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# Chiori Miyagawa: I Came to Look for You Tuesday

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One of the gifts that Chiori Miyagawa has as a playwright—an attribute that makes her plays so affecting and valuable—is her ability to convey empathy in the most simple and human terms. In *I Have Been to Hiroshima Mon Amour*, she examined the aftermath of the dropping of the first atomic bomb, letting audiences experience, vicariously but viscerally, what it might have been like to be a victim or a survivor of that horrific event (while ultimately communicating the futility of trying to do so). In *Broken Morning*, she investigated the daily lives of prisoners on Death Row, at work in a sewing factory while awaiting their executions. In *Dream Acts* (which she created in collaboration with playwrights Jessica Litwak, Mia Chung, Saviana Stanesco, and Andrea Thome, she provided audiences with a glimpse of the hopes, dreams, travails, and injustices of a group of fictionalized children of illegal immigrants. We leave each of these plays enlarged because for a time we share the inner lives of characters in circumstances dramatically outside our comfort zone (in most cases, at least): her works immerse us and implicate us, never letting us simply watch stories unfold passively.

Her newest play, created in collaboration with director Alice Reagan, is *I Came to Look for You Tuesday*; it's at La MaMa, in a physically lovely and very stark production designed by Jiyoun Chang, Solomon Weisbard, Elizabeth Rhodes and Anne Kenney. The production note included in the program says the play—which is part of the larger “Tuesday Project”—is concerned with reunions, particularly following catastrophes (examples, of which we have seen too many of late, include Hurricane Sandy, the Tsunami that devastated Japan in 2011, seemingly endless wars, tornados, and so on; all of these are depicted in the play).

For me, the greatest power of the piece comes from Chiori's uncanny skill in allowing us in the audience, who hopefully have not had to confront the devastation presented here, to feel its pull. There are several enormously affecting scenes in this play: one in which a father and son, squabbling about the latter's future following his high school graduation, suddenly find themselves in the middle of a tornado that the son says must be a mile

wide; and another (several short scenes, actually), in which two men find solace in one another at an evacuation center during the week following an earthquake and tsunami that destroyed virtually all of the town they live in. In one of these scenes—just to give you a brief sampling of the kind of gut-punch Chiori’s words can deliver—one of these men, Bailey, chats briefly with a woman digging through some rubble:

WOMAN: My husband turned up on the deceased list. I was sure he’d outlive me. He was worried about his fishing boat. We were already up the hill when he thought to go check on his boat. Stupid.

BAILEY: I’m sorry. I meant to inquire...

WOMAN: Doesn’t matter. He’s dead already.

Chiori is Japanese American, and her plays span Eastern and Western cultures in a very specific way; the color-blind, ethnically diverse casting of this play reflects her sensibility beautifully and her longtime mission (I believe) to find commonality among people in the world—what makes us alike rather than what makes us different. There is much to discover in *I Came to Look for You Tuesday*; I hope by sharing some of what I have found in it will pique your interest in this newest work by a remarkable playwright as well as her entire oeuvre, which is unique and considerable