

PAULINE PRODUCTIONS, ASHFIELD, MA

## ***NOW*, a one-woman show by Tamir, written and performed by TAMIR.**

Directed by Martin Jason Asprey. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

*“It scars you on the inside.”*

The last time I saw TAMIR on stage, almost two years ago, it was at the Hawthorne Valley School in a production William Shakespeare’s “*Richard II*” as the Duke of York in a Walking The Dog Production. I said of her, “*TAMIR plays the Duke of York and seems to never leave the stage, which was fine with me for her work in this role is exemplary.*” Now, at the First Congregational Church of Ashfield in a script that incorporates many speeches and moments from the works of Shakespeare actually entitled “*NOW*”, she presents a one-woman show where she is **actually** never off stage and that is still just fine with me. The woman has an extraordinary presence, a voice that is so compelling you pray no one else will speak, and a physical grace that seems impossible to sustain. It isn’t. For almost 90 minutes she holds her audience in total thrall as she divulges a story so close to her own that every word spoken, every contortion of her body, feels like total confession and the stage is almost too small a box in which to reveal it all. Unlike the church experience TAMIR is not seeking absolution or even understanding. She just needs to bring us into her life experience so that we can know what has brought her to this stage, at this time, telling this story. Her reasons are there to be plucked, held and cherished. That was exactly what her audience did on opening night of this world premiere performance. *NOW* may tell a story of then, but it is real for us right now.



### **TAMIR IN ACT ONE OF *NOW*; PHOTO: JEANNINE HAAS**

She informs us about her flirtations with suicide and her three attempts - shotgun, razor to wrist, pills. She guides us through the Israeli experience of her childhood when war was never more than a block away. She speaks of family abuse and family protection. She explodes the myths of the Sabra and opens up views of the truth of that experience. She uses her Martha Graham dance training to help us feel what she has felt in a life built on the effects of trauma. This woman, looking back on a youth spent yearning for release, unveils her secrets using poetic language all her own blended seamlessly with the words of Shakespeare and creating a timeless picture of a woman’s work to remain a woman alive to possibility and not molded into the modern maiden general that we hear so much about from Israelis in legend and story.

TAMIR’s unnamed character, but you think of her as TAMIR, relives adventures familial and familiar. A person in torment with a spirit undissolvable, she makes her past present as she acts out her history. This is an achievement like none I’ve seen before on a stage. Other actors have told their personal stories but not in any way or form like this one. Every once in a while she sings, but that is not the musical part of her history; nor is her use of dance movement a reflection of her inner music. That comes through the simplicity of her words. “A mirror of who we are, or want to be” she says, is what this is all about. She holds that mirror close and reflects her soul out to the audience to see, and pity, and support, and love.



## TAMIR: A PORTRAIT

Relentlessly her story takes her to Mexico and to the United States. These transitions are not as important as her revelations about God and about life and the importance of each. Her show's title is manifested in the second half of the performance where she plays out some of the things that have actually brought her to this *NOW* she is opening to us. The actress is just making way for us to enter her particular world and how she lives in it. It is proof positive that no amount of past suffering is wasteful if it leads us to a better today. There is no other play like this one at making such a point. We are direct witness to the difficulties TAMIR suffered to become TAMIR *NOW*. We may wonder as we leave the theater if a lovely woman could possibly endure what she has been through, though we surely understand that there is no sham here. Still the theatricality of the experience keeps us alert and on our seat's edge from start to finish.

Ezekiel Baskin has lighted the show for support, emphasis and emotional underscore. It is a beautiful and poetic sense of what the play needs, moment to moment. The Director of the piece is Shakespeare and Company's Martin Jason Asprey who has clearly worked closely with TAMIR to give the show its visual and emotional theatricality while allowing her freedom to express with movement and dance those moments that are her particular points of exposure. Asprey's work is indistinguishable from TAMIR's here: who contributed what is hard to say. But the total work, beautifully performed, is clearly Asprey's envisioning of TAMIR's memories and words. This is one show that is enjoying a much too short run in an out-of-the-way location (from Pittsfield it is only a 48 minute drive to the venue in Ashfield). This is one show that would be a pity to miss. Artists have made it so, almost as much as life had done.

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*NOW*, a Pauline Productions offering at the First Congregational Church of Ashfield, MA, 429 Main Street (Route 116) plays through Sunday, January 12. For information and tickets go to [www.paulinelive.com](http://www.paulinelive.com) or call Jeannine Haas at 413-588-1534.