

Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW – Nirbhaya *****

☒ Told with great heart, quiet ferocity, and visual beauty Nirbhaya is an extraordinarily powerful issue based drama. It tells the story of Jyoti Singh Pandey, brutally raped and killed on a Delhi bus in December 2012 and known as Nirbhaya – ‘the fearless one’. This attack brackets the experiences of five other Indian women, breaking their silence on the circle of abuse in which their lives have been folded. The last testimony of the cycle, set in America, potently releases the anger to other cultures where the position of women in society has altered, and yet abuse still strikes.

The play, told in great part by victims of abuse themselves, whose pain and anger is all too visible, is a damning indictment of the position of women and young girls in society worldwide, and takes the Delhi attack as a sparking point for protest and change. And yet to deliver this urgent message the piece uses the most poetic and visually appealing languages of theatre, evoking a sense of fine culture in chaos, images of the human spirit in crisis, – the sheer exquisite beauty of the staging helping hammer home the message that this abuse must stop, for the sake surely of human potential, of our capacity to love.

The final pictures, of the funeral of Jyoti, and her transformation into Kali, the Hindu Goddess of empowerment, were so moving as to be almost unbearable. The audience, all around me in tears, of course has merely to glance at a British daily newspaper, or anywhere, to realise that women and girls are oppressed by predatory men everywhere, all the time. If theatre can change anything, open debate and doors to progress, contribute to making society better, then this is the kind of theatre that might do it.

Political and yet universal, angry yet restrained, so brutal at times I had to look away, so beautifully focused in its writing, direction, ensemble performance and immediacy that an hour and thirty five minutes passed without my noticing. This play should tour the world and help try to make it a better place. Unmissable.

Five Stars

Submitted by [Ade Morris](#)