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THEATER REVIEW

• By HELEN KAYE

Between Two Worlds
By Sara von Schwarze
Directed by Manfred Langner
Cameri/Stuttgart Playhouse
December 17

Press photographer Ruth (author Sara von Schwarze) is a slob, with a messy denim shirt, shabby pants, a grubby T-shirt and her hair raked back from her face. This is a woman who doesn't like herself. She has a chip on her shoulder the size of a boulder, and after an incident in the West Bank, she's fled from Israel to Munich determined to have it out with Dear Old Dad.

Dad is an aging hippie called Abraham (Eli Gorenstein), a photographer who lives in a Munich loft with Sabine (Cornelia Heyse), an attorney. They've been out and when they come home they're confronted by the raging Ruth, who's broken in through a window.

The core of *Between Two Worlds* is German vs. Israeli, a clash of identities inherently troublesome because of the baggage attached.

"I lived with that guilt for years," says the German-born von Schwarze, who has used the barest bones of her own life as skeleton for her play. In the 1970s her parents converted to Judaism and immigrated to Israel, later returning to Germany.

In the play, Abraham is also a convert and an ex-immigrant, leaving Ruth emotionally rootless. Confronting Abraham and Sabine allows Ruth to confront herself, to struggle toward a realization and acceptance of that self.

Between Two Worlds is performed (as written), in German and Hebrew with the appropriate subtitles screened above Paul Lerchbaumer's no-frills yet eloquent set. His costumes are like that too.

Manfred Langner's direction is equally no-frills, allowing his actors to attack the text head on. The usually excellent Eli Gorenstein doesn't yet seem to have hit his stride as the escapist Abraham, piling on bluster instead. Cornelia Heyse creates a Sabine who's both sensitive and smart. Actress von Schwarze keeps a tight rein on Ruth which makes truthful her confusion and her pain.

The drama itself could use that tight rein. Engrossing though it is, *Between Two Worlds* does get itself into muddles through lack of focus. Author von Schwarze has included more or less everything that might have a connection with her subject, even the debate over circumcision. In theater, less always tends to be more.

'BETWEEN TWO WORLDS' (Yossi Zwecker)