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# Theater

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■ event: My Name is Rachel Corrie

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Review

Time Out Chicago / Issue 186 : Sep 18-24, 2008

Critic's Rating

## My Name Is Rachel Corrie

**Purple Bench Productions** at **Artistic Home**. By Rachel Corrie. Edited by Katherine Viner, Alan Rickman. Dir. Emmy Kreilkamp. With Jessie Fisher.

The most controversial play of the New York theater season two years ago is probably among the most practical, straightforward storefront offerings Chicago theatergoers will encounter this fall. Compiled from journals, letters and e-mails of Rachel Corrie, a Washington-born human-rights activist crushed by an Israeli tank while she acted as a human shield on the Gaza Strip, this one-woman docuplay set off a media firestorm when it was pulled from the New York Theatre Workshop's lineup under pressure from the Jewish community—in particular, board members with no intention of producing a Palestine-sympathetic work.



GAZA SUITE Fisher journals about life on the strip.

When the play finally opened in a commercial Off Broadway production to mixed reviews, it was clear the media buildup had done the show no favors, not to mention that the ticket price for what was dismissed as a flighty blond's doodled notebook scribbles was the same as one would pay at movie-star-studded Manhattan Theatre Club. By contrast, young company Purple Bench Productions' nonpartisan staging does it two favors: It charges only 20 bucks, and it offers modest, scrubbed-faced Jessie Fisher as the titular, accidental martyr.

Rachel Corrie was no Anna Deavere Smith, but she was a burgeoning creative writer. Had she lived, her perspective would have blossomed beyond the typical privileged-American's awakening journey chronicled here. With no formal political education, she was a citizen's journalist articulately answering a calling the best way she knew how: by documenting ground-level slaughter exactly as she saw it. Ironic and self-deprecating, her prose is a perfect match for resourceful Fisher, who finds the voice of a girl so smart and cool you'd want to buy her a beer if you met her at Ginger Man, and a girl so naive she could meet a fate as tragic as Corrie's.

— Christopher Piatt

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