

NAME

MP3 Anna and the Apocalypse.mp3

DATE

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DURATION

24m 53s

2 SPEAKERS

Speaker1

Speaker2

START OF TRANSCRIPT

[00:00:00] Speaker1

The following is a message from Wellspring's congregation.

[00:00:05] Speaker2

Good morning, Wellspring's. It's good to be with you again to start today. I'm going to play a little bit of fill in the blanks with you. You can put your answers in the chat if you want, but this is actually going to go pretty fast, fast. So maybe just kind of follow along in your mind and see if you know what I'm getting at. Oklahoma, where the wind comes. Fill in the blank. And the way that we can. Fill in the blank if you know it, when the wind. Fill in the blank if you don't. If you got what I'm getting at here. Maybe you, like me, was taken to an awful lot of Broadway musical revivals when they were a kid and maybe you like me, however you came to know it really enjoyed speaking the idiom of the great American Broadway musical. Back then, in the 70s and 80s, I can't say I was happy all the time when my parents took me to all of these revivals, there are plenty of times in which I would rather be doing other things. But looking back, I consider myself incredibly fortunate that my parents invested the time and the money to kind of give me this sense of exposure to musicals. I cherish it, which is not to say I cherish all the things about those musicals in many of these revivals. At the time 70s and 80s, especially through the early 80s, revivals were all the rage and kind of looking backward.

[00:01:43] Speaker2

Nostalgia was all the rage on Broadway and a lot of the messages around race and gender. From those old musicals, pretty harmful, and then, however, during my lifetime, it seems like the Broadway musical has really reinvented itself, took a turn towards not just telling the stories of the past, but telling more inclusive stories representing different and more diverse populations. The great American musical has gradually become more, not perfectly so, but more representative of who we all actually are as people, not just any longer an exercise in this. So I gratefully speak the idiom of the Broadway musical, and it is one of the things that drew me to today's movie. Now today's movie, Anna and the Apocalypse, as part of our summer spiritflix series about the stories that we watch on our screens and the meanings that we make and derive from those stories. Anna and the apocalypse checks so many boxes of kind of genres that I love. Christmas movie check, comedy check, zombie check and yes, musical big check. Now you would be justified. I think you would be justified if you have not seen this movie. Comedy, Christmas, Zombie Musical, this thing is a total goof, right, can cannot be serious about this. And I actually went into this movie. I love some B movie schlock fully expecting that's what it would be.

[00:03:45] Speaker2

But almost from the beginning, I can see that although this is a movie, this movie is an Indian kind of made on a shoestring budget, it is not simply be movie schlock. I could tell right away because of its soundtrack that right from the very beginning just grabbed me with its tunefulness and accessibility. And Stickability and I have seen this movie three, four times and I have listened to the soundtrack on Spotify so many more times than that. I just love I adore this soundtrack. It nails being a musical so well, so, so skillfully. And it's even more than just the music that grabbed me. I did not expect. To be moved to the point of actual tears. By a movie called The Apocalypse, a comedy Christmas Zombie Musical. But I have to. I adore this movie deeply. And I think that's because it comes from or aligns with another genre, a genre spoken to by one of those famous songs there is Born to run by Bruce Springsteen, the sense of needing to get out, to find oneself to get out into the wider world because the place or the people that we are from just feels too limiting, if not outright harmful to us. I'd like to believe that the writers, the people who made Anna and the apocalypse knew what they were doing by titling the first song Read you some Lyrics from Break Away, because it harkens back to me for another coming of age movie called Breaking Way that was popular in the late 70s, maybe early 80s when I was a kid set in Bloomington, Indiana, kind of a class conflict between the college students.

[00:05:49] Speaker2

And the kid's name in this movie, The Sons of the people who worked in the quarries. In Bloomington, the so-called cutters. And the story of one of these young men, one of these young cutters. Who needs to find himself beyond the confines of just who he was born to and where he was raised? So the first big musical number and wow, it is tuneful and it's called Breakaway. Again, I'd like to believe they were harkening back to the movie breaking away as kind of an homage. For what they are trying to do in this movie, one of the main characters sings as I wait half dead in the same old bed at the dawn of another day, I feel chained and bound to this hopeless town and I know I must break away. Character who sings that is Anna of the title Anna, who, when we meet her when this movie takes place, she is 17, 18 and her final year of high school. Anna, who we can tell just from the very first few frames, can not wait to get away, that she is born to run, that she yearns to break away, that she will have to experience and express in conflict with her dad, who is a custodian, where at the high school where she is in her final year of school, who she he really wants her to go to uni to call university.

[00:07:23] Speaker2

This is set in the fictional town of Little Haven, Scotland. But she doesn't want to go to uni, not immediately yet. She wants to be able to go out and explore and travel the world. And she is not alone in this desire to break away. Other characters sing as well to her friend, Steph. Out And proud lesbian and someone who believes deeply in paying attention to the injustices of the wider world and who is driven to a kind of despair that her fellow students in the high school and the town of Little Haven, Scotland, just feel so indifferent to the injustices and inequities of our world. And his best friend, John, who in a way, and they take great pains to do this well in a non toxic masculinity way. Has been harboring a love for Anna for many, many years. And just has felt not able to express his feelings for her. But again, there's nothing manipulative about it. And when and eventually when he reveals and she says she loves him, too, but not in that way, you don't get a sense that, John, although disappointed as heartbreak, is disappointing, he's got to respond to that in harmful ways whatsoever.

[00:08:55] Speaker2

So these are some of the characters who inhabit Anna's orbit. And so, as you can tell in the scene that I've said there's already quite a bit of drama happening in this movie and then the zombie apocalypse happens at Christmas time, just to add a little bit extra complication. So it's no great stretch to see that the zombie genre often has readings of what zombies mean. What do they represent? What are the metaphors for like in arguably what is the greatest zombie movie of all time? The late 1970s, Dawn the dead, the zombies. I mean, it takes place in a mall where the survivors are hiding out, where eventually the zombies get into and out of the dead. The zombies receive this kind of metaphor for kind of crass commercialism, mindless consumerism. The zombie genre has exploded since the late 70s and the original Dawn of the Dead. They did a remake, but I don't think that much about the remake. But that's for another message, I guess, at some time, although it is interesting, as long as I've been doing and been preaching as part of spiritflix, this is the first ever zombie movie that I've ever preached on after 14 years of doing this. This how much I love this movie, you can't tell already. Some of the zombie genres feel a little tired. Little played out at this point, but there was a zombie movie a few years ago called The Girl With All the Gifts, which the zombies there.

[00:10:27] Speaker2

A metaphor, an expression actually, of the consequences of the human devastation of our natural environment and what happens when. What happens when nature evolves and decides to fight back? That is well to of course, there's The Walking Dead, which I don't know is in its eighth season, but this point. I know it's not I think it's 10th or 11 to me, and I know you might disagree, send your complaints this way to me. The Zombies of the Walking Dead or metaphor for a show that long ago outlived its usefulness. Just my perspective. Hate on me if you want. Zombies also operate as a kind of metaphor here, different. From those other movies. The zombies here kind of point to a process of what's known psychologically as individuation. Individuation, which is the process by which we truly become ourselves, not merely a reflection of the places or place or people or community in which we are born and raised us individuation, the process of becoming most particularly ourselves. What this movie says, what the zombies are a metaphor here. Is that individuation, any authentic experience, process of individuation is in and of itself a kind of mini apocalypse destructive? And creative. Generative and revealing. This is a story here, how she becomes herself, how she breaks away, and yes, there's comedy in here.

[00:12:20] Speaker2

At one point she hauls a large, oversized decorative candy cane that's been driven into the into the ground with a spike at the bottom and yanks out of the ground and uses it to ward off the zombies. There are comedic moments in this movie and. Where and in the apocalypse really gets its power from. Is that the breaking away is necessary and painful? And that Anna gets her chance to break away, although in a world that is now unrecognizable to her. And in a way that she never would have expected, it would have happened. And the realization of who she is. It's true and real for her as a survivor and as a fighter. There's an interesting thing about falling in love, as I have with a movie like Anna and the Apocalypse as an indie that not a lot of people have seen. I've read a lot about it. And something interesting happened. The actress pretty compelling. The actress who played Anna back in twenty seventeen recently moved here. The view from this side, that's an older, Manhattan skyline, but here, lower Manhattan, the Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn side where where I was born, where I first lived on this earth, Ella once moved to Brooklyn. And in moving. She revealed in an interview not too long ago in anticipation of Pride Month, that she came to realize that the truth of who she is is that she is queer.

[00:14:06] Speaker2

And as she tells her story, you recognize there was some aspect of needing to leave home, of needing to leave for her native U.K., she's English and coming here to a new place. That allowed her to name and claim. This really true and deep aspect of who she is. Many of us know, perhaps even some of us have been or are people who have had to leave home. People or place or religious community or culture. Who have had to leave home in some ways to get to know who we really are. Indeed, I think in many ways that is a story that is common to Unitarian Universalist. And what is also true, and maybe we have been this, maybe we are this, or maybe we know people like this, people who became so focused on the act of just physically getting out and getting away. That perhaps they did not recognize or took some time to recognize that the deeper work of breaking away is not just the physical act of getting away as necessary as that might be. But inadvertently being just so focused on the geographic relocation exclusively. Inadvertently took some pain and shame from where they came from. Out into that breaking away self. And more healing, more growth needed to happen and occur. For these people to authentically become themselves. Calls to mind for me an episode of a couple of years back, *Queer Eye* from the Netflix show *The Fab Five*, they go to Quincy, Illinois, for a specific reason.

[00:16:18] Speaker2

This is where one of the Fab Five. Jonathan Van Ness. Whose gender identity is not binary? And whose expression of gender is expansive and inclusive, playful and loving. Of himself, Jonathan, himself. Jonathan's PR., They say, are they anti Anthee? Deeply encompassing. Deeply welcoming of aspects of the self integrating. Jonathan Van Ness, they. I believe are so able to be a presence of growth for other people because JVM, as they are often called. Has done such work within themselves. To heal and so in this episode of *Queer Eye*. Jonathan Van Ness and the other four members of the Fab Five go back to the place where Jonathan was from. And if you know anything about Jonathan, Jonathan VanNess' story, you know, it was not easy for them. Survivor of childhood sexual abuse and terrible bullying in high school, the exact high school, they're going back to see Jonathan Van Ness. They were the first non female member of the cheerleading squad. And this was not easy for Jonathan. There was harm and hurt. That they took with them when they left Quincy. Jonathan is also very open about his story of addiction and self harming and harmful behaviors and his process and her process of healing. So they go back the entire cast us to Quincy to help out a teacher and teacher who was Javins orchestra and performance teacher, a teacher who for decades, let's put it terribly, has done nothing to kind of update their style.

[00:18:41] Speaker2

And one of the things we learn is that this teacher, this beloved teacher, Katie Dooley, has been so focused on others, on her students that she hasn't had a lot of time for herself. And there's a whole other part of this that isn't really developed because it's not totally the the focus of the story, but that also points towards the inequities that so many deeply committed, devoted teachers have to face of expending vast amounts of time and their own money because their schools are not adequately funded. And like I said, this episode points there, but it doesn't really fully get into the structural inequities. So there's all these fun *Breakfast Club*, the movie kind of references throughout, and GVN, the survivor of this place. Towards the end, after Mrs. Dooley has had her makeup and she is really feeling what it's like to again, as the show says, about forty five minutes, it's package quite neatly and perhaps a little too neatly. But you do get a sense that this makeover has been really meaningful for her to have all this expression of love and care directed back towards her as she is cared for so many over the years. And Jonathan Van Ness and Katie Dooley sit down and talk to each other. And during this passage, I'm going to read to you, both of them had tears streaming down their cheeks.

[00:20:14] Speaker2

And Jonathan says this Quincy has had ever since I left a very particular kind of painful place in my heart. Because as much as I loved being a blue devil as the mascot of Quincy High, because as much as I loved being a blue devil, my experience here was very hard. But one thing you did for me and other kids like me, GVN says you always treated me the same as if I was like everyone else. And as they say, as an LGBT person, I think so badly, we just want to feel normal and not treated differently. And you always did that. JVN again now. I mean, tears really moving, really, really moving, Jamie, and starts to conclude, I just feel like my scars were very much healed this week by being here. You literally saved people's lives as a teacher, JVN says to Katie Dooley, mine included. And I tell you, I love Anna and the *Apocalypse* so much that one of the things I really yearn for is a sequel at some point. Another zombie musical. About Anna afterward. That will continue this story, the sad and moving along with this triumph. That she and a few others who make it out. I know that in addition to the work. Beginning through individuation. These were. Our work, our work, all of us who have had the experience of leaving in order to find ourselves, the work really continues of individuating.

[00:22:20] Speaker2

Through integrating. Like GVN. All parts of who they are. Like so many of us have chosen to do that work. Of welcoming all aspects of ourselves. And choosing the path of healing. And kindness so that we can live fully into. The fullness of Arby. I don't know, and actually I kind of doubt whether I will ever give the gift of an AMA and the apocalypse to. But what I do know is that this work. The ongoing healing and making whole of our lives. This is as real as any work can ever get. For all of us. Amen. And may you live in blessing. I ask if you would please join your heart with mine, a brief prayer. Divine invitation to wholeness. And providing a space of welcome and hospitality and grace within our own hearts. For the past and the process of becoming who we are so that we may be able to welcome all parts of who we are. And through this work of great inner kindness and compassion come to enter that great stream. That stream of healing. Becoming not perfect people. But whole people. The kind of work that allows us to recognize that in becoming for ourselves. We just naturally see the gift to our presence. Invite others to locate that same wholeness within themselves. Amen. And may you live in blessing.

[00:24:41] Speaker1

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END OF TRANSCRIPT



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