

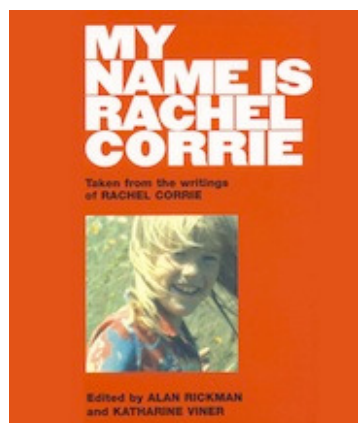
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# LA Theater Review: MY NAME IS RACHEL CORRIE (The Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum)

by Sarah Taylor Ellis on September 3, 2011

in Theater-Los Angeles



## A PATCHWORK OF THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL

*My Name is Rachel Corrie* is a solo show comprised of a patchwork of actual e-mails and diary entries by a young female activist in Gaza who was tragically run over by an Israeli bulldozer in 2003. Edited together by Alan Rickman and Katherine Viner, it is not a particularly well-written play, yet the current production at Theatricum Botanicum makes the most of this collage-like script, grounded in Samara Frame's superb performance as Rachel.



Frame crafts Rachel Corrie as an outgoing, spectacularly multifaceted

young woman. Her body tenses over her laptop as she engages in passionate e-mail debates with her neoliberal dad, but she is equally apt to giggle and roll about on the floor when she receives an e-mail from a crush back in the US. Frame's Rachel Corrie embraces the stage with restless energy and passion; one wishes more young Americans showed such fervor, for whatever cause. Susan Angelo's smart direction keeps this one-woman show dynamic, using the full range of Theatricum's outdoor arena; she has a nuanced gift for bridging from the mundane details of life to an expansive contemplation of a human's place and purpose in the cosmos.

Unfortunately, this production suffers from an awkward employment of technology. While a slide show sometimes brings a welcome visual supplement to Frame's performance, it also has the occasional effect of turning the show into a didactic lecture. A video segment is disappointingly amateur, with rough cinematography and ambient noise. Overamplified sound recordings of Rachel's parents feel at odds with the naturalism of the rest of the production. The play is strongest when simply focused on Frame's performance, which is strong enough to hold an audience's attention without the gadgetry.



Since its London premiere in 2005, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* has met with unending political controversy for its one-sided perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although Corrie volunteered with the ISM (International Solidarity Movement) on the Palestinian side, her writings – and Frame's exuberant physicalization of her words – do not always propagandize as much as they show a young, globally-conscious activist engaging with complex political issues to the best of her (admittedly limited) knowledge and ability. With a concerned and questioning spirit, Corrie uses pencil and paper, a keyboard, and an Internet connection to grapple with the meaning of life in the face of violence. Hopefully audiences will leave the theater in this same spirit, eager to educate themselves on the other side of the political debate.

As an aesthetic entity, then, it may be a stretch to call *My Name is Rachel Corrie* a “good” play, but in Theatricum Botanicum's often gripping production, this work instigates an urgent and necessary dialogue.

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photos by Ian Flanders

*My Name is Rachel Corrie*

scheduled to end on September 22

for tickets, visit <http://www.theatricum.com/plays.htm>