

AFRIDIZIAK

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Very much a 21st century story, the Cumberbatch family are in the midst of a crisis that is one man's attempt to save his son from the refuge he has taken in online suicide sites following the suicide of a family friend after losing his job.

While Anthony skulks around the house he does so with little more than a vexed grunt to give to his parents. However, in the confines of his bedroom in front of his laptop, he morphs into an aggressive, animated, young man brazenly aiming threats to those in cyberspace who dare invade the sites that he has made his virtual stomping grounds. Unable to navigate relationships within the real world, Anthony has worryingly romanticised the act of suicide as a road to freedom, and possibly one that will earn him respect, something he now has for his father's deceased friend.

The portrayal of a young man who feels out of place and alienated within the real world yet is fully engaged, with bravado, online is performed with vigour and menace by Ashley Gerlach. Roderick Burrows's Vernon who has assumed an anonymous online identity in an attempt to save the son that he cannot communicate with in the flesh elicits the audience's empathy as a man also trying to be a good husband to his clinically depressed wife Vicky (Jodyanne Richardson). Norfolk's story telling is strong in its tackling of the timely issue of how technology has changed the dynamic of how we communicate with those nearest and dearest and how the internet has perhaps convinced us that the anonymous interactions we have online supersede these.

It is with the characters of Vernon and Anthony that this issue is best played out with the production's music and set's blue and red provocative lighting complementing Ashley's troubling monologues. This is a dark and sombre piece and the extent of the many issues faced by the family unfold as the play progresses, particularly Vicky's story.

All in all, a good story well told, and it will make you reflect on how you interact online.