

## **MISS AMERICA'S UGLY DAUGHTER, Bess Myerson & Me written and performed by Barra Grant**

For those who are too young to recall a beauty contest held in the Forties, the lovely Bess Myerson is the only Jewish girl ever, to be named Miss America. Not only was she beautiful but also very bright, a mover and shaker both during and after her reign. Active in politics and humane causes, a socialite and - eventually, a disgrace. But this is not HER story. What you will hear comes from the mouth of her only daughter, Barra Grant and all about Myerson's one major failure: the role of a mother. You might call her a Jewish "Mommy Dearest"- without the physical abuse.

The highlighted focal point on stage, symbolically, is a throne with an ermine trimmed, red velvet cape draped around it. The show begins with the familiar fanfare, "Here she comes.....accompanied by an array of photo projections, very well done throughout, by Fritz Davis. The set is cleverly designed (by Elisha Schaefer), as it switches to various locations without interruption. Barra Grant, the titular "ugly" daughter, is actually an attractive, slender woman with a gorgeous head of long hair who was, she tells us, a chubby, bucktoothed kid with frizzy hair and no discernible talent, not just ignored by her mother but often deliberately hidden from view.

Grant's soliloquy is spellbinding, gossipy, heartbreaking yet always truly entertaining. She may have lost her self-esteem under the circumstances but not her sense of humor. Watch her expression as the maturing yenta keeps phoning her at all hours of the night. The voice of the wonderful Monica Piper is heard as Bess and she's as funny as she is annoying. This woman was so self-centered, if her neighbor's house burnt down, she would probably bitch about having to smell the smoke! Barra's gallows humor comes into play describing her and her mother's assorted boyfriends, her efforts to launch a career in Hollywood and her childhood, which you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. But read her bio in your Footlights program – she did alright for herself, so there ! The play is stylishly directed by the talented Eve Brandstein and should not be missed.

The Broad Stage , Santa Monica College Performing Arts Center, in the 99 Seat Edye Theatre, 1310 11th Street. between Arizona and Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica 90401. Friday & Saturday 8 pm, Sunday 3 pm. \$55 Talk Backs with Grant will be held after the 3 p.m. Sunday matinee performances on July 22 and 29 and August 5 and 12. (800)838-3006 or [misamericasuglydaughter.com](http://misamericasuglydaughter.com) or [www.brownpapertickets.buytickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.buytickets.com) Parking lot in front. No intermission. Ends 8/26

REVIEW BY INGRID WILMOT