

BWW Review: FRANK FORBES AND THE YAHOO BOY at Bakehouse Theatre

by Barry Lenny May. 26, 2018



Reviewed by Ewart Shaw, Thursday 24th May 2018.

Nigeria is well known as the home of fabulously wealthy individuals who need your help to move millions of dollars to safety via your bank account. It's a technique known colloquially as phishing. It's also home to a major film production culture known as Nollywood. These two concepts underlie **Frank Forbes and the Yahoo Boy**, by Matt Hawkins, who directs

this season at the Bakehouse.

Frank Forbes, a retired engineer, long estranged from his son, Angus, is given a computer and a life (on) line by his daughter, Tracey, as an alternative to grading screws and planning a second shed. Meanwhile, in Lagos, Ishaku, estranged from his father, the Imam of Kano, is introduced to phishing by Jamilah, an entrepreneurial woman, and becomes the Yahoo boy of the title. No prizes for guessing why. Inevitably, Frank and Ishaku strike up a conversation, and then a relationship.

When Ishaku tells Frank that, if he can't raise the money to make a movie, he'll become an area boy, a street thug, Frank sends him the money that had been meant for his son. Then he decides to reclaim the cash by flying to Lagos to confront Ishaku. It does not end happily, but there are plenty of laughs along the way, in this economical production. There's a simple set, and plenty of direct address to engage the audience in the tale.

Playwright, Matt Hawkins, underplays the pathos and draws the audience into the story. The themes of delusion and ambition are harmonized with metaphors. Who would have thought that so much depended on the right screws for a crane? There's also a passing reference to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as Tracey, self-exiled in Canada, sits mechanically and methodically stamping library books.

Brendan Cooney, better known as a comedy performer, catches the determination of Frank's character, though he's more than a mite too young, and there's fine work from Kimberley Fox as Tracey. Sheila Ablakwa makes her stage debut as Jamila and has exactly the character for her role, voluptuous and controlling. Stephen Tongun is Ishaku, again, brilliantly cast, with the timing needed to make the best of his lines.

The play is running at the Bakehouse until June 2nd, at 7.30 pm, except Sunday at 6 pm and no Monday performance. Tuesday is cheap Tuesday.

The South Australian Playwrights Theatre has done a good job with this production, now if only that Nigerian billionaire, with all that money to transfer to my bank account, could be persuaded to support the SAPT.