

Theater review: *Orphans* directed by Christo Davids

By [Aa-isha Hassiem](#)

18 Oct 2023

Christo Davids, best known for his role as Errol in the television soapie *7de laan*, brings this iconic play to the local stage, addressing important, relevant issues in a South African context.



Image by Fiona MacPherson

Orphans, a play by Lyle Kessler, revolves around two orphaned brothers, Phillip (Christian Bennett) and Treat (Stefan Erasmus), who form an unlikely bond with their kidnap victim, Harold (Abduragman Adams). Harold, an orphan himself, takes these boys under his wing and offers them guidance and support, something they have been missing.

Through this, the play expertly navigates the topic of masculinity and the importance of positive male influences, a subject which is prevalent in today's discussions. It also tackles grief in its many forms; the loss of parents, the loss of childhood, the loss of what could have been.



Image by Fiona MacPherson

Daids places these concepts under a South African microscope, specifically in coloured households, where the father is often absent, whether that's physically or emotionally, and where grief is something that is swept under the rug. *Orphans* depicts how these issues tend to influence one another.

In the same breath, we are shown the hardship and pressure that comes with one sibling taking care of the other, especially when the caretaker himself has not had a guiding hand. Throw in financial issues and it's hard to grasp how these boys have survived on their own for so long.



Image by Fiona MacPherson

Despite these heavy subjects, the show has a steady flow of laugh-out-loud moments. It's always easier to be amused when you see yourself and your culture reflected back to you. Bennett, Erasmus and Adams do a wonderful job of drawing you in emotionally and then evoking a laugh out of you.

With the modest, yet believable, set design, the actors seem to fill the make-believe room with their performances. They make us feel for these characters, root for them and grieve with them. The Golden Arrow Studio's size adds to the play's intimacy, making you feel like you're in their living room with them. It's almost too soon when the lights come back up, the 90 minutes seem to fly by.



Image by Fiona MacPherson

Overall, *Orphans* is an important analysis of our culture and is still relevant four decades later. With Davids' modernisation, it makes an even bigger impact. It is truly a must-see!

Orphans will be running at the Baxter Golden Arrow Studio from 11-28 October 2023.

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