

# Remnants of Apartheid Strikingly Portrayed in Latest Fugard Play

For those who joyfully celebrated the end of Apartheid in South Africa 12 years ago - blacks and whites, old and young, rich and

who shared his beliefs, was ready to agree with the naysayers who were asking, "What will Fugard write about now?"

Unfortunately, it seems the news isn't all good. The glaring disparity between the races still exists; so does the strangulated belief system that law and order, and concomitant behavior should mean different things to the poverty-ridden population of the barren, overcrowded new townships where several families share one disease-ridden plot, often less than a mile from the pretty, well-cared for 'white' villages, sheltered by willows and oaks, where sports clubs, swimming pools, gardens and flush toilets abound. Right or wrong, Fugard lets his audience make the distinction between what was and what is, if there's a difference when it's called freedom, or just a semi-final victory over impossible circumstances.

In Fugard's new play, "Victory", in its U.S. premiere here at The Fountain Theatre, two young 'coloreds' break into the home of Lionel Benson (Morlan Higgins in a perfectly brilliant performance), expecting to find money, a lot of it, according to Vicky (an astoundingly good Tinashe Kajese) who, it soon turns out, was virtually brought up in the Benson household, where her mother, now dead, was the beloved housekeeper. Vicky was loved, and spoiled, by both the Bensons, although Mrs.

## Mad About Theatre



by Madeleine Shaner

poor - playwright Athol Fugard, whose work was most closely associated with that social disaster, who reaped opprobrium and banishment from the stalwarts who stood behind the cruel system, and worldwide praise and honor from those

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Benson has also passed away. Vicky is under the influence of Freddie (a frighteningly splendid Lovensky Jean-Baptiste), a criminally-minded lout whose sense of history tells him it's his turn to be on top in this newly free society where he, nevertheless, still seems to be on the bottom of the shaky social pyramid.

The three characters are beautifully drawn to represent the excesses of apartheid, its products, and the extremely shaky hold the former elite has on its position in the 'new' South Africa. Benson is somewhat prepared for what has transpired; at least he has a gun. What he's not

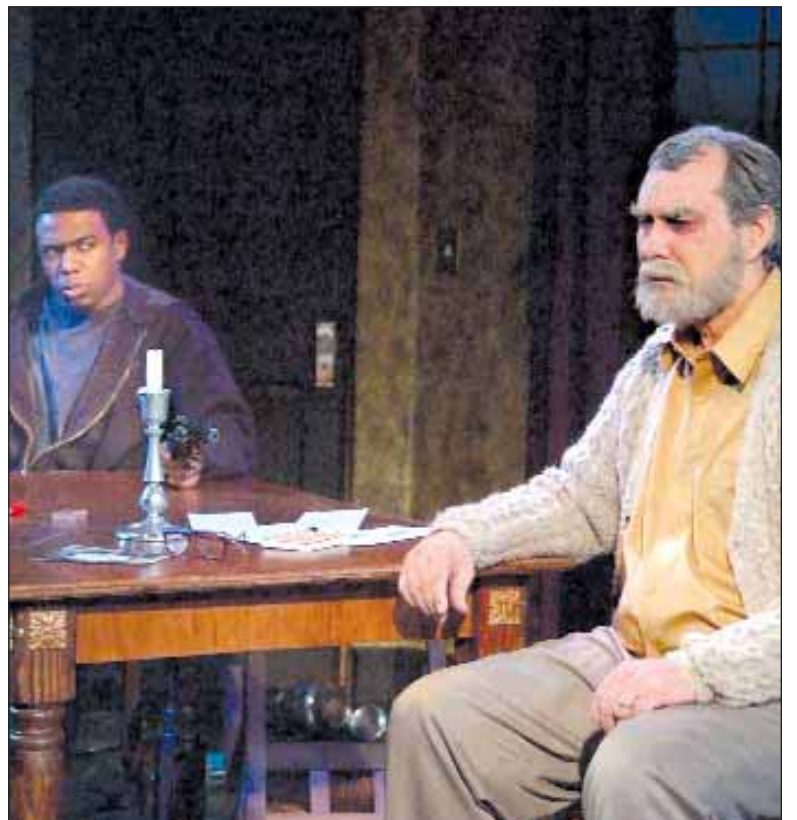


Photo by Ed Krieger

(From left) Lovensky Jean-Baptiste as Freddie and Morlan Higgins as Lionel Benson in "Victory".

prepared for is the betrayal, by Vicky, of everything he has fought for most of his life. His hopes for her, his interest and support of her education, his wife's love for her mother, have all gone by the board in a social shipwreck headed by the Freddie's of the world who have no sense of history, just a pursuit of revenge and a predilection toward violence for its own sake.

The play is, at its core, an introspection into the politics and afterbirth of apartheid, something the world hasn't figured out yet. Superb dialogue and even better performances make this a document to be seen, and re-seen, and discussed, and thought about, and considered, and seen again. Maybe until we all understand it.

Or at least, think about it. Specially superb director, Stephen Sachs, has some kind of exclusive contract with those who know, or who think they know, or hope they know what it's all about. His work with these three fine actors, each so comfortably at home in some sense in Travis Gale Lewis' detailed design of the living room/study of the kindly old Professor Benson, for whom one's heart bleeds, is a splendid work of art.

Victory, presented by the Fountain Theatre, 5060 Fountain Avenue, L.A. 90029., Thurs.-Sat. 8:00pm., Sundays 2:00pm. (323)663-1525 or [www.FountainTheatre.com](http://www.FountainTheatre.com), through March 9.



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Tinashe Kajese as Vicky in "Victory."

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