

# British Theatre Guide

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

## My Name is Rachel Corrie

Taken from the writings of Rachel Corrie by Alan Rickman and Katharine Viner  
Royal Court Theatre Upstairs  
(2005)

Rachel Corrie was an apple-cheeked All-American girl, brought up in Washington State. The only thing that separates her from tens of millions of her peers is a desire to do good and a love for humanity.

Her life is brought to the stage thanks to the efforts of actor Alan Rickman and Guardian journalist Katharine Viner. They have sifted through notebooks and e-mails in order to produce a meaningful example of a genre that has become known as *Verbatim Theatre* - a reconstruction using the words of protagonists, like [Bloody Sunday](#), currently showing at the Tricycle.

In some ways, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is a Twenty-First Century equivalent to George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. Like Spain in the 1930s, Palestine today has the power to attract Internationalist activists who want to help, regardless of personal risk.

For twenty minutes, we share a Tracey Emin mess of a bedroom (Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* on the floor speaks volumes) with this idealistic, unworldly college student. Megan Dodds, from TV's *Spooks*, seduces her audience so that all must be won over by this woman who sums herself up as "scattered and deviant and too loud".

Then, as the bedroom rolls away and designer Hildegard Bechtler introduces a bullet-holed wall, things become more serious as Rachel arrives in Israel/Palestine. Initially, she feels secure and mildly angry.

Soon, as she sees dead bodies and puts herself into the firing line, she achieves real empathy with her hosts and an inner peace. However this is accompanied by a growing rage towards the Israelis who are making the lives of innocent Palestinians hellish. Some might argue that there are Palestinian terrorists around who have caused the latest Intifada but Rachel's rosy view misses this point.

Just as the tension is becoming too great, the editors cleverly bring us back to earth with a brief interlude taking us back to a job that Rachel did as a counsellor to a group of the mentally ill.

After this breather, it is back to the front line and an increasingly despairing young woman who has gone beyond her previous life to become a true Palestinian.

The final moments after Miss Dodds walks off the stage come from a TV screen as we hear an eye-witness account of the 23-year-old's death and then see a clip of her as an amazingly assured activist for peace a full thirteen years before.

Like Sir Antony Sher's [Primo](#), *My Name is Rachel Corrie* is a remarkably moving 90-minute solo piece about human dignity and suffering. Rachel Corrie was little more than a girl and while she

could be naive, she also had a saintly aspect, meeting death with the beatific happiness of a martyr.

This play features a great performance from Megan Dodds and is the kind of theatrical experience that can have a significant political effect. The world should be filled with beautiful idealists like Rachel Corrie. Some may feel that she was misguided but none could doubt her sincerity and commitment.

*This review originally appeared on Theatreworld in a slightly different version*

Rivka Jacobson [reviewed](#) this production when it moved to the larger Theatre Downstairs and it was again [reviewed](#) by Louise Hill when it transferred to the Playhouse.

**Reviewer:** [Philip Fisher](#)