



## Event

# Exploring memories of Rasputin, the Queen, and police interviews

In an age of social media networks like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, it sometimes feels like the photograph is king. Holidays, meals, and key moments in people's lives are snapped, uploaded, and liked, while the cult of the "selfie" appears to be becoming pervasive. Photographs can sometimes seem to be the ultimate record of a life, whether they're posted on a website or kept in a traditional album on a shelf. Yet, as one of the characters in *Everything Not Saved*, a show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the UK, points out: "Photos aren't actually memories." While a photograph can only capture a single perspective of a single moment in time, a memory can change over the years.

Those reflections on perspective and memory formed the heart of *Everything Not Saved*, which was commissioned for the 2017 Dublin Fringe and staged at this year's Edinburgh Fringe by theatre company Malaprop at Summerhall, the former Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the University of Edinburgh, UK. The show is constructed around three scenes, interspersed with jokes and reflections on memory projected onto a screen and read in a child's voice. In the opening sequence, an actress is sitting at a table in a garden, recreating the moment when Princess Elizabeth delivered a speech in Cape Town, South Africa in 1947 on her 21st birthday, during which she dedicated her life to serving the Commonwealth. The actress' ex-lover is filming her from behind for images that will be inserted into newsreel footage from the time, creating a more personal shot over the Princess' shoulder. The pair remember previous visits to their friend who owns the garden and joins them. The three of them try to recall the name of his lover who met them for dinner—was it Dave or Jake or another short name?—while, in an aside to the audience, the actress remembers watching news reports about the death of Princess Diana while sitting on her father's knee. "Photos remind us to remember, but they're not our memories", she says. "So why do we love them so much? Why do we have that urge to make records? Why do we kill people in tunnels with that urge? That urge to make records of her literally killed her. Now all we remember of her is that she died that one time, even though she did lots of other things too."

How people use memories was at the centre of the second scene, in which an instructor is training a police officer to interrogate a babysitter suspected of hurting a child. Once the officer leaves the room, the instructor tries unsuccessfully to flirt with the actor playing the suspect. She asks how he became an actor and why he takes part in the training, and he explains it feels "worth doing". Slowly he reveals he was abused when he was a child, and he uses those memories in playing the babysitter and the child in the training scenarios with the police. He tells the audience

in a soliloquy: "I spend 6 hours a week with dysfunction. It's not my dysfunction, I wouldn't do it if it was. It's not what happened, but it feels like what happened felt. I don't feel like I'm wallowing—I feel like I'm acknowledging, I feel like if I have no choice to remember then it feels good to have a time and a place where I'm not just allowed to but supposed to, in the hope that others won't have to. It's a controlled fall. Or a bungee-jump, if you like."

The final scene shifts from considering memory to perception. Three characters are dressed as Rasputin and are auditioning to play the Russian mystic in a music video. In the dressing room after their audition, two of them question why they were being asked to act out being poisoned, drowned, and shot, with the third explaining that Rasputin had become an "echo" instead of a memory, with the stories that have grown up around his death being better remembered than the historical facts about him. In true Fringe tradition, the show then takes a turn for the surreal, when a masked figure comes onto the stage and pretends to shoot each of the auditioning actors. Six more actors dressed as Rasputin then march onto the stage and are also shot. The final words projected onto the screen tell the audience this is the part of the play they won't understand. Although the three scenes are linked by the theme of memory, they still feel somewhat disparate, and may have hung better together with a clearer epilogue to tie the thoughts together. Yet that doesn't detract from an accomplished piece of theatre, which sizzles with snappy dialogue and is performed with confidence and energy by Breffni Holahan, Maeve O'Mahony, and John Duran.

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