It is often said that if the shoe fits we have to wear it - or is it the bed we have lie in ? At any rate, in Heather Nimmo’s good-natured monodrama, One Small Step, the central character, Regina, a machinist in a footwear factory is ready to give everything the boot. A live-wire sheila with two children - teenager Sinbad and pre-schooler Angel - plus her Italian husband Charlie, Regina has been offered a promotion to shop supervisor and it triggers a domestic chain reaction. Her children are fractious, her husband feels financially undermined and her mother and mother-in-law have other things on their minds.

One Small Step has been developed from Boots, a short play for workplaces developed for the redoubtable Junction Theatre Company. In its present form it has had seasons in Perth for the Western Australian Theatre Company and, in this Bakehouse production (lightly directed by Catherine Fitzgerald with discreetly apt sound and lighting by Lauren Pittwood and Christian Donoghue) the solo performer is Petra Schulenburg, who gives us a zesty Regina, banging her head against the world, sometimes her own worst enemy but, most often, resourceful, resilient and strong spirited. Schulenburg also brings at least a dozen other characters as Nimmo’s text populates the stage with the significant others in her sometimes insignificant life. It is a staunch performance but the shifts of mood (and voice) are a big ask and at times I worried for the safety of the actor’s vocal cords.

Petra Schulenburg also designed the production with freestanding racks of metal shelving stacked with shoe boxes providing props and actual shoes as aids de memoire for Regina - “slip-on and slip-away” casuals for Charlie, Milanese fancy styles for the Dragon mother-in-law, and the nuggetty smell of her father’s shoes, full of Proustian association for her, but something much more sinister for her mother.

One Small Step is set in the early 90s and the references - to Timezone, Dbs and Doc Martens - remind us of that. It also has the gently didactic
signatures of community theatre of that time, with its themes of self-fulfilment and social conflict. But interestingly, these days, the pressures on women to weigh their own needs against those of their children have never been greater - whether the kids are three years old, or grown up like Regina, and asking her mother to serve another term of servitude as an unpaid child care worker for the grandchildren. In many respects, the questions raised in Heather Nimmo’s modestly appealing play have never gone away.

The first in a year long season of predominantly local works written by Sandy McCutcheon, Sean Riley, Stephen House and Duncan Graham, *One Small Step* is an indication that the Bakehouse season is well under way. Next up is ABC presenter Sandy McCutcheon’s *The Vigil*, directed by Geoff Crowhurst, closely followed by *Penetrator* by Anthony Neilson, directed by Eddy Knight and featuring Nic Pelomis, Nathaniel Davison and Duncan Graham. Pick up a Bakehouse brochure and make the most of offerings from some of Adelaide’s best and fairest.