



'Red Bike' gives child perspectives on life

Chioma Anyanwu/Unicorn Theatre



Through the innocent eyes and words of an 11-year old on a red bicycle, the world appears so much simpler and pure; yet, the simplicity exposes more complexities of an adult world.

In a one-woman tour-de-force performance, Chioma Anyanwu opens a doorway to a handful of characters solely with her vocal inflections, posture changes, and facial expressions in a one-act performance. In a virtual, streaming video she takes her viewers on a marathon ride through her town and to the top of a humongous hill to overlook her hometown from a different perspective.

As she rides her bike to several areas through town, she provides a perspective on "everyman" and our need for possessions. While the story evolved, I got a vision of an old 1970's song by Melanie, "Brand New Key" where the main character roller-skates and rides her bike all over town.

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The idea of success and possession for the narrator began with the simple desire for a generic red bicycle. That simple item lay beyond her parents' budget. To have such an item required saving and planning through several paychecks and lottery ticket rewards. A dollar here, a five-dollar win, a paycheck or two with leftover change finally added up to the purchase price and newfound freedom.

With that freedom came the key to vision and insights in all parts of town, from the industrial areas to luxury apartment buildings, to a gargantuan hill that seemed as high as Pike's Peak to an 11-year-old. And, once atop the hill, the coolest possible and scary solo ride down brings the excitement of the first drop from a sky-high roller coaster.

As the descent accelerates, so too do memories and flashes into the future. The narrator's mind and visions snap back and forth as life speeds and flashes to and fro. At times Anyanwu's character seems a child filled with wonder and then sees through the eyes of her parents and an elderly gentleman she knows.

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The show leaves viewers with a chance to examine their lives, the simplicity of childhood along with perspectives developed through their decades. With video projections of different backgrounds and locations, viewers visualize what character and landscapes the narrator traverses.

“Red Bike” by Caridad Svich and directed by Sidonie Garrett continues through Feb. 21 through live-stream and The Unicorn Theatre. For ticket purchase, use the Unicorn website: www.unicorntheatre.org The play is available on-demand so the video can be viewed anytime. The play best engages adults and only contains limited adult language (basically one word that perhaps an 11-year-old might say to appear more worldly).

Tags: “Red Bike”, Unicorn Theatre, Performing Arts, Kansas City, Kansas City Theatre