

The American Drama Group Europe presents TNT theatre in:

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING

The company revives one of our most successful productions, one which has been seen across Europe and has become only more relevant in our divided world.

It is five troubled years since the words “I have a dream” shook Washington and the world. Martin Luther King stands on the balcony of a Memphis motel, exhausted and troubled. His liberal allies in government have deserted him for his opposition to Vietnam, his leadership of the Civil Rights movement is challenged by the radical followers of Malcolm X who accuse him of selling out to the white establishment, his own staff fear he has lost direction as he broadens his targets to include poverty itself, and above all his creed of non-violence is mocked and outflanked by extremists and those who simply see it as a form of surrender. Meanwhile the scheming Edgar Hoover of the FBI holds a dossier on his private life that might be released to the press and President any day now with heaven knows what effect on his reputation. And what is he doing in Memphis supporting a small time strike when he is needed in Washington to coordinate his nationwide campaign against poverty? Seconds after he reaches the balcony to take fresh air a shot rings out. Martin Luther King falls and dies in the arms of his friends. The greatest political visionary of the twentieth century lies dead.

How this came about, following the spiritual and political journey of this once humble preacher to the status of icon and, tragically, martyr. And this is the stuff of tragedy because Martin Luther King was man torn by inner demons and wracked with guilt; a man who lived by the creed of non-violence and saw his supporters savagely beaten, wrongfully imprisoned, humiliated and all too often murdered. The production chooses a few essential moments that illuminate the whole story: Rosa Parks’ stand against segregated bus seats, the Selma voter registration marches and the final struggle for a wider vision that confronted the entire economic and military industrial power of the USA. Martin Luther King had a dream and some of that dream of racial equality has been realized, but his wider dream of peace and an end to poverty in the world’s wealthiest nation has not been achieved. The contradictions in America and it’s great myth as a land of opportunity are brought into startling and dramatic focus by this play: a documentary, a thriller and ultimately a modern tragedy with implications well beyond the USA.

The play is written by Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith whose previous productions include FREE MANDELA, 1984 and CROOKED LETTER CROOKED LETTER. The score of live and recorded music is by John Kenny. Adrian Decosta returns to the title role. TNT with the American Drama Group Europe give more performances in more countries than any other touring theatre.

“TNT - Highly effective and charismatic theatre.” Village Voice, New York

“In total, the piece is powerful and instructive, a vivid theatrical reminder of Dr King’s dream and legacy”.
Luxembourg Worte.