



**[Mogadishu](#) at [The Royal Exchange Theatre](#)**

**Written by Vivienne Franzmann, directed by Matthew Dunster and designed by Tom Scutt.**

**Reviewed by [Jane Turner](#) January 2011**

Manchester's fantastic Royal Exchange Theatre brings its current season to a close with the world premiere of the Bruntwood prize-winning play MOGADISHU by Vivienne Franzmann. The play is called MOGADISHU says Franzmann "because this is a word that is synonymous with chaos" which is what this play depicts.

This new play, advertised as gripping and urgent was one of the four joint winners of the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting and went on to win this year's prestigious George Devine Award for new writing. It is the first play by author Vivienne Franzmann a former East London secondary school teacher.

Set in an inner city London school, MOGADISHU centres on white, liberal-leaning teacher Amanda. When she is pushed to the ground by black student Jason, she is reluctant to report him as she knows exclusion could condemn him to a future as troubled as his past. She becomes sucked into a vortex of lies in which victim becomes perpetrator and where tensions mount as the truth becomes less clear and more dangerous by the day.

Franzmann took a year off from teaching to write the play and it is based on her own observations as a teacher and the experiences of teachers who have faced false allegations from students.

The young cast of this play were cool and convincing; their school uniforms suitably embellished as is the norm these days, and worn with the style of a teen with attitude and affected individualism. The language they used was of the hard street variety; foul, littered with slang and delivered with energy, wit and vitality. The boys were rude and coarse and obsessed with sex and references to girls' body parts. The tireless and exaggerated mannerisms, gyrating, gesticulating and generally jerky body language made watching them conversing quite exhausting – how do they keep it up? The sudden shifts into adolescent moodiness or anger so familiar to those of us who have to work in schools every day were so realistic I almost felt like I was back in the school-yard instead of having a night off at the theatre! Surrounded by a cage to represent the boundaries of the school whilst at the same time symbolising imprisonment, the stage was perfectly set.



### Overall Assessment?

Well, this play gets an A from me, not quite an A\* because of its slightly implausible and over-dramatic conclusion (I won't give it away), but otherwise, it's an observant and witty script, with great character performances delivered around modern day dilemmas written by an experienced teacher with a great eye for detail!

The cast includes Hammed Animashaun, Ian Bartholomew, Christian Dixon, Julia Ford, Savannah Gordon-Liburd, Tara Hodge, Fraser James, Tendayi Jembere, Michael Karim, Malachi Kirky, Farshid Rokey and Shannon Tarbet.

Sets and costumes have been designed by Tom Scutt, whose other credits include the recent production of HAMLET at Sheffield Crucible and Rupert Goold's RSC production of ROMEO AND JULIET. The creative team is completed by Philip Gladwell (lighting), Ian Dickinson (sound), Wyllie Longmore (voice coach), Kevin McCurdy (fight director) and Kim Pearce (Assistant Director).

**Wednesday 26 January – Saturday 19 February 2011**

**Transfers to the [Lyric, Hammersmith](#) : 7 March - 2 April 2011**