

# LA WEEKLY

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**REFUGEES** Writer-performer Stephanie Satie has been an ESL teacher, which may partly explain her bubbly personality and larger-than-life gestures that underscore her words. Her one-woman show takes us inside a carpeted classroom, with a map of the world on the upstage wall (set by Rick Friesen), in which Satie morphs from herself into an array of students of various ages and genders from nations such as Armenia, Russia, Uzbekistan and

Iran. All are learning the distinction between the verbs "to wish" and "to hope." The students unveil their Old World traumas, mostly involving their commitments to family, while Satie, of Polish-Jewish stock, confides the sense of her own family's evaporation into lunacy and geographic distance. Satie's New World feminism is as dogged as her students' tugs toward tradition. For instance, Satie leads an Iranian woman to a family counselor after the woman reveals a black eye. For her "interference," she is approached by the woman's seething husband and chastised by school authorities. Satie recognizes that moral compasses often go haywire in a melting pot. Her turn-on-a-dime impersonations and dialects are as impressive as the force of her personality, in a saga carefully shaped by director Anita Khanzadian. Multiculturalism is often a buzz-word for what's really a single-culture event, but this is the real thing. The evidence was in the American, Farsi, Russian and Armenian conversations coming from the audience after the show. Sweet Lies Theater at the Bitter Truth Theater, 11050 Magnolia Blvd., N. Hlywd.; Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; thru Aug. 2. (818) 755-7900. (Steven Leigh Morris)