

Performance

Hitting Home

Necessary Targets

lands in Broward

BY JASON COTTRELL

Can well-meaning, unscathed Americans reasonably expect to heal another country in the wake of war? That question is being explored again as the Women's Theatre Project revisits *Necessary Targets*, which made its South Florida debut last August in Miami.

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"Toward the end of the [Miami] performances, we were turning away people at the door," says Meredith Lasher, president of the theater group. "And then we started getting phone calls from people who had seen the play saying they wanted to bring their friends to it."

Six months later, after a struggle to secure a small enough venue, *Targets* is being restaged in Broward County. Eve Ensler's unflinching drama about two American counselors clumsily trying to help female Bosnian war refugees comes hard with rich characters, no easy answers, and an emotional



hot poker. Best-known for writing *The Vagina Monologues*, Ensler is also an activist fighting violence against women worldwide, and her travels to the former Yugoslavia inspired the script.

Despite the play's emotional edge and Ensler's close association, *Targets* never drifts into a crusade. This is not an exploration of man's inhumanity to women. Rather, it's about picking up the pieces after stolen

homes, murder, and rape. Most of the play is set in group therapy, where the narrative's movement is measured in breakthroughs — sometimes subtle turns of phrase, other times hysterics. With its reliance on nuance, the script would fall flat without a good performance and the right stage. Fortunately, the Studio is just the right size. Those sitting in the first row could claim credits as extras. Genie Croft, direct-

ing the same accomplished cast of seven that she did in Miami, has a clear vision of the script. And the actors make each breakthrough feel new. The play isn't perfect. The opening scene suffers some unnatural setup dialogue. And Meryl Streep couldn't save the unnecessary closing scene from its let's-find-some-meaning tone. But it's no matter — by then, the sale has been made.

Performances of *Necessary Targets* run through Sunday, March 20, at the Studio (640 N. Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale). Tickets cost \$20. Call 954-462-2334.

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