



Adelaide Theatre Guide

www.theatreguide.com.au

Supporting live theatre in South Australia

PO Box 738
MODBURY SA 5092

info@theatreguide.com.au
ABN : 93 297 960 525

THE EVENTS

State Theatre Company of South Australia

Her Majesty's Theatre
Until 5 March

Review by John Wells

The dark side of the human psyche can be hard to comprehend. How can we understand what leads a man to kill? Science and medicine can only give some of the answers. Art prods and questions, suggests and rages. Art grapples and chafes. Art is impertinent, unafraid and querulous. "Guernica" tells us as much about war as do thousands of books, theses and documentaries.

David Greig's wonderful and topical play "The Events" examines a bewildering massacre. A young man (called "the Boy") brings a gun to a community choir and kills many of its members in an unfathomable act of mass murder. Greig's script is almost too full of ideas – super-saturated – which means the central premise's clarity is somewhat lost in the fizzing vectors of the text. But the energy of those ideas and Greig's passionate exploration is intense and inspiring. There is such compassion, tenderness and humanity in the writing. It is a great pleasure to watch such a serious and fearless work.

Claire (Catherine McClements), an Anglican priest and leader of the choir, survives the killing spree. The play recounts brief episodes of the slaughter, plus Claire's unquenchable search for why – she questions her psychologist, her lover, a politician, the Boy's father and the Boy himself. All these roles are played by the one actor (Johnny Carr): we are all responsible, all part of the question and part of the answer. On stage with the two actors is a community choir, which adds musical heft to the story and provides, at times, a Greek chorus-like effect. The choir is different every night. This means the spoken responses from the choir tend to be a little stilted, but the vocal soundscape is beautiful and moving. The combination of the harsh desperation of Claire's grief and the gentle, sweet singing is wonderfully unnerving.

McClements is outstanding as the shattered, scarred priest. Her sinewy rage and grief is palpable. McClements brings subtlety and conflict to her character. Carr is versatile and believable in all his characters, switching effortlessly from Claire's female partner to the brash, right-wing politician. It is a deft and engaging performance. Despite the awful tragedy of the script, both actors find plenty of light among the shadows; their performances are natural, relaxed and highly entertaining.

Clare Watson's direction is impressive. The production is taught and streamlined. The narrative is always clear. There is no unnecessary business, but Watson gives the actors great emotional space. She choreographs the choir well with the actors. Despite the sombre theme, the production is always engaging and entertaining.

"The Events" is an unsettling, sadly topical and profoundly moving theatrical experience.