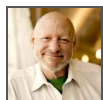


OCTOBER 8, 2014 | SHAPIRO ON THEATER

Review: "The Events" and the backstory



Derbhle Crotty and Clifford Samuel in 'The Events' at Annenberg Center. (Photo courtesy of Actors Touring Company.)



SHAPIRO ON THEATER
A BLOG BY HOWARD SHAPIRO

You never hear anything about the terrible real event that led Scottish playwright David Greig to create "The Events," which Annenberg Center has brought here from Europe. The real event never figures directly into the play.

So I'll tell you: On a July day in Norway in 2011, a 32-year-old right-wing extremist parked a car in a busy part of Oslo and then detonated it, killing eight people and wounding more than 200 others. About 90 minutes later, he turned up on Utoya, a Norwegian island and the site of a summer camp for teenagers, where he murdered 69 people, mostly the campers, in a shooting spree that lasted more than an hour. He was protesting, he said, Muslim extremists

and foreigners. Just last month the man, Anders Breivik, said from the prison cell where he is spending 21 years, that he wants to start a fascist party in Norway to prevent people like him from committing violence.

Says a character in "The Events," explaining himself to an audience some time before he becomes the murderer of a church's choir members: "I don't hate foreigners. I just hate foreigners ... here." His eventual exercise in madness is not the point of the play – the play focuses more on the need of the choirmaster, a survivor who's been psychologically pummeled by the shootings, to discover why anyone would do such a thing.

In that, "The Events" is a play about our need to make sense from senselessness, and whether it's really possible to forgive the perpetrator whose gun's been aimed directly at you. I wouldn't call Greig's play bleak – it's far too theatrically inventive for that. But it is intense for most of its 100 minutes, appropriate to its themes. And at times it seems so cerebral – full of ideas – that I wondered whether it had a heart as well as a mind. It does, as Greig demonstrates well toward the play's conclusion.

Greig wrote a show that endeared itself to many Philadelphians who saw it last spring in a production by Inis Nua – "Midsummer," about a chance meeting of two strangers, with music and a striking, introspective narrative. His talent for stage-telegraphed introspection shines through in "The Events" – the soul-searching is what grabs you as you watch the survivor struggle in the aftermath.

The production, an award-winner at the mother of all Fringe festivals in Edinburgh, is the combined effort of three stage companies: Britain's Actors Touring Company, plus another London company and one from Vienna. Ramin Gray directs "The Events" with Derbhle Crotty as the survivor and Clifford Samuel in a variety of roles, including the woman's psychiatrist, many of the people she visits to find a key to the killer's motivation, and the killer himself. Crotty and Samuel are vivid and convincing in their portrayals.

A pianist, Magnus Gilljam, plays on one side of the stage and leads an on-stage choir – a different local chorus at each performance. This arrangement calls for impressive logistics; not only is the choir supposed to be the choir in the play, some of the members have lines and collectively, the ensemble becomes one of the play's characters. On opening night Tuesday, I saw and heard the Penn Glee Club in the role – the guys were in fine voice. A list of the other choirs that will perform follows, and after each play a different guest will lead a talkback about the work and its themes.

—
"The Events" runs through Oct. 19 at Annenberg Center, 3680 Walnut St. 215-898-3900 or www.annenbergcenter.org.

The following choirs will perform at "The Events."

Tonight (Oct. 8): The Penn Sirens

Oct. 9: The Haverford-Bryn Mawr Chamber Singers

Oct. 10: The Jersey Sound Chorus

Oct. 11: The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas Choir

Oct. 12: The Jersey Sound Chorus

Oct. 14: Allora -- Philadelphia Women's Music Project

Oct. 15: The Healing Presence Choir

Oct. 16: The Rutgers University Singers

Oct. 17: Philomusica

Oct. 18: The Anna Crusis Women's Choir

Oct. 19: Philomusica

Attempting to make sense from senselessness.

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY



0 Comments

NewsWorks

 Login ▾

Sort by Oldest ▾

Share  Favorite 



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 [Subscribe](#)

 [Add Disqus to your site](#)

 [Privacy](#)

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY

ARTS CURRENT
AFFAIRS
Σ THEATRE MUSIC
= LIVE FOOD
∩ PERFORMANCES

this month, WHY Y-TV
kicks off a new season of
original, local, programming.

WHYY TV [click here for full list](#)

© WHY Y/NEWSWORKS 2014

(<http://www.whyy.org>)