



#aiww: The Arrest of Ai Weiwei (NHB Modern Plays)

Howard Brenton

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A timely play based on the true story of an imprisoned Nobel Laureate.

On 3 April 2011, as he was boarding a flight to Taipei, the Chinese Artist Ai Weiwei was arrested at Beijing Airport. Advised merely that his travel "could damage state security", he was escorted to a van by officials after which he disappeared for 81 days. On his release, the government claimed that his imprisonment related to tax evasion.

Howard Brenton's new play is based on Ai Weiwei's account in Barnaby Martin's book *Hanging Man*, in which he told the story of that imprisonment - by turns surreal, hilarious, and terrifying. A portrait of the artist in extreme conditions, it is also an affirmation of the centrality of art and freedom of speech in civilised society. The play premiered at Hampstead Theatre in April 2013, in a production directed by James Macdonald.

'Moving, scary, gripping, inventive and at times laugh-out-loud funny' *Telegraph*

'Excellent... like a mix of Kafka and Bennett' *Guardian*

'Tremendously powerful' *Financial Times*

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