

British Theatre Guide

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Isaac Came Home From The Mountain

Phil Ormrod

Theatre503

9 May–2 June 2018

You wouldn't want to take a trip to the rural area in which Phil Ormrod's play is set. The male characters are all prone to bad tempers, difficulty in communication and a tendency towards bullying and physical violence.

Fathers hit sons, sons hit each other and a number of them carry a gun as if it is an essential element of their identity.

Phil Ormrod is depicting what he refers to as a "toxic masculinity" in rural areas where the usual supports for identity no longer exist.

Out of school and out of work, Bobby (Charles Furness) argues with his father John Wainwright (Guy Porritt) about damage to the home which he blames on an intruding bird. His Dad doesn't believe him and in a fury tells him to get out of the house.

The row results in Bobby walking the area so determined to get a job that he takes work at Mike Scofield's salvage yard.

Scofield (Ian Burfield) tells him, "we deal with stuff people give up on. You'll fit in."

Not that the job resolves things with his Dad, a policeman who regards Scofield as a bit of a villain.

Violence, insecurity and frustrated rage are never far from the surface with any of the characters. Force seems to be the default solution to any issue though, as Scofield explains to Bobby, "real strength isn't just smacking someone. It's making them flinch when they see you."

Even the rare glimpse of a gentler side to a character, such as when Scofield describes to Bobby how he feels about his son Chris (Kenny Fullwood), it is marred by his advice on how to beat others.

And yet whether the force is a physical blow or John Wainwright using his police uniform to bully others, it is shown to fail and occasionally with disastrous results.

A lot is missing from the lives of these troubled men, not least being the peculiar unexplained absence of women who never even get mentioned. Maybe they all left in disgust years before having absolutely no idea why these men behave the way they do.

There is from very early on a bleak predictability about this play's narrow look at violent men failing to get on with each other. It never surprises. You know what is coming, even if you cannot see an obvious reason for this community of violence.

Reviewer: [Keith Mckenna](#)