

NOT THIS DAY!

A production in sound, sight, and movement

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SYNOPSIS and a Message From the Producer

These are crazy times. My generation watches them with dismay, but my children's generation simply accepts them as that's just the way things are. Much as we would like to turn our eyes away from the parade of daily insanities, there are too many to ignore – in an age of information overload, they simply overwhelm us. Wife and child abuse, road rage, families in crisis, runaways, school shootings, kidnappings, eating disorders, teenage suicide, gang warfare, corporate greed, pedophilic priests, homelessness, poverty, hunger, disease, AIDS, old age loneliness, inadequate health care, overpopulation, terrorism, war, suicide bombers, genocide, religious and ethnic bigotry, environmental degradation, hurricanes, earthquakes. . . and that's just the easy list, the one that comes quickly to mind, the one you don't have to think too hard to generate.

My children's ages were in single digits when our family held its own private memorial service in our living room for the victims of the Columbine school shootings. (It was my kids' idea.) We live in Evergreen, Colorado, and just this year, Columbine came to our backyard, just around the bend at Platte Canyon Valley High School. At the time, my daughter Gillian was a junior at Clear Creek High School. Her school's football team hosted Platte Canyon in its first game after that tragedy. Shortly after, we received a letter from the Clear Creek High principal, saying that the school would begin lockdown and evacuation drills, just in case. Then this Spring we had Virginia Tech, and more lockdowns.

It used to be that we marked time with either "B.C." or "A.D." Now, I think a lot of us mark time by pre- and post- 9-11. We are a resilient, determined country. We have carried on since 9-11, but we have not gotten over it. We have not recovered from the reality that we have a worldwide enemy who hates us simply because we exist, and whose souls are dedicated, and whose eternal reward is determined (so they fervently believe), by their commitment to destroy us. I doubt we ever will get over 9-11, not in this lifetime at least, and I'm not sure we ever should. Painful as 9-11 and its legacy have

been, there are too many lessons there for us to leave behind too quickly. I'm not saying we should wallow, but I am saying we do well to remain aware.

Crazy times, indeed. Our show *Not This Day!* asks us, "What about the world today? What about the place that we call home?" Well yes, what about it? How do we return to sanity and restore innocence, resolve, and courage in a world literally full of terror? How do we cope? And much more importantly, how do Gillian and her generation cope? They are the future – for all us and after my generation is gone - and if they do not overcome Columbine, Platte Canyon, Virginia Tech, 9-11, and all the rest, then the human race faces a long, lonesome, and worrisome road ahead.

A couple years after 9-11, Cirque du Soleil came out with a new touring show called *Varekai*. It is staging of the *Icarus* myth: the manmade wings and failed flight too close to the sun; the familiar parable of the human race outstripping its own aspirations and crashing down in its pride. Yes, we know all about that – we have a new awareness of our limitations post 9-11. But *Varekai* went beyond the myth. It ended in triumph: pride was forgiven, love and courage restored the fallen, and the joy of aspiration and the magic of the dream were restored.

Dominic Champagne, writer and director of *Varekai*, began his program notes with these words:

<i>Puisque les temps son fous</i>	Since these are crazy times
<i>Et que nous avons le devoir</i>	And it is our duty
<i>De ne pas abandonner le monde</i>	To not surrender the world
<i>Aux main des nullités</i>	Into the hands of fools
<i>Je fais le vœu que ce spectacle soit pour vous</i>	May this show be for you
<i>Comme il a été pour moi</i>	As it has been for me
<i>Une célébration</i>	A celebration
<i>De la rencontre des fraternités</i>	Of the coming together of brothers and sisters
<i>Et de la joie des dépassements</i>	And of the joy of challenging limits
<i>Pour dire au monde</i>	In order to tell the world
<i>Que quelque chose d'autre est</i>	That something else is possible

possible

I have those words framed and hanging on the wall of my office, right by the light switch, where the daily act of lighting my workspace makes me stop to consider them. They inspire me, keep me centered, give me hope. They remind me that something else is possible, that we have a duty not to give in, not to abandon hope, because if we do the world will truly be lost *aux mains des nullités* – into the hands of fools. Instead, the show must go on. Yes, I think as I turn on the lights and read those words again, the show must go on, and today I will do my best to play my part. For the sake of the lives and loves and all I hold dear, I will carry on with the show.

Broadway shows have long expressed that sentiment, of course, in the tunes we all love to sing after the applause has stopped and the house lights are back up. Recently, with Gillian's help, I found the same sentiment in the lyrics of a song called *The Show Must Go On* by the 80's band Queen:

Empty spaces - what are we living for?
Abandoned places - I guess we know the score
On and on
Does anybody know what we are living for?

Another hero, another mindless crime
Behind the curtain in the pantomime
Hold the line
Does anybody want to take it anymore?

The show must go on
The show must go on
Inside my heart is breaking
My make-up may be flaking
But my smile still stays on

I'll face it with a grin
I'm never giving in
On with the show!

It was in response to thoughts such as these that Gillian and I created *Not This Day!* We began with something our hearts needed to express – to ourselves at the very least, and then to anyone who would listen.

The show doesn't mince words. Through hard-hitting lyrics, passionate music, dance, and a cinematic backdrop, we encounter the sheer bulk of oppressive evil that should keep us from getting out of bed in the morning if we would pay it only half a

mind. But we don't stay in bed, don't cower, aren't paralyzed with fear by the insanity running loose in the asylum outside our walls. Instead, every day we, like the dancers in our show, find the simple courage to carry on, to take a stand in the face of overwhelming odds. By doing so, we willingly join with the band of brothers and sisters who have found the will to carry on.

The title *Not This Day!* was inspired by a scene toward the end of the third movie of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Return of the King*. At that point in the story, the good guys stand before the black gates of Mordor, a forlorn and hopeless island of good in a sea of unrelenting and inevitable evil. Lord Aragorn rides in front of his quailing army and delivers this speech:

I see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart of me. A day may come when the courage of men fails, when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship. But it is not this day! An hour of war and shattered shields, when the age of men comes crashing down. But it is not this day! This day we fight! By all that you hold dear on this good earth, I bid you, stand, Men of the West!

At the end of the show, surrounded by impossible evil, our dancers rise to their feet and then the closing anthem of hope and courage rocks the stage – just as, every time I reach that point of the drama, it also rocks my heart.

I bid you stand with them, and with us. For all that we hold dear, for all that makes us love and live and hope and carry on with the show everyday of our lives, we offer ourselves and our vision. Will you stand with us? If your answer is yes, then Gillian and I say *Welcome!* Yes, welcome, welcome indeed.

- Kevin Rhodes, in the year 2007, post 9-11.