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Must See

MAN OF THE HOUSE (Talawa Unzipped)

'SOMEONE'S GOT to stand up to them,' says playwright Ade Solanke, 'and maybe sometimes it's only the mothers who can do it.'

Her new play *Man of the House*, which showcases this Thursday (28th February) as part of Talawa Theatre's Unzipped season, deals with the hot topic of teenage trouble - especially boy trouble - and parental responsibility.

'It's about a mother who sees her son is at risk of getting into trouble and finally - after sending out an SOS to all the men in her life - finds the courage to tackle him

herself,' says Solanke.

So, are parents to blame for thug behavior?

'Yes and no,' answers Solanke, who has studied scriptwriting in Los Angeles as a Fulbright Fellow. 'Society has [to take] some responsibility. But whenever I see young kids misbehaving on the bus or in the street I always ask myself, "how do they behave at home?" Whatever we say about absent fathers, these kids mostly do have mothers. Is there more that mothers could do?'

Both the mother of a teenage boy

and a single parent herself, Solanke knows how hard raising a child on your own can be.

'I remember having wars over the washing up, and the usual 'tidy your room' battles. Then when I read about a local shooting last December I did what all dramatists do: I took the situation and reinvented it, based on my own mother-son experiences. I focused in on one of the would-be assassins and imagined the scene of him trying to get out of the house to go on this mission, and his mother refusing to let him out.'

'I thought, at some point, those killers left their homes to either knew or suspected they were up to no good. What if one of the mothers had tackled them?'

'As women we don't want to be men,' she continues, 'but in this time and place, do our sons need us to be?'

■ *Talawa Unzipped at the Young Vic 27 - 29 February 2008*
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