

Banned novel spawns riveting high school censorship drama

The Metal Children



BY MATT WINDMAN
amNewYork theater critic

What a shame that Tobin Falmouth's supposedly controversial adolescent novel "The Metal Children" doesn't really exist. By the end of Adam Rapp's off-Broadway play of the same name, which observes censorship and chaos at a suburban high school where Tobin's novel was banned, you can't hardly wait to read it for yourself and make up your own mind about the book.

Playwright-director Adam Rapp, who is also the author of several

young adult novels, was alarmed in 2005 when a Pennsylvania high school voted to remove his book "The Buffalo Tree" from its curriculum of required reading. That eye-raising experience led him to write "The Metal Children."

Tobin, played by **Billy Crudup**,..... is a New York writer whose novel creates a wave

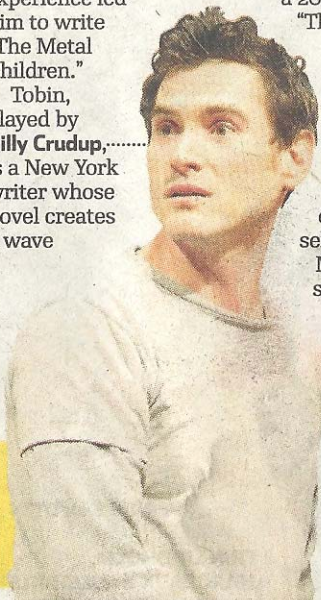
of violence throughout a small town after it is officially banned.

Pros: "The Metal Children" is the strongest play that Rapp has written since "Red Light Winter," a 2006 Pulitzer finalist.

"The Metal Children" is marked by a gripping plot and a complex central character.

Crudup delivers a strong performance as Tobin, stressing the character's deepening depression and self-masochistic attitude. Many of the play's supporting characters, however, come off as broad and superficial.

"The Metal Children" is an involving piece of theater that delves into the passionate extremes that have led to our country's Tea Party protest movement.



If you go

"The Metal Children" plays at the Vineyard Theatre through June 13. 1083 E. 15th St., 212-353-0303, vineyardtheatre.org