

THEATRE – The Web – Bakehouse Theatre – 3K

[Theatre](#)

by [MiriamK](#).....Krystoff Raw

Growing up in the country can be hard on so many levels. The social ramifications of living in a town where the potential pool of friends is very limited and everyone knows everyone's business are immense.

Kate Mulvany's *The Web*, centres on the relationship between Fred (Michael Lemmer) and Travis (Andrew Thomas), two sixteen year old boys who live in an isolated rural area and attend the local agricultural school together. While Fred is shy, socially awkward and struggling with his studies, Travis is the charismatic, academically superior, head prefect. This duo strike up an unlikely friendship when Travis offers to help Fred with a project designed to bump up his marks in Social Studies class. Travis, who is a big fan of social experiments, comes up with the idea that Fred will overcome his social isolation by engaging with people online and will keep a record of how well this strategy works. However, the opening scene leaves no doubt that all isn't going to go well.

Lemmer is believably naïve and uncomfortable as Fred, while Thomas is a nice mixture of charming and unsettling. They have an amiable and natural chemistry, creating the required strange yet authentic relationship. As Fred's mother Ivy, trying hard to keep life going following the death of her husband, Amy Victoria Brooks gives a strong portrayal of a woman who is putting her concern for her children paramount and subsequently neglecting herself, possibly as recompense for previous wrong-doings. Completing the cast, Nathan Porteus and Delia Taylor also do well as local policeman Sgt Tukovsky and the bubbly online presence of Susan.

At the most basic level there are several issues with the script. The plotline is rather predictable and fails to offer anything truly thought provoking. While only written four years ago, the online world presented already seemed rather out of date and unrealistic in terms of the interactions of contemporary teenagers in that zone. While this wouldn't be a problem for older audience members who may not know the difference, the characters and their actions felt more akin to how adults see the world of teenagers, rather than what it actually is. The treatment of Fred while in custody, even taking into account the small-town mentality, as well as the general ineptitude of the police in terms of knowing what was going on with missing-persons cases, also failed to ring true.

The direction from Yasmin Gurreeboo is not entirely successful. The action jumps from past to present throughout and the transitions between scenes are staged with slow-motion, rewind and repeated movements. It appears that the idea behind this was to create a film-like feeling, however it doesn't quite hit the mark. In other segments, Travis recounts some famous social experiments while the remaining actors jump around the set with jerky, disjointed movements. Again this staging seems to attempt to create the flickering effect of film without ultimate success, coming off simply seeming uncomfortable.

The set (Manda Webber) is made from an interesting combination of shipping containers and wooden pallets. It meets the requirements for the quick shifts of scene from police station to hospital room, bus stop to various parts of Fred and Ivy's house. It does however seem a little cramped at times, with the action taking place in the settings staged inside the shipping containers being particularly awkward. Additional atmosphere was effectively created via the lighting of Alexander Ramsay and musical composition of Daniel Thorpe.

Despite the issues mentioned, **the performances from the ensemble make this an enjoyable rendering of a somewhat clunky, and seemingly difficult to stage, play.**

Krystoff Rating: 3K

Note: this review relates to a preview performance of this production