

British Theatre Guide

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My Name is Rachel Corrie

Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner, taken from the writings of Rachel Corrie
Royal Court Theatre Downstairs
(2005)

Rachel Corrie is dead.

On 16 March 2003, the 23 year old Rachel Corrie was killed in the Gaza Strip, standing too close to an Israeli Defence Force bulldozer, while trying to prevent the demolition of Palestinian homes.

The play attempts to explore why a 23-year-old woman left her comfortable American life to stand between a bulldozer and a Palestinian home and highlights the short life and sudden death of this young idealist, and the words that she left behind.

Rachel Corrie was a middle-class American, in her own words, "scattered and deviant and too loud", who found herself involved in the International Solidarity Movement protesting against Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory.

Alan Rickman, far better known as an actor, and Katharine Viner have edited Rachel Corrie's diaries and emails to produce a monologue which paints a vivid picture of her character and portrays her idealistic and personal reasons for going to Gaza.

Megan Dodds' captivating, 80 minute solo performance portraying the young woman is versatile and demonstrates great sensitivity to both the text and the character.

Set in a red room, reminiscent of Jane Eyre's childhood (or Freud's symbolic womb), Rachel Corrie is first introduced as a teenager in search of direction. She is a confused and anxious youth: "I am inside a terrifying mirror," she says, with "the million thing" that she wants to be. She narrates events and outlines some of her feelings and views through portraits glued to the red wall.

Her life changes forever as a result of an invitation beckoning her to join her friend Chris in the war zone of Israeli-occupied Gaza.

Her listing of the names of the five dead people whom she most wished that she had met, topped by Salvador Dali and Karl Jung, dilutes the political aspect of her move. Going to Gaza is not even mentioned in her immediate list of "things to do" which Rachel Corrie was in a habit of preparing. Even as she packs her bag for the fateful trip Rachel confesses, "I didn't intend to become so deeply involved in activism this year".

Hildegard Bechtler's simple but very effective set and Johanna Town's careful application of lighting, ensure that Rachel Corrie's move to Gaza is powerfully conveyed by the gradual shift from her bedroom's quirky items and the red wall towards Gaza and another longer wall, this time of bullet-ridden concrete.

My Name is Rachel Corrie is superbly directed by Alan Rickman who is supported by Megan Dodds' engrossing performance, which is brilliantly sustained throughout the play.

They combine to transform the somewhat banal and scatty 23 year old Rachel Corrie into a heroic figure worthy of audience attention.

The production runs until 29th October

Philip Fisher [reviewed](#) this production in its former run at the smaller Theatre Upstairs

Reviewer: [Rivka Jacobson](#)