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"Because the events of Yom Kippur are mostly confined to the living room of a young couple in Israel--a space whose clashing fabrics indicate both modesty and twenty-something carelessness--its coming-of-age themes about forgiveness, patriotic responsibility and death have the potential to appear especially hefty. Some of its most powerful moments take place when its four main characters cork a bottle of wine after returning from streets mauled by war, react to a blazing alarm or shield their fear of loneliness with raised chins and crossed arms."

"Arela Rivas does a fine job with the character of Yael, adding a complexity to her lines with her expressive eyes and effortless body movements. When she is hit by loneliness, she trembles and appears prematurely old; when she begins to rediscover her humor, one can see a tomboyish spark behind her close-lipped smile. In a scene between her and Shane Jerome (Yitz), their attraction is believable. Other actors, particularly Aylam Orian's army captain Avi, give noteworthy, appealing and vulnerable performances. "

nytheatre.com:

"[T]he production is very heartfelt, as are the actors' performances. The collective ensemble is very strong, especially the authentic Israeli in the cast, Aylam Orian as Avi, the soldier. Arela Rivas is very good in her mammoth role as Yael and she has very strong chemistry with Gayle Robbins (Sarah).

Stephanie Tucci's set and Alex Moore's lighting do a good job with what they have and the space.

Yom Kippur has heart and for that, it's worth seeing."

Here is one I hadn't see before which is a rave review, you might tell Halina about the reference to her "crisp" direction.

http://www.jacneed.com/Quick_Takes.htm

YOM KIPPUR: (Midtown International Theatre Festival, Abingdon Theatre Complex, New York (through August 2; festival running through August 10. 800-279-4200 or www.midtownfestival.org). How important is Israel to American Jews? While the answer to that question may ostensibly seem a no-brainer, recent research indicates that there are significant numbers of respondents who are profoundly ambivalent about their connection to the Jewish state. Such is the case with some of the four central characters in Meri Wallace's thoughtful and affecting new play "Yom Kippur" at New York's Midtown International Theatre Festival.

If the provocative world premiere begins in 1973 Jerusalem on the morning of the title holiday and soon confronts the start of the war of the same name (with the attack of Egypt and Syria), the focal two 20-something couples' diverse views about life in Israel and their responsibilities as new settlers certainly resonate today. American Jews-and Jews throughout the world, for that matter-continue to debate the nature of Israel's response to the terrorism of Hamas and Hezbollah on the one hand and its involvement in peace talks on the other. As the Yom Kippur War begins, former Kibbutznick and artist Yitz kisses his pregnant former dancer wife

Yael and leaves to join his unit, while his cellist best friend Ephraim, who admits to 'freezing under fire, speaks of obtaining a letter from a psychologist excusing him from enlisting.

Although this often touching drama sometimes comes across as too episodic, with many quick scene changes from their two-bedroom apartment and a park bench to hospital room and air raid shelter, Wallace does well capturing the emotional roller coaster rides that Yael, her best friend Sara and Ephraim experience-first as they await the return of Yitz and later as harsh post-war realities call into question their evolving feelings about Aliyah and their respective futures in Israel. Loving new mother Yael worries about her son's future as the climate of violence and constant military struggle with Israel's neighbors hits home directly. Complicating further already difficult situations is Ephraim's obsession with Yael, whom- Sara fears- he has always loved more than her.

Strong-willed Yael tries to be as committed to Israel as she is to her young son . Her rich circle of friends prove to be both beneficial and challenging. Thirty year old Hadassah Hospital doctor Shlomo, himself an immigrant, supplies timely advice to her as well as Ephraim. Sara, for her part, never lets Ephraim's love for her best friend jeopardize her closeness to Yael. Evenso, an unexpected visit from Yael's cold and distant mother-in-law Bella and the latter's dark observations about the impact of Israel's wars on her family irrevocably shake her daughter-in-law's resolve.

Some theatergoers- this critic included, may feel that Yael is too tenacious a character to let a blunt but largely unsympathetic in-law like Bella persuade her to return to America. Others may see her decision as a logical consequence of her concerns as a mother. Still, 29 year old Avi, a pivotal Israeli army captain, provides a key note of optimism when he declares , "I'm here. Israel is here. Come back." At the very least, Wallace's heartfelt play is likely to have audience members examining their own ties to Israel even as they consider the American immigrants' respective commitments and relationships.

Under Halina Ujda's crisp direction, a generally winning cast makes the most of the characters' journeys . Arela Rivas brings a compelling combination of toughness and warmth to heroine Yael. Gayle Robbins catches all of Sarah's loyalty to Yael and her steadfastness as a young settler. Orion Delwaterman adds some complexity to the tricky role of Ephraim, a character that needs more .development in the later going. Evan Sokal is very engaging as big-hearted Shlomo. Aylan Orian, who somewhat resembles a young Kirk Douglas, captures both the sharp candor and the deep tenderness of Sabra Avi. Shane Jerome has the right likeability as Yitz, while Annalisa Loeffler is rivetingly grim as Bella.

Early on Yael offers the following insight her father used to say- that "Yom Kippur is more about making amends with your fellow man than fasting. " While the couples and their friends may not be scrupulous about ritual observance, most of them do take pains with acts of loving-kindness. Likewise, "Yom Kippur" the play make timely points about connection and Israel as a bastion of human caring.