



[The Events](#) at [Everyman Theatre](#)
Reviewed by [Jane Turner](#) April 2014

It was good to be back inside the ***Everyman Theatre*** in Liverpool after two years of closure due to re-construction. The new theatre, workshop, bar and restaurant has a beautiful new façade and a light and spacious modern interior. It is not too different to be unfamiliar, with a similar layout that retains the intimate and atmospheric basement bistro that draws you in and envelops you in the hubbub of pre and post theatre gossip.

The balcony overlooking Hope Street is a creative addition to the old frontage and a good place to linger and get an appreciative eyeful of the magnificent and under-rated 'Paddy's Wigwam'.

The theatre itself is still snug and informal, but better lit and with seats that don't make your bum ache after half an hour. My only complaint is the menu, limited and not a patch on the old one. Bring back the chicken curry and those delicious desserts please!

Disappointed by the menu, I was tempted to drop into the wittily named '**ate days a week**' which I passed en route, but oddly it was closed. It was not long though, before my food frustration slipped from my mind, as I became absorbed in the thoughtful unfolding of the words and actions of the performers on the suitably spartan set. There were just two actors - the charismatic

Amanda Drew

and an energetic and versatile

Clifford Samuel

, accompanied by

Magnus Gilljam

on piano and the melodic vocals of the Up For Arts choir.

Between them, they convincingly portrayed several members of a community and the perpetrator himself in the aftermath of a mass shooting, such as the 2011 massacre of young Norwegians at a summer camp, Columbine, Sandy Hook, and the Boston marathon runners, summed up neatly in the title of this thought provoking drama as '**The Events**'. Why? Why did he do it? How could he do it? What was he thinking? Is he mad or just bad? Are the parents responsible, or society? Was he bullied at school? Could we have done more as a community? Who is the community? What about the influence of ideology? What books and films did he watch? What of racism and multi-culturalism? Or was he just 'angry and had a gun?'

Lots of questions, speculations, observations, explanations and soul searching, which is what we all do when incidents of this kind occur, all cleverly drawn out as if thinking out loud together during the fraught 90 minutes in this meticulously penned **David Greig** composition, inspired by

the

Anders Breivik

massacre. But, in the end, despite our desperate need for understanding, he gives us no satisfactory answers, because '

bad things just happen

'.

I much preferred **Amanda** in [A Streetcar Named Desire](#), as I think she is made for the part of Blanche, and not quite for the lesbian vicar Claire, who she plays in this David Greig composition - she's just far too enigmatic, but maybe that says more about the vicars and lesbians I've met? Nevertheless, she gives an emotional performance, as witness to a mass shooting, whose state of mind is disturbed in the process, whose exhaustion and anguish she reveals in every wrung out word, every sluggish-one-minute and manic-the-next action, as she grapples to retain her faith in God, save her soul and '

understand why he did it

'. And, it is her state of mind that pretty much takes up most of her time on stage, and which she reveals to the audience as she re-lives the moment she came face to face with a massacrist and survived.

The Events

is really a story of victim and survivor, which thankfully for one who doesn't like to wallow in a pity fest of victimhood, is not mawkish. It is an honest account of the spectrum of emotions one must go through at such times, and the questions we crave answers to in the face of such unpredictable acts of violence.

I was initially confused by the roles of **Clifford Samuel** as he switched a bit too quickly from mad gunman killer to journalist, to psychologist and then to Claire's partner, looking exactly the same, without prop differentiation, just a change of demeanour and tone. A captivating, versatile, and physical performance though, as he sat, skipped, crawled, leapt and sang from one set piece to the next.

The **Up For Arts** choir were terrific, and looked and sounded every inch like the real live amateur local community mixture of people they are, with folk of every shape, size, colour, gender and ability, and assorted and colourful clothing to match. They reworked Dizze Rascal's *Bonkers* to great effect, serenaded with *The Messiah* and even recited the words of a Norwegian folk song, all while serving to personify the real live people affected by atrocity. What a great idea to introduce a different choir in every performance, adding a bit of local authenticity to the comforting and familiar backdrop of a community hall setting and fitting to the tradition of the Everyman Theatre.

An absorbing and question raising drama, that requires a bit of patience from the audience at the outset to figure out what is actually taking place, and who is who. But worth sticking with, not only for the compelling performances from actors and choir, but also because of the way in which it tackles the complex issues raised by such random acts of unexpected barbarity. It is honest and doubting about the questions we ask and the often simplistic answers we come up with to explain such killings. It examines revenge and forgiveness and questions our tolerance of others, and finally, it asks us to consider what it really means to be human, and how we can live peacefully alongside one another in a changing world.

If we are to come away from watching this play with just one thought, it should be that, thankfully such atrocities are rare. And as somebody once said: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."