When you throw a stone with care,

into
a large lake,

or
a river that flows,
eventually, into all the oceans of Earth,

it may be difficult to see the ripples
reach the far shores.

It was a local,
small town production.

And, there he was, the *fiddler on the roof*,

an actual fiddler on
an actual roof on a small stage.

I came with my sister's family.

Willing suspension of disbelief, I wanted
the songs to reach me,
the play to be well done,

to bring me fully
into the story.

Indeed,
I am transported to Anatevka and the story of Tevye,

a peasant,
a devout Jew,
a poor milkman, and

his daughters, who,

contrary to tradition,
and
his expectations,

want to choose their own husbands.

I have seen several versions of this musical story.
I know it is about Jewish pogroms,
traditions,
forced change,
wanted (by some) change,
and the persistence of human spirit.

I understand it to be a play about Russia.

In time, the second soon-to-be suitor, Perchik, arrives in Anatevka. He tells Tevye that he is a teacher and that he wants to teach Tevye's daughters in exchange for food and lodging.

Tevye asks where he's from and Perchik replies:
"From Kiev. I was a student there."
My whole body responded.
I could hardly breathe.

Tevye asks where he's from and Perchik replies:
"From Kiev. I was a student there."
The small theater, and
my whole world spun,
revolved,
evolved, tried
to settle.

"From Kiev. I was a student there."
Suddenly,
this wasn't about Russia;
it was about Ukraine.

It was about Ukraine

(and Russia, no
escaping history).

It was about Ukraine.

It was about Kyiv, where
I have been. And the playwright Sholom Aleichem's
imagined village of Anatevka

might have been Borodyanka which
I also visited.

More intense than universal,
the story became personal.

There, on the stage, were the families of my new friends in Kyiv,

their grandparents,
who lived in geographic Russia.

.
The ripples spread and intersected.

There on the stage were my grandparents, living at the same time
as their grandparents.

It was visceral.
I was connected.

Later I learned it wasn't just me. My sister.
My brother-in-law.

My nephews and nieces.

All of them felt the shock
and the impact.

Even though they had not
traveled to Kyiv
with me
in person,

they had been there with me
in spirit.

My experience changed all of us.

When you throw a stone with care,

into water
anywhere on Earth,

eventually,
even if you do not see it,

the ripples reach all

the waters of the world.

—Mary Ann Allison, January 2026

A note on the use of Kiev and Kyiv. The old spelling, Kiev, comes from the times of Russian occupation. Ukrainians, today, use Kyiv.