

00;00;06;06 - 00;00;45;22

Speaker 1

My name is Wesley Savick. I'm a professor of theater at Suffolk University, and I wrote the book and the lyrics, and I'm directing the show. I chose, I think they were just working names that stuck, the two main characters in the play, Betty and Bill. And, Betty and Bill were high school seniors in 1981, and I wanted them to, grow up in, Athens, Ohio, because I wanted to bring in Athens, Greece as, as another part of the show.

00;00;45;23 - 00;01;14;12

Speaker 1

So Bill moved away at some point and is, Democrat lives in Massachusetts now. Betty stayed in Ohio, and she is a MAGA Republican. And then in this show, they get back together, in the last scene of the play, and it's in that scene that we see, all kinds of, it's it's a very personal scene between these two characters.

00;01;14;12 - 00;01;44;09

Speaker 1

But I also hope that we see, a possibility and maybe a warning, for all of us, who's, families and friendships and whatnot all have been disrupted by our political divide. And, the show we're talking about, at one time was called One State, Two State, Red State, Blue State. When we did it in April of 2018.

00;01;44;11 - 00;02;21;06

Speaker 1

And I've changed the title, because it's, a different show now. I felt like the two great, theatrical elements which are present right now are Greek tragedy and the American musical. Greek tragedy, because those plays are all about, human beings rigidly in conflict with themselves to the point of shattering, you know, and, the American musical, because that's a form in which if you feel something strongly enough, you have to burst into song to express it.

00;02;21;06 - 00;03;02;05

Speaker 1

And, I thought, oh, the moment we're in is certainly emotional enough to, sustain the musical. And it's definitely conflicted enough to, veer towards Greek tragedy. I feel very strongly, about, 2024 as a, pivotal year in the history of this, Democratic experiment we have called America. When we did the Musical the first time we were in the heat of it, I started writing the show three weeks after the inauguration in 2017, and I was so compelled for a number of reasons,

00;03;02;05 - 00;03;32;12

Speaker 1

but one of them was the results of the 2016 election was violently upsetting to the majority of our students who didn't know what to do with their energies. Whatever forms of resistance were possible they were inventing, just because the impulse to resistance was so great. My own history, in theater has always been to try to find ways for the theater to speak in a spirit of resistance to the current moment.

00;03;32;13 - 00;03;56;24

Speaker 1

Theater has a place in the conversation about these things, and especially at a university and this show was a response to the current time. The big difference now is that it's a historical play. Now, six years later, the events of the 2016 election, make it a, not a period piece necessarily, maybe slightly, but definitely a historical piece.

00;03;56;27 - 00;04;22;25

Speaker 1

Meaning, that the audience has a lot more information about what's going to happen next than they did when we did it in 2018. I feel like this play is meant to appeal to us as citizens of this country. One of my inspirations for the creation of this show was a book by the sociologist, Arlie Hochschild called ,ÄúStrangers in Their Own Land.,Äù

00;04;22;27 - 00;05;10;02

Speaker 1

And one of the things that she really emphasizes in the book is, this notion of an empathy wall that we create between each other, where we don't have empathy for the other side. We tend to demonize the other side and, almost create a system of, good and evil versus, differences of perspective. I think it would be useful for people to see the play to transcend some of this and try to see a greater good or a greater possibility, of understanding, that maybe is still possible to humanize those you disagree with.

00;05;10;04 - 00;05;29;22

Speaker 1

And I think the play serves as a kind of a reminder of, before you and before you, take sides that are irreconcilable, maybe this show could soften your heart a little bit, but also sharpen your mind.