

Sara Juli

“The Money Conversation”

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By [QUINN BATSON](#)

Offoffoff.com

In her new piece “The Money Conversation,” Sara Juli makes something good out of almost nothing at all. She has taken the simple, and risky, concept of giving \$5,000 to the audience each night and turned it into a multilayered piece of anthropological exploration. As she began counting invisible money on the final performance night, it was clear that when she told people, “Here’s xxx dollars. Take it. It’s for you,” some had decided that was permission enough to keep her money.

“Money Conversation” is exactly that. Juli counts out money, drops it on the floor, and then separates different amounts from the pile and asks the audience what each amount means to them. The responses range from overly serious to comic, simple to incredibly specific. \$250, for example, is “four ounces of good weed,” according to a young man sitting with his not-quite-smiling parents. \$100 is the fee to redeem frequent flyer miles within 7 days of flying. \$1100 is someone’s monthly student loan payment.

Certainly there is an initial watching-a-trainwreck fascination and disquiet in the audience as Juli counts out several hundred dollars in \$20 bills onto the floor, rolls around in it, and then begins to hand the bills out in brief but direct interactions with individual audience members.

Juli explores many layers of trust and permission and desire in this piece, upping the ante with each round of giveaways. The \$20 bill round has her first simply giving single bills to selected audience, then sitting in audience laps and eventually having them remove bills she has stuffed into her pockets, the \$50 round has people grabbing an increasingly elusive bill from between her toes, the \$100 round has men reaching inside her clothing to retrieve bills. A round with pennies accepted from and returned to the audience seems to both ease and increase audience tension, and the last two rounds of \$300 and over \$3000 have an electric tension as people instinctively begin to refuse to accept such large amounts of her money, either forgetting or unaware that there is a “deposit box” at the exit for people to drop her cash into, in the deposit envelope provided with each program.

It takes a deft performer to pull off a show like this. Juli has the quick and accurately clever responses of a good standup comic. “Money Conversation” builds well, flows well and ultimately, sits well.