

Come From Away review.

To Air on Garrett Stack's Broadway Bound 3-18-17

I don't know about you, but I feel we are living through terrible times. It's us vs. them. Them vs. us. The word *we* is absent. The word *help* is stricken. The phrase *give a damn* is obsolete.

On Broadway an antidote to this poison has *come from away*. People are sucking up this antidote like precious morsels of food in a famine.

I will start at the end and tell you why this is so. At the end of the brand new Broadway musical called *Come From Away*, the last note was sung, the lights went to black, in two seconds the cast assembled in one line on stage and the lights came back to full. In a massive spontaneous roar, the capacity plus crowd leapt to its feet and cheered, wept and hollered. What is all this about?

On the surface *Come From Away* is a new musical that tells the connected story to 9/11/2001 when 38 jumbo trans Atlantic jets heading to the United States were forced to land in Gander International Airport, Newfoundland, Canada. Gander, a town of just 10,000, had 7,000 stranded passengers sitting on the tarmac.

In a spontaneous, unquestioning act of selflessness, the Newfoundlanders took 7,000 tired, hungry, scared people into their towns, their converted schools-turned-shelters, churches and their homes. The 7000 passengers did not even know why they were forced to land in Gander. It would be five days before the US airspace reopened.

The unfolding story of those five days is what *Come From Away* is about.

Below the surface this show is the inspiring story of human beings at their best – the ideal demonstration of *peace on Earth, good will toward men*. The cast of 16 is an ensemble effort with everyone and no one being the "star." This cast plays myriad characters. At first they're Canadian residents getting the news at Tim Horton's that 38 jets are about to touch down, then passengers and crew on the plane. Then local officials like the teacher, the police officer, the mayor, the school bus driver, the air traffic controller, and the veterinarian. And then on to individual characters with their own unique true stories. All this is tied together with music, lyrical narrative and stagecraft that propels the story without letup.

There are laughs of course, sighs and sadness, but throughout the entire 100-minute no-intermission show we wept tears of joy for witnessing human behavior at its best. Let me repeat that, human behavior at its best.

Come from away, wherever you are, and don't miss this true story that explodes on Broadway. Act fast.

(Saw the 3/16/17, 7:00 pm performance at the Schoenfeld Theatre.)

