

HOW PEOPLE UNDERSTAND DISGRACED

By Ayad Akhtar

The article discusses the arrival of Ayad Akhtar's play "Disgraced" in Sydney, highlighting its significant impact and international recognition. Akhtar aims to connect deeply with the audience and make them more aware of the current era, particularly the political and religious conflicts between the West and Islam. The play, which premiered in Chicago in 2012 and won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2013, has been performed in New York, London, and now Sydney. "Disgraced" revolves around Amir, a successful New York lawyer who has distanced himself from his Muslim heritage, and his wife Emily, an aspiring artist. Their seemingly secure life begins to unravel with the arrival of Amir's nephew Abe and Emily's interest in Islamic art. The play reaches its peak during a dinner party that devolves into a heated argument about religion and politics, exposing the deep-seated differences between the characters.

The article describes "Disgraced" as a melodrama filled with intense moments and revelations. The performances of Sachin Joab as Amir and Paula Arundell as Jory are particularly praised for capturing the essence of Akhtar's dialogue, which balances on the edge of comedy before delving into fear and loathing. The characters' conflicts are portrayed as irreconcilable, raising questions about the pervasive violence and hatred in society.

Drawing on the ideas of French philosopher Alain Badiou, the article contrasts "big-T Theatre," which addresses communal issues, with "polite theatre" that offers a superficial satisfaction. While "Disgraced" may not achieve the pure form of big-T Theatre, it represents a significant ripple beneath the surface of conventional theatre, challenging audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about contemporary life.