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Paulanne Simmons

One Woman's Take on Growing up Catholic

"Following the Yellow Brick Road...Down the Rabbit Hole"

Directed by Elwyn Castle

Next performances Aug 14 & 21 8 p.m.

At The Turtle's Shell Theatre

300 West 43rd St.

\$20 (212) 352-3101 or www.theatermania.com

Reviewed by Paulanne Simmons July 18, 2007.

The coming-of-age adventures of repressed Catholic girls is an old story. And there's no artistic news in one-woman (or one-man) shows in which the performer plays multiple roles. But somehow Terri Champion's "Following the Yellow Brick Road...Down the Rabbit Hole," if not exactly bursting with fresh insights, does present a lucid, lively and often amusing picture of how one girl navigates her way between heaven and earthly happiness.

Cissy is accompanied on her journey by her equally ambivalent and ignorant friends. She is taught by a succession of nuns, one of whom had "each leg the size of a fourth grader," and lay teachers (the sexy Miss Brown had both girls and boys lusting after her). When the "Kotex movie" doesn't teach Cissy enough about the facts of life, she turns to her mother, whose uptight explanations would be even funnier if they didn't ring so true.

Cissy asks questions like, "Why did God give us body parts we couldn't touch?" She concludes that "Any time you do anything that feels good, the closer you get to hell." It isn't until her high school boyfriend, Rick, gives her a lesson in anatomy that she realizes she may be wrong.

"Following the Yellow Brick Road...Down the Rabbit Hole" may mix its metaphors, but there is no confusion in its message. It captures most of the pain and uncertainty of growing up, the deliberate, disingenuous and sometimes unintended cruelty of adults, and the hope that springs

eternal in young breasts.

Elwyn Castle's wily direction keeps *Campion* on track, never allowing her to stumble into sentimentality or stagnate in immobile talk. And Mindy Haywood has choreographed nimble steps that take Cissy from her childhood to the threshold of maturity.

Following the yellow brick road and going down the rabbit hole actually ended with both Dorothy and Alice going home again. For Terri *Campion*, home is never the same. And that's what makes her adventure so satisfying.



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