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THEATRE By TOM FOOT
Bloody brilliant

BLOODY SUNDAY– SCENE FROM THE SAVILLE INQUIRY
TRICYCLE

THE Tricycle Theatre continues its impressive series of tribunal plays – spanning Guantanamo, Stephen Lawrence, and the Iraq War – by staging an edited version of the Bloody Sunday inquiry.

As memory proves to be a serious defect for the soldiers and commanders on trial, here are some undisputed facts.

On 30 January 1972, British soldiers shot dead 13 unarmed civilians (and wounded another 14) taking part in a civil-rights march in Derry.

The original inquiry, chaired by Lord Chief Justice Widgery, exonerated the soldiers claiming they were fired on first and killed only those carrying nail bombs. The Saville Inquiry, launched in 1998 following Tony Blair's concession that those killed were unarmed, is the longest and most expensive investigation in British legal history – in excess of £150 million.

Despite a high profile cast, and some caricature figures who would be quite at home in a Bird and Fortune sketch, it is Richard Norton Taylor's editorship – successfully condensing six years into two hours – that steals the show.

The play recreates the technological excess of the tribunal room and the painstaking trawl through eyewitness accounts from the protesters and the army.

While most of the army officers and soldiers are struck dumb by a timely bout of amnesia, the harrowing scenes that took place are etched permanently in the minds of the protesters.

This is theatre at its political best. Television cameras were banned from the Saville Inquiry, but no copyright was placed on the scripts. By bringing the key players to life, and the events crashing back into the public domain, this type of production exploits the theatres potential as a functioning watchdog.

But for all the focus on the day in question, it is the inquiry into what followed that may prove more significant.

At the end of the evening the press were treated to a debate chaired by Jon Snow between Mike Mansfield QC and Derry born revolutionary Eamonn McCann.

It was McCann's words that summed up the potential significance of the inquiry.

"What brought down Nixon was not Watergate but the cover up that followed. The same will be with this – you heard it here first."



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Until 7 May.