

From: Terje Rod-Larsen <[REDACTED]>
To: Jeffrey Epstein <Jeevacation@gmail.com>
Subject: Fwd: NYT: Review: A Byzantine Path to Middle East Peace in Oslo¹
Date: Tue, 12 Jul 2016 16:57:13 +0000

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Camilla Reksten-Monsen <[REDACTED]>
Date: July 12, 2016 at 16:10:37 GMT+3
To: Terje Rod-Larsen <[REDACTED]>, Mona Juul <[REDACTED]>
Subject: NYT: Review: A Byzantine Path to Middle East Peace in Oslo¹

Review: A Byzantine Path to Middle East Peace in 'Oslo'

[REDACTED]
[in-oslo.html](#)

By [BEN BRANTLEY](#) JULY 11, 2016

The Aaron Burr of the musical “Hamilton” — who stewes over being shut out of pivotal closed-door conferences — isn’t the only person who wants to be in the [room where it happens](#). It’s hard not to envy the witnesses to history in the making and to imagine attending conferences, Zelig-like, in Versailles, Vienna or Potsdam.

J. T. Rogers shares that instinct. Unlike most of you, he has acted on it. Having combined investigative zeal and theatrical imagination with insider access, Mr. Rogers now invites you into the chambers where the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization were forged during nine fraught months in 1993.

Even if you never thought about traveling to Norway, you’ll probably want to visit the inevitably titled “Oslo,” the absorbing drama by Mr. Rogers that opened on Monday night at the Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater at [Lincoln Center](#). At a very full three hours, with many international stops, this play is long and dense enough to make you wonder if you should have packed an overnight bag.

Yet what Mr. Rogers and the director, Bartlett Sher, have created is a streamlined time machine, comfortably appointed enough to forestall jet lag. Centering on one Norwegian couple who improbably initiated the diplomatic back channel that led to the epochal meeting of the Israeli Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#) and the P.L.O leader [Yasir Arafat](#) at the White House, “Oslo” affectingly elicits the all-too-human factor in the weary machinations of state policy.

That couple is Mona Juul, then an official in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, and her husband, Terje Rod-Larsen, who was director of the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Sciences. They are friends, as it happens, of Mr. Sher, who in turn introduced them to [Mr. Rogers](#), who interviewed them extensively before writing this play.

You might expect “Oslo” to have a self-servingly limited perspective. But as he demonstrated in his earlier plays about international politics, including [“The Overwhelming”](#) and [“Blood and Gifts,”](#) Mr. Rogers doesn’t traffic in superheroes.

His well-intentioned interventionists in foreign lands often turn out to be ambivalent fumlbers in the manner of Graham Greene’s protagonists. “Oslo” doesn’t have the layers of complexity (and the respect for what we can’t know) of Michael Frayn’s great, similarly speculative you-are-there dramas [“Copenhagen”](#) and “Democracy.” But it’s a vivid, thoughtful and astonishingly lucid account of a byzantine chapter in international politics.

Mona and Terje are (spoiler) more successful in their endeavors than Mr. Rogers’s previous versions of such characters, at least in terms of immediate goals. But as embodied by (hooray!) Jennifer Ehle and Jefferson Mays, they are complicated beings in a less-than-perfect marriage with a sometimes faltering grasp of the international time bomb they have set ticking.

Well, perhaps not Mona, who always keeps her head and manages repeatedly to pluck victory from the jaws of disaster. But Mona has the advantages, as well as the disadvantages, of often being the only woman in the room; and she has the unqualified advantage of being played by the irresistible Ms. Ehle (the definitive BBC version of [“Pride and Prejudice,”](#) the 2000 Broadway revival of “The Real Thing”), who manages to be practically perfect without turning into Mary Poppins.

It is Mona who serves as our wryly neutral narrator, sliding briefly and fluidly out of the action to place us on timelines and annotate references. She and Terje have been ingeniously conceived as perpetual, generally gracious hosts to the play itself and to the social encounters within, pouring drinks, moving furniture and overseeing the seating arrangements on Michael Yeargan’s elegant, minimalist set.

Of course, the gatherings they preside over have astronomically higher stakes than those of an average cocktail party. When the play begins, a dinner at Mona and Terje’s home is interrupted by a phone call — two, actually, and simultaneous. It’s Israel on one line and the P.L.O. on the other. The couple’s guests, the Norwegian foreign minister Johan Jorgen Holst (T. Ryder Smith) and his wife, Marianne Heiberg (Henny Russell), are not pleased when Terje explains his goal of secretly bringing irreconcilable adversaries to the bargaining table.

“The world is cracking open,” says the blazing-eyed Terje, who has a habit of sounding like Tony Kushner in “Angels in America” when he is excited. (Mr. Mays, a Tony winner for [“I Am My Own Wife,”](#) expertly elicits the brazen but uneasy showboat in Terje.) Holst is skeptical and alarmed. That’s a response that Terje and Mona will continue to encounter in many forms. And the play’s rhythms are dictated by the couple’s repeated overcoming of resistance.

I leave it to historians to confirm or dispute the accuracy of Mr. Rogers’s portrayals. But he has done a fine job of mapping the lively, confusing intersection where private personalities cross with public roles. The supporting ensemble members, some of whom are double-cast, create credibly idiosyncratic portraits, right down to the two-man security detail (Christopher McHale and Jeb Kreager) that arrives in the show’s second half.

Only occasionally does the script resort to the telegraphic shorthand of cute, defining quirks. The relationships that emerge from within and between the opposing camps are steeped in a poignant multifacetedness, as sworn enemies find themselves tentatively speaking the language of friendship. This is most eloquently embodied by Uri Savir, an Israeli cabinet member portrayed juicily by Michael Aronov as an exuberant rock-star dignitary, and Ahmed Qurie , the P.L.O. finance minister played with a careful balance of wariness and warmth by Anthony Azizi.

The cast also memorably includes Daniel Oreskes and Daniel Jenkins as a pair of Rosencrantz-and-Guildenstern-ish academics from Haifa; Adam Dannheisser as an Israeli foreign minister with digestive problems; Joseph Siravo as a hard-line Jewish lawyer; and Dariush Kashani as a hard-line Marxist [Palestinian](#). Mr. Oreskes also shows up as Shimon Peres. But the most famous power players in this drama, Rabin and Arafat, never appear, at least not in the flesh.

However, at various points, different characters do imitations of the more famous politicians who remain in the wings. The ways in which these impersonations evolve, and the responses they provoke, create some of the play’s tensest and funniest moments.

It’s no secret that politicians have to be actors, which the characters in “Oslo” well know. Their understanding and re-creation of the signature styles of allies and enemies make for unexpected moments of personal catharsis and illumination. They also happen to be the stuff of crackling theater.