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IT'S AUGUST, meaning that (1) New York is hot and steamy and (2) virtually every black-box theater in town has been taken over by the New York International Fringe Festival, a two-week orgy of new plays presented by more than 200 companies. Choosing shows to see is a crap shoot, but my luck was terrific, for I picked six winners in a row, all but one of which are still open:

- Negin Farsad's "**Bootleg Islam**" is an eye-opening I-was-there monologue by a second-generation Iranian-American woman who went to Tehran for her cousin's wedding and saw more than she bargained for. More a stand-up routine than a fully developed one-person show, but smart, funny and fascinating all the same (Paul Sharpe Contemporary Art, tonight at 9:15 and Saturday at 7 p.m.).