

## Everyman for Himself

I am going to be writing a critique on Carol Ann Duffy's adaptation of *Everyman* which was performed at the National Theater in London in April of 2015. Overall, I feel this allegorical play was effective in the message it was working to convey. When I began watching the play, I did not know what to expect. Once God/Good Deeds gave their opening speech and the audience was greeted with this opening number of Everyman's birthday that lasts about 10 minutes with loud music, partying and no dialogue – I was set with confusion and unsure of what the rest of the play would hold. (In the script, Duffy describes this sequence as "*Prologue: Everyman's birthday party with Fellowship, which descends into drunkenness, coke-snorting, lewdness and aggression amidst the dancing and laughter. The prologue ends with a rap and Everyman vomiting into a bucket provided by God/Good Deeds*") What I find so impressive about it is that the director was able to take this short description and turn it into this elaborate, vivid, and loud prologue that is roughly 10 minutes long. While this was one of the moment that stood out to me initially, I had three key ones after watching the production in full that I wanted to highlight:

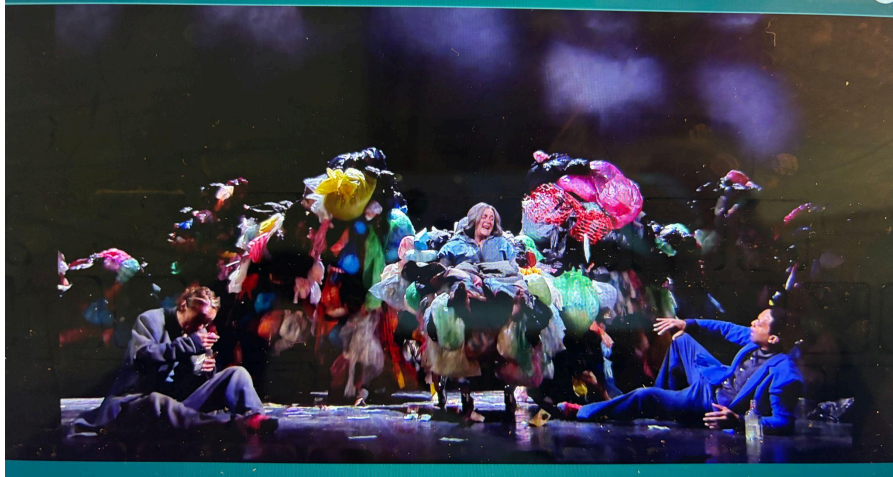
### The Fall...



The fall is a very critical moment in the play. I didn't pick up on it until a few days after watching the play that this moment coincides with the moment when Everyman falls off the balcony after he meets Death. "Every man slips and falls off the balcony. The rest of the action takes place in his head during his fall to his death." The "fall to his death" eventually happens at the end and comes out of NOWHERE. It is a shocking moment that stunned me and the audience as you can hear an audible *gasp* from some of the members. What is so unique about this moment is that while Everyman is falling there is a screen that displays a series and collage of images behind him. In it, it depicts (what I can imagine to be) what Everyman is seeing on his fall down – not only literally but also figuratively in his mind. These images consist of cityscapes, vivid abstract lights, scenes of Piccadilly Circus, a birthday cake, a storm, bikes,

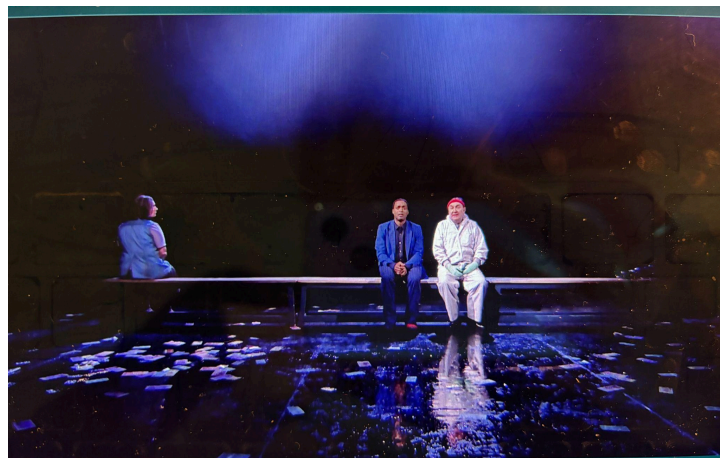
birds, people yelling, a ferris wheel, lighting, and eventually the birthday candles being blown out; all the while Everyman is slowly descending into darkness. What I think is so clever about these selected images is that a lot of them foreshadow what will eventually happen in the play.

### **Good Deeds, Where are You?**



This scene also stood out to me for many reasons. For starters, the way the “trash pile” swirls around Everyman in a dynamic way to form and reveal the scene of Hell and Knowledge creating a blanket the same way as Everyman appears to be doing is very creative. Additionally, just from that opening moment, it goes to show that Everyman and Knowledge are very similar in many ways and maybe he should rely on and become friends with Knowledge as it can help him on his journey to God.

### **Closer to Death Than You Think...**



The main aspect about this scene that stood out to me is how Everyman is sitting closer to Death than he is to God. And seeing that this is the final scene of the play, he is nearing death and so in turn Death sits *nearest* to him. Another thing I noticed is that as the play progresses, God appears

in less and less scenes while Death appears more frequently. Lastly, in the part when all of the Senses and Qualities are sitting on the bench (shown above) and all get swept away into the grave except for Everyman, it is interpreted that he is losing all of his senses one by one – but he himself is not quite gone. While this is a morbid and dark aspect of the play, I believe the director did it in a way that was subtle and rhetorical.

### **Final Thoughts...**

I really enjoyed this production. Overall, I feel like the allegorical approach, specifically with this production, reminds me of the Pixar Movie ‘Inside Out.’ Because all of these moments during the play occur between the time that Everyman is falling off the building and actually hitting the ground, I like to think that Everyman is meeting and having a self-discovery with his inner thoughts, feelings, and demons throughout this play. I feel in a lot of ways it gives another way to look at the production as he wishes he could have done more with his life – all within the split seconds before death.

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