

# Answering *The Call*

Profile Theater's season of Tanya Barfield starts with brutal honesty.

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An empty baby crib could mean either expectation or loss. For Annie (Amanda Soden) and Peter (Tom Walton), the couple in Pulitzer Prize-nominee Tanya Barfield's *The Call*, it's both.

When they can't conceive, Annie and Peter decide to adopt a girl from Africa. This is a couple who have their shit together—they're the type of people who keep wicker placemats on their dining table. But they're also humans juggling desperation and logic, and adopting a child from Africa is not without complications. "I'm not trying to be racist, but..." could preface most of the play's dialogue, as the two explain their decision to skeptical friends. But Barfield isn't apologetic.

Finally, canned responses have a place to go to die. *The Call* undercuts every time you've said, "I'm fine," when you wanted to cry or word-vomit a politically incorrect rant.

Driven by character more than plot, the play unfolds in conversation over dinners between Peter and Annie and their friends Drea (Chantal DeGroat) and Rebecca (Anya Pearson), a "lesbian chic" couple quick to point out the obvious—like the possibility the adopted girl may have AIDS. Or that Annie won't know what to do with kinky hair. Or, why won't they adopt a black baby from America?

Performed on a thrust stage where the characters often sit with their backs to the audience, the play is naturalistic bordering on voyeurism. Barfield's fast-paced dialogue slowly reveals cracks beneath the surface of Annie and Peter's optimistic dispositions, making their eventual breakdowns that much more arresting. In contrast, DeGroat and Pearson get to be the comic-relief couple, jumping on chairs and flailing ecstatically. Only a few scenes with Annie and Peter's new African neighbor, who spouts long monologues and caricatured lines, take away from the play's realism.

*The Call* is heart-wrenchingly honest in a hyper-polite society. Barfield is a foil to [mommy bloggers](#), [Kinfolk](#) and the [perfect social image of motherhood](#). It is OK to receive a call, the play winks, but think twice before answering it.

**see it:** *The Call* is at Profile Theatre, 1515 SW Morrison St., 242-0080. 7:30 pm Thursday-Saturday and 2 pm Sunday, through Feb. 21. Extra shows 11 am Wednesday, Feb. 10, and 7:30 pm Wednesday, Feb. 17. \$38, \$20 under 30.

<http://www.wweek.com/2016/02/10/answering-the-call/>