

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## 17 Minutes

Scott Organ

The Barrow Group & Marshall Cordell

Gilded Balloon Teviot

3–28 August 2023



Andy Rubens is one of the first school guards on duty when he hears a gunshot. It was just noise. He was not sure what he heard. He was trying to “ascertain”. America's frighteningly familiar multiple shooting events are the basis for *17 Minutes*.

We need to know who the hero is and who is the villain. We know that the person with the gun is the suspect. But who else can we blame? We think we need to know all the facts, but, in reality, who is at fault is more universal, more community. Who can we blame?

It wasn't until the multiple shots that followed that Rubens was sure that it was gunshots. He sought cover against a school wall, called the local police, and then tried to “ascertain” where the gunshots were coming from and how many shooters there were. Still very unsure of what had happened, what was happening, he is interviewed by Detective Virgil Morris.

The information from Andy's interview doesn't match the facts. The CCTV videotape acquired by the media didn't match his interview. 17 minutes. From the details that Detective Morris has, it doesn't match. It looks like that for 17 minutes, he was frozen against the wall. He did nothing.

Rubens: “I thought they were on the roof.” Detective Morris: “So, there was more than one.” Rubens; “I didn't know. I was trying to ascertain. I can't do anything until you know where the shooters are. That makes sense.” 17 minutes. Andy quickly goes from witness to suspect, in the minds of everyone: the police, the media, the parents. Even his wife tries to convince him to quit before he is fired. She offers this to him as an option, even though he is sure his boss will support him. She can't let herself visit the idea that for 17 minutes, he did nothing.

Rubens is utterly alone. He is the everyman. Americans are overloaded, numb with this kind of violence. It happens on an almost daily occasion. The parents, the families, the community doesn't have a time to grieve. Anger is easier than grief. Easier to share.

But we need to know who is at fault. Who can we blame? Not just the perpetrator, the kid with the gun. But the people who could have done something, who should have done something and didn't. Or didn't do enough. Or did the wrong thing. Hindsight has 20/20 vision. And everyone takes on the investigation and sits in judgment.

*17 Minutes* is Scott Organ's sketch of one of these mass shootings. A child has entered his school and begun shooting. We don't know how he got the gun. We don't know why he did this horrible thing. We don't know what happens to him. Scott Organ is more interested in the life of this victim,

vilified for doing nothing. This is not a political play. It happens in America. But this could be any country, any community.

Larry Mitchell plays Andy Rubens with the innocence of someone who acted like a human being, not a hero and not a villain. Brian Rojas plays Detective Virgil Morris with chilly detachment. DeAnna Lenhart plays Rubens's wife who tries to deal with the facts, the reality of what the future hold for them, not allowing herself to feel too deeply. Mary Stevens plays another of the security guards with the conviction of one not caught up on the mess. She can afford to be sympathetic. Dan Watson and Lee Brock play part of the outside community.

Director Seth Barrish has created a tight production with the heart-beating terror that this could happen to anyone.

**Reviewer:** [Catherine Henry Lamm](#)