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## Thomson triumphant in *I, Claudia*

May 01, 2009

**RICHARD OUZOUNIAN**  
THEATRE CRITIC

### ***I, Claudia***

★★★★ (out of 4)

Written and performed by Kristen Thomson. Directed by Chris Abraham. Until May 23 at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts, 55 Mill St. **416-866-8666**



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Utilizing a series of masks, writer-star Kristen Thomson has mesmerized with her solo show '*I, Claudia*.' She returns to the role tomorrow at the Young Centre.

*I, Richard, loved I, Claudia.*

Kristen Thomson's portrait of a wonderfully winsome young woman trembling on the cusp of adolescence is one of the freshest things to hit the stage in many a season.

"There are vulnerable people in this society," she confides to us, "and I am one of them."

*Claudia* has all the trembling intensity of any girl at the awkward age of "12 and three-quarters," but in her case it's magnified by the fact her parents are divorced and her father is involved with the loathsome Leslie. "He calls her his special friend," *Claudia* snorts, "but I know a euphemism when I hear one."

She spends every Monday night with her father, and every Tuesday is "the worst day since Armageddon" because she has to wait a whole week to see him again. So she retreats to the boiler room of her school to heal her psychic wounds.

Clad in a floppy red beret, an oversized green sweater and a dreary tartan skirt, she looks like any one of the thousands of private school girls you see on the subway, clutching science projects, listening to music and defying the world to make contact.

Thomson has it all down perfectly: the mercurial mood swings, the schizoid vocabulary (part kidspeak, part dictionary), even the awkward attempts to "be a victim of your sexuality" by thrashing away to the Backstreet Boys.

What makes this unique is that she does it all behind a mask. But instead of obliterating

the character, the big-browed, hollow-eyed face she dons helps Thomson reach into the heart and soul of sweet Claudia.

"People don't mean to," she admits, "but sometimes they fail each other."

Thomson's triumphant performance as Claudia is rooted in accurate details (she overfeeds her goldfish and they die while she dreams of peer acceptance and a pair of platform shoes) that underscore her contention that "sometimes life is so true."

Blissfully funny, unexpectedly touching, *I, Claudia* is a must-see.

*This is an edited version of a review that originally appeared on April 5, 2001.*

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