

REVENGE SERVED CHILLED

A GAY MAN ENACTS REVENGE ON HIS OLD TORMENTER IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL THEATRICAL THRILLER.

THERE'S BARELY a gay man alive who hasn't used a hook-up app for a one-night stand. Bears, twinks, daddies... they're all there. So, too, are those so-called "straight" married guys. Behind the anonymous blank profile, is he a popular family guy, with a regular job and footy mates – who also happened to bully the shit out of you in high school? What if he turned up on a sex app and didn't recognise you? Wouldn't that be the perfect opportunity for revenge?

That's the scenario in *Fag Boy And The Married Guy*, an intense one-act play that takes us down a very dark road into not-forgotten old fears and complicated emotions.

Our gay character, Will brings his old foe Alex home on a date and serves up a dish of revenge that's not just cold, it's chilling. Drugged and helplessly bound to a chair, Alex is at the mercy of his captor, reminiscent of William Mastrosimone's *Extremities* and Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth*.

Fag Boy... writer/director Wayne Tunks says the story's inspiration comes from experiences well-known to many in the gay community who were victims of bullying and abuse. "As gay men, we go through a lot when we come out," say Tunks. "While it may be getting easier, things are still hard and kids can be cruel. How much effect does this have on the rest of our lives? People who really went through the wars struggle to ever get over it.

"I also wanted to explore the idea of whether homophobes are hiding an interest in men. Do our biggest haters hate us so much because they are secretly battling their own urges?"

Playing the role of Will is Billie Scott who starred in Tunk's *The Girlie Show* at the Old 505 Theatre. His quarry, Alex is played by popular musical theater star Stephen Mahy (Brad in *Rocky Horror* and Kenickie in *Grease*). This role is not one of his booty-shaking-in-tight-pants performances, but audiences may well enjoy seeing buffed-up Mahy shirtless and bound to a chair. Mahy, however, says he finds the role somewhat confronting.

"When I saw the play's title, I balked," he says, "it's jarring. But when I read it I realised how poignant it is. It's written by a gay man, and it really poses questions about facing one's sexuality."

The characters are so intense that finding the right motivations is a mental challenge for the actors. "Preparing for such a role is hard," says Mahy. "This role requires a lot of energy and focus. I was bullied and I bullied at school without even knowing it. Being a teenager is awful and growing up in that scenario makes me feel awful. This will challenge audience members to feel many things. I think everyone will either love or hate our characters, and be one-sided throughout the play."

Fag Boy And The Married Guy premiered in 2012 at Melbourne's Midsumma Festival. It sold out and gained mostly positive reviews.

"The pressure gets so strong at one point in the script that twice we had women almost faint," says Tunks. "In fact, they had to leave the theatre. As a producer, you worry about them but as a writer you can't help but feel good that your work has such a psychological impact." Yet, as a one-act play, some critics felt it was limited and could have been expanded further into perhaps even darker territory.

Tunks is no stranger to the writing game having spent 20 years in independent theatre and as a writer for TV's *Neighbours*. Influenced by the likes of David Williamson (*Emerald City*) and Jonathan Harvey (*Beautiful Thing*) he's upped the ante on his thriller, giving the Sydney production a new ending – one that many will be eager to see.

MORE: *Fag Boy And The Married Guy* plays from September 20 at the New Theatre, Newtown, Sydney. Go to www.newtheatre.org.au

Hunter or prey? Billie Scott and Stephen Mahy.