NEW YORK - [Presenting organization] proudly presents FELICITAS, written and performed by Libby Skala (Best Solo Performer, A Time to Dance - London Fringe Festival; Off Bway: Lilial; Film: Birth with Nicole Kidman), with original mandolin music by Steven May, and directed by Janice L. Goldberg (The Kennedy Center Gold Medallion Award). Performances are [venue and address] on [dates and times]. Tickets are [price] and can be purchased at [website] or by calling [phone number]. For more information please visit www.LibbySkala.com.

Libby Skala charmed audiences internationally with her acclaimed solo plays Lilial! about her Oscar-nominated actress grandmother Lilia Skala and A Time to Dance about her award-winning great aunt Lisl, a pioneering dancer. She returns to complete the trilogy with FELICITAS, the story of her great aunt Lizi, a tough-love Austrian baby nurse who flees Nazi-occupied Austria to build a new life in America.

Born in pre-world war Vienna under the Hapsburg Empire to a Catholic mother and Jewish father, Lizi grows up under the shadow of two forceful older sisters. Carving out her own path, she devotes herself to keeping babies alive and teaching new mothers strict baby care techniques of the day. As a social worker and nurse at the avant-garde Moll Institute in Vienna between world wars, she fulfills her dream of establishing structure to brand new lives, watching hopeless newborns flourish under her gifted touch, while struggling to balance her personal life with her professional devotion. When the Nazi-regime terminates her work, she flees to America where she is forced to re-invent herself utilizing her talent and training. A celebration of love, discipline and the nobility of a life in service.

Featuring original mandolin music written and performed by Steven May and video designed by Stephen Stevo Arnoczky.

Tickets are [price]. For more information and photos, visit www.LibbySkala.com.

LISTING INFO: The real-life story of a gifted, educated, spunky Austrian-emigree baby nurse who sacrifices her own family relationships to nurture newborns and mothers with firmness and compassion - all set against the backdrop of WWII.
LIBBY SKALA (Playwright / Performer) has charmed audiences internationally with her family trilogy of solo plays: *Lilia!*, about her Oscar-nominated actress grandmother Lilia Skala, *A Time to Dance*, about her great aunt Elizabeth Polk, an award-winning dance therapy pioneer, and now *Felicitas*, about her great aunt, an infant nurse. Libby performed *Lilia!* in an Off-Broadway run at The Arclight Theatre, and won “Best Solo Performer Award” at The London Fringe Festival for *A Time to Dance*. All three shows have toured North America and Europe. Her solo play *Irena Sendler: Resucing the Rescuer* premiered at the London Fringe Theatre Festival. Other stage work includes Viola in St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival’s *Twelfth Night* and appearing in the film *Birth* with Nicole Kidman. Libby is a graduate of Oberlin College and is an award recipient of the Pandella Cultural Fund in Switzerland. www.LibbySkala.com

STEVEN MAY (Composer / Musician) has been playing music since the tender age of three, when he made his first make-shift violin out of a ruler taped to a cereal box in his native Kentucky. His background includes classical, country, Celtic, bluegrass, folk, jazz, and Brazilian music. On fiddle, he alternates between an acoustic and an electric 7-string with the range of violin, viola and cello. On the mandolin, he alternates between an acoustic and baritone electric. That versatility allows him to switch seamlessly between traditional sounds and crunchy rock and hip hop grooves. His interest in various musical traditions has led him to a variety of recording and performing projects. Credits include: Erica Sunshine Lee; Beltaine’s Fire; Steve Ferguson and Midwest Creole Ensemble; The Clearing; Three at Last; and Lisa Redfern. www.SMay.net

JANICE L. GOLDBERG (Director) was recently awarded The Kennedy Center Gold Medallion Award for her work with new plays. She has directed over 75 new works, uptown and down, across the country, from university to Off-Broadway. Recent work includes The Last Frontier Theatre Conference in Alaska, The Stop Gun Violence Now Theater Festival, *Speedball* at the Kennedy Center, *Autumn Run* (also co-author) and *These Shining Lives* at Adelphi University. For FringeNYC she directed *That Dorothy Parker* and *After Anne Frank* (both award winners and selected for Fringe Encores) and *The Gathering Room*. She directed the Off-Broadway premiere of *Rose Colored Glass*, which she co-authored and is published by Samuel French, Inc. For Artistic New Directions she has directed Gary Garrison & Roland Tec’s *The Rubber Room*, Kristine Niven’s *Human Resources*, numerous Eclectic Shorts and Go Solos! Janice is co-author of 8 plays with Susan Bigelow and directed each in Northern California, as well as Bindlestiff’s Dance Hall, commissioned for the National Eco-Drama Festival & featured in American Theater Magazine. Janice is the recipient of the Pilgrim Project Grant, and a Writer/Director Residency at the Dorset Writers’ Colony, VT. Her work ranges in scope from mime to musical, from contemporary farce to courtroom drama, from plays for women to plays full of testosterone. She serves as Artistic Co-Director of Artistic New Directions in New York and leads her Nail-the-Job workshops in Cold Readings and Auditions for students all over the country. www.JaniceLGoldberg.com

STEPHEN STEVO ARNOCZY (Video Design) is a freelance media designer native to New York City. He attended NYU (TSOA ‘04-’08) He is an associate video designer at Imaginary Media Artists and the company video designer for The Dance Cartel. Recently he’s worked with: Stein|Holum Project, Fresh Ground Pepper, Ping Chong Company, Liz Lerman, *Sleep No More*, and Maya Ciarrocchi. His work has been seen in NYMF (New York Musical Festival), and at 3LD, Theater Row, XL Nightclub, Kent 285, The Living Theater, The Bushwick Starr, and Ars Nova. His video design for *Bio-Hazard: A Relative Comedy* starring Sarah Elizabeth Greer won the 2013 United Solo Festival Award for BEST MULTIMEDIA.
"Libby Skala's FELICITAS is an epic that's charming or a charmer that is epic-ish. It's one hour of entrancing story-telling. Many of the great tales are about how war scatters families and what becomes of them after the battles are over - War and Peace, Gone with the Wind, the Herman Wouk War books, etc. On a more intimate level, FELICITAS engages the same theme but in an unanticipated way. There's Vienna and Nazis and a narrow escape that would make Pauline gasp. That this is a true story makes it all the more startling. I so recommend this!"
- Jeffrey Sweet, Author of The O'Neill: The Transformation of Modern American Theater

"The plot of FELICITAS could probably be given an elaborate, widescreen Hollywood treatment. Set mostly in Austria in the 1930s, the story has a grand, epic sweep. The gifted, highly demonstrative Skala makes FELICITAS a lively, fascinating and touching creation. Her writing is strong and heartfelt. She gives a vocally varied, physically animated performance. I highly recommend this. How powerful it would be if she could perform all three plays in rep."
- Mark Dundas Wood, SIMPLY SHOWBIZ

"EDITOR'S PICK: Accompanied by Steve May's beautifully played mandolin score, Skala crafts a tale that’s inspirational without syrup. Aided by projections, touching and funny, of drawings, old family photos, and historical images...Skala has created a remarkable living biography. It’s a performance that engages our emotions while respecting our intelligence and leaves us feeling uplifted. Try not to miss it!"
- Jon Sobel, BLOGCRITICS

"Skala mines her rich family history for some incredible stories. With shining eyes and deep conviction, [she] reveals to the audience the secrets for a happy baby. Her writing is lovely and life affirming; she tells her great aunt’s story with warmth, sincerity and a poignant truthfulness. Ms. Skala's performance is filled with nuance and humor. She creates memorable characters. Beautifully underscored by Steve May's mandolin playing."
- Navida Stein, STAGE BUDDY

"What sacrifices would you be willing to make to pursue your dream? Prepare to rethink your answers after seeing FELICITAS. Skala delivers this charming monologue alongside Steven May, who performs lilting original mandolin compositions as she re-enacts Lizi’s story. A beautiful tribute!"
- Amy Lee Pearsall, NEW YORK THEATER NOW

"Skala once again has brought to life a fascinating character, the more fascinating because she was a woman who went up against the resistance of family, of society, and ultimately of a powerful enemy force, yet one who was able to make a difference in the lives of many. It’s one hell of a showcase for a performer; that Skala wrote the piece only emphasizes how much self-determination she has drawn from these fabulous ancestors."
- Byron Nilsson, WORDS AND MUSIC

"A superb performance. You expertly communicated all of Felicitas’ funny, bittersweet struggles as a young woman growing up in the Nazi era and then as a new immigrant to the US with her child. My seniors and I were mesmerized by your outstanding portrayal. The comments were: ‘I have never seen such a terrific one woman show,’ by Sarah, one of our survivor members. Hedy, second generation Shoah survivor, observed that ‘everyone was holding their breath so that you could hear a pin drop.’ I highly recommend FELICITAS!"
- Sharon Wolfe, Director, JASA Van Cortlandt Senior Center
## Felicitas

**Production History**

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FELICITAS

by Amy Lee Pearsall · August 14, 2014

What sacrifices would you be willing to make to pursue your dream? Would you be willing to upend everything in your life to use your gift? We may possess some idea, but prepare to rethink your answers after seeing Artistic New Directions’ production of FELICITAS, written and performed by Libby Skala, currently showing at the Steve & Marie Sgouros Theatre as part of the 2014 New York International Fringe Festival.

FELICITAS tells the true-life story of Skala’s great aunt, Lizi. A bit of a pioneer, Lizi bucked convention in the 1930’s by becoming a single mother while pursuing her higher-calling career as an infant nurse. Skala examines Lizi’s relationship with her parents and sisters in Vienna, her calling off a relationship with the ski instructor/motorcycle mechanic who loves her, and her overwhelming desire to live a life of service. We are taken through her early education in healthcare, Lizi’s daring escape from Nazi-occupied Austria by way of Italy with her young son in tow, and the requisite stop at Ellis Island. Finally, there is a reunion with her extended family in New York, where she ultimately decides to establish a new life and career caring for her much beloved babies.

Lest one think this is a tale of hardship, the word FELICITAS means happiness, and in this production, it is a word well-employed. As directed by Janice L. Goldberg, Skala takes charge of the stage with a whimsical smile, fully engaged in sharing the life force of her aunt, and this bit of familial history with her audience. Skala delivers this charming monologue on stage alongside her husband, Steven May, who performs lilting original mandolin compositions as she re-enacts Lizi’s story. Stephen Stevo Amoczy contributes to an otherwise spare set with his video design, effortlessly weaving together historical family photos, brief film clips, and various graphics to indicate time and place.

With FELICITAS, Skala has created a beautiful tribute to her family, and to her great-aunt Lizi in particular. The piece is apparently the third solo play rounding out a trilogy of well-received works Skala has created about her grandmother and her two great-aunts, all of whom fled Austria during World War II. I would be delighted to see these three works somehow brought together, either in repertory performance or a bound edition of plays. That said, FELICITAS works as a stand-alone piece, and is worth a look at this year’s FringeNYC.

http://nytheaternow.com/Content/Article/felicitas
“Felicitas” at the NY Fringe: a loving tribute to a tireless childcare-giver [theatre review]

Posted by Mark Dundas Wood on August 22, 2014

The plot of Felicitas—at the New York International Fringe Festival—could probably be given an elaborate, widescreen Hollywood treatment. Set mostly in Austria in the 1930s, the story has a grand, epic sweep. A young, highly dedicated (but vastly overworked) baby nurse goes on vacation to a ski resort, takes a spill on the slopes, and is aided by a handsome blond ski instructor (and sometimes hairdresser). Romance blossoms, but class barriers keep the lovers apart. Before long the half-Jewish Felicitas (aka “Litzi”) finds herself “in trouble”—and, soon, so is Austria. The Nazis have arrived. Time to think about America.

You can almost imagine a ruddy-faced young von Trapp or two capering beside a fountain somewhere in the distance, scowled at by a looming soldier with a swastika on his arm.

While the scope of Felicitas may be large and historical, it is presented in extremely simple fashion. Directed nimbly by Janice L. Goldberg, it’s a monodrama in which the playwright, Libby Skala, plays the title role. For 75 minutes she commands the stage alone. Well, not exactly. She shares the spotlight with her husband, musician Steve May, an accomplished mandolinist who lends a sometimes lively but always slightly melancholy sheen to the proceedings. Providing further textural layers are a series of clever projections embellishing the world of the play. Skala frequently interacts with these images, some of which are animated.

Felicitas was, in fact, a real person: Skala’s great aunt, who immigrated to the U.S. along with other members of her family. Twelve years ago, when I was reviewing theater for Back Stage, I attended and wrote about another one-woman play penned by (and starring) Skala called Lilia! The title character of that production was Felicitas’ sister, actress Lilia Skala (Libby Skala’s grandmother). In the intervening years, the playwright/performer created yet another play, A Time to Dance, focusing on a third sister, dancer Elizabeth Polk. (In the latest play, the writer/performer embodies Lilia and Elizabeth as well as Litzi—along with as an assortment of supporting characters.)

In a way, Litzi had the drabbest life of the three girls. She was not a performing artist, and her days were private and often short on adult company. Her time on earth—as depicted by her granddaughter—was touched by sadness, but it was not unhappy. She knew what she wanted and needed to do: take care of her beloved “bebbies.” And that is what she did, repeatedly and energetically, throughout her life. She took pride in her work and joy in her days—and she had no truck with regret. Drab? Hardly.

The gifted, highly demonstrative Skala makes Felicitas a lively, fascinating and touching creation. Her writing is strong and heartfelt. And she gives a vocally varied, physically animated performance.

I highly recommend Felicitas. I feel fortunate to have seen Skala perform again, all these years after Lilia! I’m only sorry I missed the second installment of the family trilogy. How powerful it would be if she could perform all three plays in repertory at some point.
FringeNYC Review: Felicitas

Last updated: 09/25/2014

Actress and playwright Libby Skala mines her rich family heritage for some incredible stories. Felicitas is the last solo play in a trilogy about her grandmother and her two great aunts and is part of 2014 FringeNYC.

Set in Vienna, against the backdrop of the end of World War I through World War II, the play introduces us to Felicitas “Lizi” Sofer, the youngest daughter of a Catholic mother and a Jewish father. The couple, as was typical of the times, has lost many children in childbirth; when this last child is born and lives, the father declares that some happiness is needed and the baby is named Felicitas, Latin for happiness. As she watches her older sisters develop their talents for acting and dancing, Lizi wonders what she will do when she grows up. She discovers early on that her calling is to care for children -- in particular babies -- and after attending nursing school becomes a professional baby nurse. With shining eyes and deep conviction, Lizi reveals to the audience the secrets for a happy baby: swaddle the baby nice and tight so they feel safe and can stand upright on your hand, adhere to a strict schedule, hold them and love them. As Lizi's story unfolds, we witness her falling in love, having an illegitimate child, immigrating to escape the Nazi regime and starting over in New York. Always present in every hardship is her steadfast devotion to her calling -- caring for, nurturing and loving babies. Lizi does this into old age, including attending the home birth of her great niece, Ms. Skala.

Ms. Skala’s writing is lovely and life affirming; she tells her great aunt’s story with warmth, sincerity and a poignant truthfulness. As an actress, Ms. Skala’s performance is filled with nuance and humor. With simple gestures she creates memorable characters. Especially endearing is her rendering of the unorthodox Jewish father and his philosophy of putting one foot in front of the other to get where you want to go. The talented Ms. Skala is also doing double duty at the Fringe: in addition to performing Felicitas, she is part of the cast of No Provenance.

Lizi’s story is beautifully underscored by Steve May’s mandolin playing. Video Designer Stephen Stevo Arnoczky uses old family photos, historical pictures, video and charming illustrations projected onto a screen to add a rich visual texture to Ms. Skala’s storytelling. Janice L. Goldberg directs with a sure hand.

Navida Stein
Navida Stein is a NYC based storyteller, actress, musician & writer.

http://stagebuddy.com/reviews/fringenyc-review-felicitas/
THEATER REVIEW (NYC FRINGE): ‘FELICITAS’ BY LIBBY SKALA

Posted by: Jon Sobel  August 17, 2014  in Arts, Culture and Society, Editor Pick: Culture and Society, The

*Felicitas*, the third in Libby Skala’s trilogy of solo shows dramatizing her own family history, is like an intense cup of hot, sweet tea - both powerful and soothing.

The first play, *Lilial*, paid tribute to Skala grandmother, the actress Lilia Skala. In the second, *A Time to Dance*, Skala brought her great-aunt Elizabeth “Lizl” Polk, a dance therapist, out of the shadows of history to brilliant, dramatic life. In *Felicitas* she does the same for a very different, quieter character who turns out to be just as fascinating: her great-aunt Lizi.

Felicitas “Lizi” Sofer, professional baby-nurse, single mother, Nazi-fleeing immigrant to the U.S., and rebuild her life and career on a new continent, attended to Skala’s own home birth along with countless others and remained in her great-niece’s life, if distantly because of her many charges, for years thereafter. As she details Lizi’s life story, Skala digs deep into the psyche of a woman who found her calling when still a young girl and pursued it with triumphant success into old age.

Accompanied by Steve May playing his simple but beautifully played mandolin score, Skala crafts a tale that’s inspirational without syrup. Lizi lived an eventful and lucky life, never marrying, never despairing, always putting one foot in front of the other as her Jewish father advised, and passing the same sage advice to her son in the new world. Skala has created a remarkable living biography out of one part detailed knowledge and research and three parts skillful composition and performance.

Lizi’s own parents were an unconventional couple, their mixed marriage not formalized till after they’d had a number of children, not all of whom survived. Skala gives voice not only to Lizi but to Lizi’s parents and her two sisters. She also calls forth Lizi’s beautiful blonde ski-instructor boyfriend Josep, who survives the war and the *wehrmacht* remaining devoted to Lizi and their son. But she won’t give up her nursing work or her new life in America to return to him. It really is a calling.

There’s an emblematic scene where war is approaching and Lizi discovers that she needs Josep’s signature to permit her to leave the country with their son Julius. The problem is, she has never told him of Julius’s existence. When they meet, Josep beseeches her to leave the boy with him. Having secured the signature, she reaches down to take the toddler’s hand and lead him away.

There’s no boy on stage, but Skala makes us see the little guy all the same. She does this sort of thing throughout – aided, it must be said, by projections, touching and sometimes funny, of drawings, old family photos, and historical images.

Skala makes fascinating characters of them all and a compelling, fully realized one of Lizi herself. It’s a performance that engages our emotions while respecting our intelligence and leaves us feeling uplifted, and that’s quite a feat. There are two more performances of *Felicitas* at this year’s New York International Fringe Festival. Try not to miss it. [http://blogcritics.org/theater-review-nyc-fringe-felicitas-libby-skala/](http://blogcritics.org/theater-review-nyc-fringe-felicitas-libby-skala/)
Writer / performer Skala to tell story of aunt in ‘Felicitas’

Writer/performer Libby Skala, who grew up in Darien, returns to Lapham Community Center in New Canaan with her new solo work, “Felicitas,” a blend of storytelling and live music offering glimpses into the life of Austrian-American baby nurse Felicitas “Litzi” Sofer, her great-aunt.

The performance will take place at Lapham Community Center in Waveny Park at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 17. Born in turn-of-the-century Vienna under the Hapsburg Empire, Sofer devotes herself to keeping babies alive and teaching new mothers effective tough-love baby care techniques of the day.

The youngest daughter of a Catholic mother and Jewish father, she grows up under the shadow of two forceful older sisters. Carving out her own path, she fulfills her dream of establishing structure to brand-new lives, while struggling to balance her personal life with her professional devotion.

Her great-aunt was the nurse in attendance at Skala’s home birth.

“Felicitas” is the third show in a trilogy.

“I’m intrigued by these women who survived two world wars, became refugees from Hitler, and built successful careers with persistence, faith and determination, each leaving an indelible mark on her profession,” Skala said.

Music in “Felicitas” is written and performed on mandolin by Skala’s husband, Steven May, a multi-instrumentalist in several genres.

Skala, who wrote “Felicitas,” has performed across America and in Canada and Europe.

“Lilia!,” her first show, is a tribute to her grandmother, Lilia Skala, who gave an Oscar-nominated performance in the 1963 film classic, “Lilies of the Field.” “A Time to Dance” won the Best Solo Performer award at the London Fringe Theatre Festival.

Admission is free, but reservations are recommended and can be made by calling 203-594-3620. For information, visit www.laphamcenter.org.
Enter One Actor, Cloaked In Magic

By BRUCE WEBER

In the category of theater write small we have two one-actor shows, "Lilai!" and "That Play," both entries in the Midtown International Theater Festival now unobtrusively going on at the Abingdon Theater Arts Complex on the second floor of 312 West 36th Street in Manhattan.

The black-box space at the Abingdon is about the size of a walk-in closet, with the audience seated on three sides of the floor. The wonderful thing about both these shows, neither of which employs more than a painted black cube or two as a prop, is how much is accomplished with so little. You can tell a good story compellingly with little more than a few square feet of space and a little ingenuity.

"That Play" is a brisk, one-man "Macbeth," adapted by Tom Gualtieri with Heather Hill and performed by Mr. Gualtieri, a slightly built young man with a subtly flexible set of facial expressions and a mischievous, conspiratorial manner. He does all the parts and even mimes some of the action, including a sword fight or two (though he balks at producing Macbeth's severed head). His witches are entertaining, and his Lady Macbeth is especially creepy.

The sections of the play that have been cut are nicely summarized in offhand asides. ("This being Shakespeare, the fact of Banquo being dead doesn't keep him from showing up on time for dinner.") And even if some of it gets a little cartoonish toward the end, Mr. Gualtieri's achievement is that of a highly enter-
taining and very effective English teacher. He's informative, clear on the rudimentary themes and plot points — and great fun.

Even better is "Lilai!," Libby Skala's tribute to her grandmother, Lilia Skala, the Viennese actress who escaped Hitler and eventually won an Academy Award for her role as a nun in the 1963 film, "Lilies of the Field," which also won an Oscar for Sidney Poitier. Ms. Skala (Libby, that is) does a marvelous rendition, in an evocative Middle European patois, of her grandmother's velveteeen, old world charm that sheaths a steel will. Rather briskly she gets across the drama of a life that includes some serious brushes with the Nazis (Lilia's husband was Jewish), an immigrant's tough introduction to America and some surprising attitudes toward art and love.

But mostly this show could be titled "A Granddaughter's Education," for Ms. Skala tells most of the story through a series of dialogues between herself and her loving but imperious grandmother. These begin when Libby is a child being chided for sucking her thumb (later she's ridiculed for picking her nose), continue through Libby's teenage years when she is seeking solace (and not really finding it) for the woes of growing up, and finishing when her grandmother is in a nursing home (she died in 1994, at 97), urging Libby to write a part for her.

Ms. Skala's script hits many of the expected melodramatic notes, but because they are true to life, they ring especially true and poignant. Over all an adoring portrait is created here, though it is to the grand-
daughter's credit that with the exception of some whininess about Hollywood, Lilia Skala comes across as a singular and interesting woman. Libby Skala is a composed actress who handles the tiny stage floor at the Abingdon with great comfort, and she is magnetic in a part that clearly means the world to her.

The final performance of "Lilai!" is today at 4 p.m. "That Play" can be seen tomorrow at 4:20 p.m. and Saturday at 2:50 p.m. The festival itself, which includes a couple dozen other shows on two stages, continues through Sunday. For information: www.midtownfestival.org.
FELICITAS
TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

STAGE

The playing area should ideally be at least 10 feet by 15 feet, though Felicitas has been effectively performed in both smaller and larger spaces.

VIDEO (OPTIONAL)

There are optional video projections designed by Steven Stepho Arnoczy which run using Isadora software from a MacIntosh Computer and require a projector and screen set-up.

SET

The set consists of a single bench large enough to seat two people. When unavailable, two chairs placed beside one another to evoke a bench will suffice.

LIGHTS

1. A general wash;
2. A special and/or focused lights on and immediately around the bench area upstage left; and
3. A pre-show and post-show setting consisting of a very dim wash.
4. BONUS: When available, a gobo creating dappled light on the stage

PLEASE NOTE: When theatrical lights are unavailable, the show has been effectively performed in a general wash of light from beginning to end.

SOUND

Live music performed by the musician on mandolin.

PROPS

All props are mimed, except for the musician’s mandolin.