

## 'My Name Is Rachel Corrie' at Theatricum Botanicum



The controversy surrounding "My Name Is Rachel Corrie" will not likely dissipate with its forthright Los Angeles premiere at the Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum. Still, local audiences of all ideological stripes can finally put this much-debated work into context, thanks to a remarkable title performance by Samara Frame.

Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner's 2005 monodrama culls diaries and emails of 23-year-old American student Corrie, killed in 2003 by an Israeli army bulldozer while protesting the razing of a Palestinian home as a peace activist in Gaza. Blowback has followed the play ever since New York Theatre Workshop indefinitely delayed its planned 2006 U.S. premiere, causing Rickman and Viner to withdraw it.

Upon seeing "Rachel Corrie," its hot-button reputation seems somewhat overblown. Traversing the viewpoint of inveterate list-maker and aspiring poet Corrie, raised by progressive parents in Olympia, Wash., the play is undeniably one-sided. (For instance, it does not address violence upon Israeli civilians by Palestinian terrorists.) That's because Rickman and Viner recount Corrie's saga less from a political perspective than a personal one -- to humanize this idealistic, passionately intelligent young woman, who began to comprehend her own admittedly limited perspective before her death.

Therefore, director Susan Angelo focuses on Corrie's mercurial, questing personality, sending the fearless Frame around the intimate Mark S. Taper Foundation Pavilion hillside. (It gets chilly, so dress accordingly.) Frame responds throughout with riveting, affecting involvement.

The interstitial projections and voice-overs are almost rudimentary. A near-collegiate conventionality blurs the narrative structure. Nevertheless, long before its rending final video of the real-life Corrie as optimistic fifth-grader, the play's intent -- to generate serious discussion and stop the killing, on both sides -- is unmistakable, and the moderated talk-backs after each performance seem invaluable.

-- David C. Nichols

**"My Name Is Rachel Corrie,"** Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum, 1419 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., Topanga. 8 p.m. Thursdays. Ends Sept. 22. \$12. (310) 455-3723 or [www.theatricum.com](http://www.theatricum.com). Running time: 1 hour, 15 minutes.

*Photo: Samara Frame as Rachel Corrie. Credit: Ian Flanders.*