

## BWW Review: SHELL SHOCK: ADELAIDE FRINGE 2018 at Bakehouse Theatre

by [Barry Lenny](#) Feb. 28, 2018

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Reviewed by Barry Lenny, Tuesday 28th February 2018.

O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, go away";  
But it's " Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play.

[Rudyard Kipling](#), Tommy.

The name, Tommy Atkins, came to represent the archetypal British soldier. When Neil Watkin wrote his book, *Shell Shock: The Diary of Tommy Atkins*, under the nom de plume, Neil Blower, he made his central character an everyman, representing all soldiers who had suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or [Shell Shock](#), as it was once known. The Tommy in this play, adapted from the novel, is based on his own experiences as an Iraq and Afghanistan veteran.

It was adapted for the stage and directed by [Tim Marriott](#) who then, suddenly, found himself stepping into the role, script in hand and after a long hiatus from acting, when the original actor left at short notice. It is Marriott, who is still performing the role, who has brought this wonderful work for the Adelaide Fringe presented here by Guy Masterson - CIT, and Smokescreen Productions, in the intimate confines of the Bakehouse Theatre. This brings the audience close to Tommy as he explains that the doctor suggested that he keep a diary of his thoughts, feelings, and progress, and the story he tells is drawn from that diary.

At first, things have a fair degree of humour when he leaves the army and returns home to his parent's house, and gets back together with his girlfriend. Then he begins to have trouble sleeping, and the nightmares worsen. He gets a job, but loses it, his anger increases, and so it goes on.

Marriott is superb as Tommy, the role coming to life in a genuine performance that leaves us in no doubt, whatsoever, that this project is of immense importance to him; an act of love and a tribute to anybody who has ever been in combat. His sympathetic interpretation of Tommy, in turn, evokes our sympathy, as we come to understand the long lasting after effects of what many members of the military have been through.

Marriott gives a moving and insightful performance leaving the audience with the impression that they have come to understand Tommy, and we are able to relate to his difficulties in readjusting to civilian life through this marvellous characterisation. Be sure to see this production before it closes.

This is one of the four parts of Guy Masterson's *#LestWeForget* series. *Anthem for a Doomed Youth* is still running, and *Mengele* is also currently being performed, with *Between the Crosses* coming soon. Make plans to catch them all.