



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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ALEX BUZO'S NORM AND AHMED

Lighting Strike

Jah'z Lounge

Until 5 Mar 2010

Review by John Wells

Alex Buzo's one act play is a midnight conversation at an inner-city bus stop between the bombastic and unpredictable Australian Norm and the shy, nervous Pakistani student Ahmed. Neither man is quite what they seem. Is Norm a shattered returned soldier, a racist buffoon, an old perv or a desperately lonely man reaching out for any connection to another person? Is Ahmed a meek and polite visitor with an optimism for the future, or is his idealistic streak fanaticism in disguise?

Buzo's play was written in 1968 and although its relevance is muted now, there are many echoes in modern Australia: the treatment of Indian students, the attitudes that created the Cronulla riots and the spectre of Islamic terrorism.

Sadly, Lightning Strike's production is flaccid and unengaging. Neither Maris J. Caune (Norm) or Jerome Matthews (Ahmed) succeed in fleshing their characters out in full, breathing characterisations. There is little complexity or nuance. Caune, particularly, fails to find the extremes in Norm. He is never menacing enough nor is the fractured, lonely man believable. Matthews is better at giving a layered performance and his accent is impeccable. But neither actor is really convincing.

As a result, a potentially interesting revival is dull and unappealing.

Rating: 2 stars (out of 5)