelings about aging. Nussbaum, in the playwright's words, "first needs to let go of blaming herself in order to find love and acceptance for others."

*"Open Hearts" runs through April 28 at Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 19; Saturday April 20; Friday, April 27; and Saturday, April 28. For tickets, \$19.25, call Telecharge at (212) 239-6200 or visit [www.telecharge.com](http://www.telecharge.com).*

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