For Immediate Release  
Media Contact: Libby Skala  
(917) 783-1174   libby@libbyskala.com

A Time to Dance
Written and Performed by Libby Skala

“...A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance…”
- ECCLESIASTES 3:4

WINNER ‘BEST SOLO PERFORMER’ AWARD  
London Fringe Theatre Festival

“Funny...captivating...charming! Ms. Skala's convincing portrayal is the reason Polk is brought to life with such vibrancy.”
- THE NEW YORK TIMES

[Presenting organization] proudly presents [number of] performances of A Time to Dance, a magical fusion of storytelling and creative dance written and performed by Libby Skala. Performances are [dates and times] at [venue and address]. Tickets are [price] and can be purchased at [website] or by calling [phone number]. For more information visit www.ATimetoDance.homestead.com.

In A Time to Dance, Skala offers glimpses into the rich life and inexhaustible spirit of her great aunt Elizabeth “Lisl” Polk, who transcends poverty, artistic repression and the rise of Hitler through the power of dance to become a renowned dance therapy pioneer. Born in 1902 Vienna, Polk survives a premature birth, withholding parents, tuberculosis, two world wars, a more famous sister (Oscar-nominated actress Lilia Skala), and unexpectedly steals the show. In 1995, at the age of 93, she was honored with a lifetime achievement award from the American Dance Therapy Association.

“The show was sparked by an interview I did with my great aunt while researching Lilia!, a play about her actress sister, my grandmother. I discovered this modern dancer’s stories stood on their own, proving her to be the riotous and controversial star of her own life,” says Libby Skala (Playwright/Actress).

Skala has performed A Time to Dance at FringeNYC, Pacific Theatre in Vancouver, Theater im Greenhouse in Berlin and at the London Fringe Theatre Festival where she won “Best Solo Performer” Award. The show received an award from The Pandella Cultural Fund in Switzerland. Skala charmed audiences with her internationally acclaimed solo play Lilia! about her relationship with her Oscar-nominated grandmother Lilia Skala. It was produced Off-Broadway by Mirror Repertory Company and ran for three weeks in London and at the Edinburgh Fringe. Non-solo work includes Viola in St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival's Twelfth Night. Film work includes appearing with Nicole Kidman in Birth.
(Subject of the show) Elizabeth Polk’s broad professional background marked her as one of the country’s authorities in teaching the joy of movement to emotionally, physically and mentally handicapped children. She had a long and rich career, teaching dance at every age level from preschoolers to adult education classes and in settings ranging from housing projects to college campuses. Born and educated in Vienna, Austria, her early music and dance studies included not only ballet, but Dalcroze eurhythmics, modern dance and gymnastics. She performed as a concert dancer and later acquired a physical education license enabling her to launch her own dance studio in Austria. In the United States, she pioneered creative dance and worked with children at the Children’s Center for Creative Arts at Adelphi University, as well as in her own studio. She was a charter member of the American Dance Therapy Association, co-founded the National Dance Teachers Guild and taught methodology in teaching dance to children in Adelphi’s dance department. In 1995, at the age of 93, she was honored with a lifetime achievement award as a chief pioneer in dance/movement therapy at the American Dance Therapy Association’s 30th annual convention.

**Running Time: 70 Min. / General Audience / [www.libbyskala.com](http://www.libbyskala.com)**
A Time to Dance

Press Quotes

"A Time to Dance provides a worthwhile reason to bask in the company of a tenacious woman who fled Nazi-occupied Austria for New York. Funny...captivating...charming...Ms. Skala's convincing portrayal is the reason Polk is brought to life with such vibrancy."
- Gia Kourlas, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Best of the NY Fringe Fest. A sparkling one-woman show. A vivacious actor, Skala brings childlike exuberance and lots of freeform expressive dance movement to her poignant portrayal of an undaunted survivor. Critics Pick."
- Lisa Jo Sagolla, BACK STAGE

"A beautiful life story worth telling, and hearing. Skala skillfully portrays her great aunt Elizabeth Polk...exuberantly with dance and drama. The music is fanciful and expressive - much like the performance by Skala, whose face speaks 1,000 words. (Four Stars)"
- Kathy Rumleski, THE LONDON FREE PRESS

"With elegant triumph, Skala manages to hold the audience’s attention—and keep it smiling—with a pointed tale of hardship.... She ultimately leaves the audience with a...message of belief in a great and invisible love, and of faith in the strength of one's 'core' that nothing can touch. (Four Stars)"
- Katy Reddin, TIME OUT NEW YORK

"A Time to Dance testifies to the theatrical power of a charismatic performer...[Skala's] extraordinary charm and skill brings to vivid life her great-aunt, captivating the audience and drawing them into Polk's extraordinary life...filled with humor."
- Miriam Rinn, THE JEWISH STANDARD

"This is Libby Skala's much-applauded one-woman show...interweaving narrative and motion, the successor to her knock-'em-dead Lilia! of nine years ago."
- Jerry Tallmer, CHELSEA NOW & DOWNTOWN EXPRESS

"The elegant one-person play depicted the rich life of Austrian dancer Elizabeth Polk...A lovely dancer, Skala skillfully wove modern dance into glimpses of how her great-aunt, who lived to be 99, survived by never allowing severe disappointments to cloud the vibrancy and beauty of life."
- Dottie Ashley, THE POST AND COURIER

"This one-woman play is a portrait of a woman so full of love...that she danced her way through life. Events that made others shudder and give up, she was able to take as gifts. Ms. Skala has an excellent sense of dramatic rhythm...a polished gem."
- R. Pikser, THEATRE SCENE

"Libby Skala glows in her poignant portrayal of a zany great aunt. Skala captivates from the moment she leaps on stage...Her gift as storyteller is undeniable and the intensity of her energy unrelenting. Lis'l's (Skala's) anecdotes are generously embellished with outrageous...comic commentary.... Her riotous sense of humor and...honesty...further endear us to this electric woman. By the show's conclusion she has the audience enthusiastically clapping to the rhythm of her final dance number. GRADE A-"
- Rachel Ward, THE CHARLESTON CITY PAPER

"Enchanting and flawless! You charmed our socks off the minute you stepped out on stage. I don’t know how you could improve on the performance."
- Jordan R. Young, Author of Acting Solo: The Art of One-man Shows

"It's difficult to explain accurately the charm of this show. As played by her niece, Polk was clearly one of the world's rarities - a deeply happy person who possessed the gift of bringing joy to others. Skala is an extraordinary performer. This is a great story, told with economy, verve and just a grain of the magical. It's for everyone."
- Carolyn Raship, CAVIGLIA'S CABINET OF CURiosITIES
A Time to Dance
Production History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Bonaventure University</td>
<td>February 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principia College</td>
<td>June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jericho Public Library</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadow Ridge</td>
<td>March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johannstadter Kulturtreff e. V.</td>
<td>November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomingdale Library</td>
<td>April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverfront Community Center</td>
<td>October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Meadow Library</td>
<td>October 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk State Lake Wales Arts Center</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubac Center of the Arts</td>
<td>January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longyear Foundation</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times Square International Theater Festival</td>
<td>January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Exit Theatre</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Marsh</td>
<td>September 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Lawrence College / Hillels of Westchester</td>
<td>April 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island Community College</td>
<td>March 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York International Fringe Festival - FringeNYC</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piccolo Spoleto Festival (Footlight Players Theatre)</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Theatre</td>
<td>Mar-Apr 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Foothills Theater</td>
<td>January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater im Greenhouse</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shantigar Foundation</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapham Community Center</td>
<td>April 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundays at JASA (Jewish Assoc. Services for the Aged)</td>
<td>March 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater im Greenhouse</td>
<td>November 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Buehne Theatre, Technische Universität Dresden</td>
<td>November 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Dance Therapy Assoc. Annual Conference</td>
<td>September 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Fringe Theatre Festival</td>
<td>Jul-Aug 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principia College Summer Session</td>
<td>July 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Artists Theatre, One Woman Standing Series</td>
<td>April 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78th Street Theatre Lab</td>
<td>September 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto Fringe Theatre Festival</td>
<td>July 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Therapist Who Fled the Nazis, and Other Characters in Motion

Above all, “A Time to Dance” provides a worthwhile reason to bask in the company of a tenacious woman who fled Nazi-occupied Austria for New York and who also, it should be noted, didn’t sweat the small stuff. In her latest solo piece, Libby Skala becomes the captivating Elizabeth Polk, a leading dance therapist who was known as Lisl and who specialized in working with emotionally, physically and mentally disabled children. A family connection helps with the transformation; Polk was Ms. Skala’s great-aunt.

Ms. Skala’s hourlong work, produced by Artistic New Directions, was seen on Saturday afternoon at the Theaters at 45 Bleecker Street as part of the New York International Fringe Festival. It will be repeated, along with two other Fringe shows reviewed here, at various times as the festival continues through Aug. 30.

In “A Time to Dance” the balance is tipped more toward speaking than moving. The program is set to a CD that Polk produced as part of her dance-therapy practice.

Ms. Skala is trained as an actress, not a dancer, and much of the movement involves instruments (a tambourine, a drum, a pair of maracas) and barefoot prances on demi-point in circular patterns. A pink scarf flaps from her neck. Her cheeks are rosy.

Ms. Skala, who speaks with a thick Austrian accent throughout the work, is a charming presence and her material is beguiling. Her last production focused on Polk’s sister and Ms. Skala’s grandmother, the Academy Award-nominated actress Lilia Skala. “A Time to Dance,” Libby Skala writes in her program notes, began when she interviewed Polk for that piece: “To my frustration, Lisl diverted each question with stories from her own life.”

She learned that Polk was jealous of her older sister. (“Lili has a fine, thin nose,” Ms. Skala said in the piece. “I have a potato nose.”) During World War I, Polk was sent to live in Denmark, where she ended up teaching music to the children of the richest woman in town. Her wages allowed her to pay for dance classes when she returned to Vienna. As one story glides into the next, it’s clear that Polk is a glass-half-full kind of woman; in Ms. Skala’s tale, she manages to evoke the bright side of tuberculosis and to even make Nazis funny. Ms. Skala’s convincing portrayal is the reason Polk is brought to life with such vibrancy.

“A Time to Dance” continues through Monday at the Theaters at 45 Bleecker Street, at Lafayette Street, East Village.

[Excerpted from a longer article]
A beautiful life story worth telling, and hearing

KATHY RUMLESKI, Free Press Reporter

With her cheerfulness, Austrian accent and music-making, you might think you’re watching Maria von Trapp.

But our entertainer is writer/performer Libby Skala, who skillfully portrays her great aunt Elizabeth Polk (Lisl), an Austrian-born dancer, in A Time to Dance at the London Fringe Festival.

Polk, who later lived in New York, taught dance and became a leading authority in dance therapy, working with emotionally, physically and mentally handicapped children. She seems like a remarkable woman.

Her life story is worth telling and Skala does so exuberantly with dance and drama.

Sometimes overshadowed by her big sister Lilia Skala (an Oscar-nominated actor, who is the focus of Libby Skala’s first one-woman show Lilia), Lisl reaches out to let her own light shine.

The music in A Time to Dance is a recording produced by Lisl that she used when working with children.

It’s fanciful and expressive — much like the performance by Skala, whose face speaks 1,000 words.

While Lisl’s life wasn’t easy — she survived poverty, Hitler and the war and a husband who was “crazy” — her life story ends with her niece saying she had no regrets.

There are definitely no regrets in seeing this show.

IF YOU GO
What: A Time to Dance
Where: Spriet Family Theatre (Covent Garden Market)
Rating: ★★★★

Fringe Benefit: Waltz, tango, ballet, modern dance
In *A Time to Dance*, Libby Skala glows in her poignant portrayal of a zany great aunt

Dancer holds nothing back with her wildly energetic performance

BY RACHEL WARD

Throughout her one-hour, one-woman show Libby Skala spontaneously bursts into dance. She gleefully skips and twirls as she shakes a tambourine or a pair of maracas high above her head to whimsical cued melodies, the fringes of her long, coral-colored shawl blowing behind her. Even when the depth of the narrative limits her whirling and cavorting, she can't seem to remain still — her shoulders rocking in an undulating sway.

In her self-written-and-directed *A Time to Dance*, Skala captivates from the moment she leaps on stage to address the audience in a convincing Viennese patois. Already three years running and a winner at the London Fringe Theatre Festival, the play is the follow-up to Skala's internationally praised solo production *Lilia!*, a tribute to the actress' Oscar-nominated grandmother. This time around she narrates the story of her quirky great aunt Elizabeth "Lisl" Polk, a modern dancer who fled a Hitler-controlled Austria for New York City during World War II, where she went on to shape creative dance therapy.

Skala fully embodies her grandmother Lilia's younger sister, surrendering herself to an uninhibited portrayal that captures her subject's spunky attitude and resilient spirit. The sheer physicality of her interpretation will inevitably have audiences contemplating how much cardiovascular training she endured to build up to her stamina-demanding hour-long performance. Certainly her inexhaustible range of eloquent facial expressions requires overly developed muscles.

Lisl (Skala) recounts her 20th-century-spanning life story, beginning with glimpses of a childhood in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Her anecdotes, generously embellished with outrageous and (often unintentionally) comic commentary, continue with the Nazi occupation and her emigration to the United States and end with her retirement from dance at "four score and 10" years.

 Alone against a bare stage, Skala engages the audience with her balance of composure and vulnerability. When imitating Lisl's modern dance teacher's reaction to the discovery of her secret ballet training, she howls and tosses her hair, ultimately lobbing a stream of spit onto the stage to the amusement of the audience. Their laughter quickly fades when she becomes Lisl again and hangs her head with such persuasive despair that they can only empathize with the sting of her mentor's rejection.

Through Lisl's riotous sense of humor and self-indulgent compulsion to make herself the center of every story, her frustration of living in the shadow of a movie-star sister comes across. She describes her Lilia's "beautiful, long, thin nose" in contrast to her own "potato nose." Every roll of her eyes and self-deprecatory quip exposes a tinge of her life-long insecurity. The honesty in this revelation of imperfection only serves to further endear us to this zany, electric woman.

Skala relishes the role, throwing her whole self into the incarnation of her beloved great aunt. Her commitment is infectious. By the show's conclusion she has the audience enthusiastically clapping to the rhythm of her final dance number. —Rachel Ward
A TIME TO DANCE
Artistic New Directions at the Lafayette Street Theatre as part of the NYIFF

Don’t be scared off; this is not a play about dance therapy. “A Time to Dance” is a sparkling one-woman show about writer-performer Libby Skala’s great aunt Elizabeth “Lisl” Polk, an award-winning dance therapist and pioneer in the field of creative-dance education.

Rather than focus on professional accomplishments, Skala delves into the absorbing stories of Lisl’s early life in Vienna as a member of a Jewish family during the years spanning the two world wars. The tales of her premature birth in 1902, the rise and fall of her father’s fortune, her unhappy 27-year marriage, and the family’s eventual emigration to the United States are told with abundant humor and an uplifting message of hopefulness and belief in the protective power of love.

A vivacious actor, Skala brings childlike exuberance and lots of freeform expressive dance movement to her poignant portrayal of an undaunted survivor.

Presented by Artistic New Directions as part of the New York International Fringe Festival at the Lafayette Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St., NYC.

Reviewed by Lisa Jo Sagolla
The theatrical power of a charismatic performer

Libby Skala in "A time to Dance." BRIAN CALDERWOOD

Libby Skala seems to have built a career on the lives of her female relatives. She has toured for years with a solo play, "Lilia!" about her actress grandmother Lilia Skala.

Now, her new 70-minute dance/drama solo presentation "A Time to Dance," part of the New York International Fringe Festival, is dedicated to Lilia's younger sister Elizabeth, or Lisl. Lisl won the "Best Solo Performer" award at the 2007 London Fringe Theatre Festival, and "A Time to Dance" testifies to the theatrical power of a charismatic performer. There's nothing on the stage at the Lafayette Street Theatre besides Libby Skala — no props except a scarf, no set — yet this one actress's extraordinary charm and skill brings to vivid life her great-aunt, Lisl Polk, captivating the audience and drawing them into Polk's extraordinary life.

Libby was born prematurely as Skala tells it in an adorable German accent, and her parents rather impatiently waited for her to die, as several other prematurely born children had done before her. "She doesn't want to get attached to another little screaming thing," Lisl says of her mother. "So they continue to wait while I cry and I cry and I cry. But I won't die." Since Lisl obstinately refused to expire, her father went out and hired a sturdy peasant girl to care for her, and this wonderful Marie became Lisl's great friend and protector.

Lisl grew up in pre-World War I Vienna, "the jewel of the Austro-Hungarian empire," where her father made a fortune as the distributor of the new snap fasteners, the latest rage in women's notions. "Two little metal pieces fit together to hold fabric together like a button, a hook or an eye. They make a schnapping noise. Schnap. Schnap."

Skala's recital of these early years is filled with humor and the effervescence of a genetically coded cheerfulness. Lisl is blessed with a sunny temperament, and that turns every experience into a positive one. Even when she's shipped off to a strange family in Denmark as part of the starving-Austrian-children-relief-program, she lucks out and lands in a wealthy household with indoor plumbing. A stint at a TB sanatorium is recalled as a lovely rest and the prologue to a complete recovery.

Wearing a simple black dress and leggings and the aforementioned scarf, Skala flies gracefully about the stage, using music and movement to punctuate her story. Lisl's experiences with modern dance and ballet are amusingly conveyed through gently satiric dance moves. The real Elizabeth Polk taught dance at every age level and in every setting. She performed as a concert dancer, then opened her own dance studio in Austria.

In the United States, she taught dance and movement to children with different sorts of handicaps — emotional, cognitive, and physical. She co-founded the National Dance Teachers Guild and helped develop the field of dance therapy.

Polk's father was a Jew, as was her husband. When World War II was imminent, she maneuvered to get out of Austria to the United States, largely because her husband insisted that they leave. It was not an optimistic disposition as hers, and their life together was not blissful. But, as Skala makes laughingly clear, even this difficult situation had a happy ending.

Libby Skala encapsulates 100 years of life, love, dance

Narrative, motion reveal ‘tart, glamorous grandmother’

BY JERRY TALLMER

The operative word is “Lillal.” As in the following:

“One day my older sister Lili, the big shot actress, Lillia Skala, says to me: ‘Look, do you want to spend your life in the basement? Is that why God put you on earth? To live and work in the basement?’

“So one day, I’m walking down Lexington Avenue in New York City, and I see a sign that says: ‘Lexington School for the Deaf.’ The deaf! I wonder: Do deaf children play like how other children play? I look into the playground. Oh, I! They’re running around, they’re chasing one another. And I think: Ja, these are normal children. They would like to learn how to dance too.”

And then Libby Skala, the lissome granddaughter of Lillia Skala, the grand-niece of Elizabeth (Lisl) Skala and of sister No. 3, Lizi (pronounced Litz) Skala, starts to dance. For this is Libby Skala’s much-applauded one-woman show, “A Time to Dance,” interweaving narrative and motion, the successor to her knock-em-dead “Lillal!” of nine years ago.

It was back while she was researching “Lillia,” the monodrama about the Vienna-to-Hollywood life and times of her Oscar-nominated grandmother Lillia Skala (the Mother Superior of “Lilies of the Field”), that the human material of what would someday be “A Time to Dance” unfolded before Libby’s eyes and ears without her realizing it.

Happened like this: When Libby Skala, in the summer of 1998, sat down to write “Lillia,” she soon became aware, from all the one-to-one personal memories she had of her fart, glamorous grandmother, Libby actually knew very little about Lillia Skala’s early life in Vienna.

“Though I had closer touch with my grandmother” than with her two sisters, Libby says, “when the three families got together every Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, I realized I really only had three grandmothers.” And it was grandmother No. 2, Lisl Skala, whom Libby with tape recorder went to interview, in the Berkshires, in that same summer of 1998.

The interview didn’t turn out the way Libby had hoped and planned. All Great-Aunt Lisl wanted to do was talk — in her own bumpy English — about herself, her private struggles, pitfalls, poverty, setbacks, labors, triumphs, strivings, lovelife (still a virgin at 32), hollow marriage, escape from swastika-draped Austria, lifelong career in the United States as dance therapist named Ruth who is not Jewish,” the Libby-who-is-Lisl says in the show.

“When Hitler comes in, [Ruth] tries to kill herself. I get the idea to bring her to the hospital a little blue nightie I received as a wedding gift. I never wore it...

“She comes to live with us, she wears that little blue nightie, and she never tries to kill herself again. She claims I saved her life...

“[When Harry comes home without the affidavits] Ruth says: ‘I will go.’ She looks just like a Hitler Youth with her little blonde pigtails and knee socks. She puts a big swastika on her arm, marches down there. ‘Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler. All the way to the front of the line...

“In ten minutes she gets us the [stamped] papers.”

A few ineluctable afternoons later, the affidavits arrive from America. In which new country, Lisl, who wants only to dance, will be given a job as accountant in her father’s schnap factory. The trouble is, “in Vienna a comma is the same thing as a decimal point,” so that Lisl, born and bred in Vienna, turns thousands and thousands of dollars into the same amount of nonexistent pluses.

And Lizi, pronounced Litz? She becomes a social worker and then a baby nurse — in fact the nurse who attended at the birth of Libby Skala in Englewood, New Jersey, thirty-something years ago.

“I have always loved to dance,” says the Mrs. Stephen May that baby grew up to be. Or the Lili or the Lisl that the stage opens its arms for her to be.
A Time to Dance
Technical Specs

STAGE

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

SET

The set consists of a small table (or bench) for placing props (rhythm instruments: tambourine, maracas, and drum).

Optional: When a piano is available, it adds to the dance studio atmosphere. Its bench is used in place of the table above.

LIGHTS

The lighting plot requires four light settings.*

1. A general wash;
2. A spot or focused light center stage;
3. A spot or focused light highlighting the table (or bench) downstage left; and
4. A pre-show and post-show setting consisting of a combination of the two spots at a very low level, with wash lights even lower.

* When a lighting plot is not available, the show has been effectively performed in a general wash of light from beginning to end.

SOUND

There is a CD containing music sound cues used throughout the show. The script contains cue placement.

PROPS

A tambourine, maracas, and a drum.