



ON A MISSION

Yes, another Mormon show, but this one pulls very few punches.



Steven Fales performs his one-man, autobiographical show.



HAVING already won fans at Mardi Gras, the internationally acclaimed *Confessions Of A Mormon Boy* has made its way to Melbourne. Based on the original direction of Tony Award-winner Jack Hofsiss (*The Elephant Man*) this autobiographical play is written and performed by former-Latter Day Saint, Steven Fales.

Blunt in its account, this warts-and-all story deals with Fales' upbringing as a sixth-generation Utah Mormon, the issues around marriage in the church, reparative (conversion) therapy, his excommunication after coming out and his subsequent plunge into a world of drugs and prostitution. For Fales, writing the play was not only cathartic, but an opportunity to expose how gay people are treated within the church.

"After my church court in Utah, where I was tried as a homosexual and formally excommunicated, I thought, 'Someone should write about this!'" says Fales.

"I found it all so bizarre and fantastical after all my years of church service, including a mission to Portugal, that I really wanted

to expose it, especially as others were going through it, too."

Fales says he also wanted to tell his story for the sake of his son and daughter, who had no idea what was going on in their father's life at the time. "If something happened to me, who would tell them my story? I didn't trust anyone else to do that."

“**We may be victims, but we cannot play the victim. This show is about how I got my life back.**”

Told with humor and through song and, yes, the actual *Book Of Mormon*, the story is poignant, delving into Fales' experiences of spiritual abuse, religious violence and reparative therapy; it examines the ex-gay movement, AIDS, chemsex, child custody, parental

alienation, cult detox and musical theatre!

How has the play been received by the gay community, especially in Utah?

"There was a counter-culture in Utah that ate it up," says Fales. "Gay Mormons have flown in from all over the world to see the show at different locations, but I've learned that this story speaks to gay Jews, Baptists and Muslims, too. It's not just about Mormons. Spiritual abuse and religious violence can impact all of us. My father, a Mormon bishop, saw the show and he does not want me telling this story. It's very bad PR. I did my duty in writing this show, and I'm still on a mission."

Fales says writing the show was difficult but performing it is exhilarating. "I love telling this story over and over again because I find new things every time I do it. It's a continuing discovery. We all have a story and I'm just telling mine. I want to give other gay brothers and sisters hope that they can overcome anything and keep going. No more suicide! We may be victims, but we cannot play the victim. This show is about how I got my life back."

MORE: *Confessions Of A Mormon Boy* plays at Chapel Off Chapel in Melbourne from 6 March. Go to chapeloffchapel.com.au and mormonboyoffbroadway.com