



MIRACULOUS: Leslie Lewis Sword's performance is brilliant
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even the Offstage-issue hessian ponchos aren't guaranteed to keep out the drafts. Having said that, fans of pathetic fallacy will find any wind and rain entirely apt.

■ *Until August 27*

TOM MAXWELL

Miracle in Rwanda

Gilded Balloon Teviot, Bristo Square

★★★★★

LESLIE LEWIS SWORD exudes an air of calm as she enters the tiny, stifflingly hot venue. She shuts the door behind her – the same door through which the audience are shown in and out – and is immediately the focus of all the agitated people in the room. The atmosphere is intense.

Miracle in Rwanda tells the true story of Immaculée Ilibagiza, who survived the Rwandan genocide by

hiding for 91 days in the extra bathroom of a local Hutu pastor. She shared this space – just three feet by four feet – with seven other women. If they had been discovered by the Hutu militia, all would have been brutally killed, including the local Hutu pastor who was harbouring them.

This show has been designed so that nothing distracts from Sword's performance. The only thing on the stage is a rectangle of white gaffer tape of the same proportions as Ilibagiza's refuge. Sword plays ten different characters, both male and female, but there are no costume changes or props in this play. Bending low over a mimed walking stick Sword is the old pastor; strutting around and issuing orders with nonchalant cruelty, a Hutu commander. Each character occupies a different



DOOMED ROMANCE: Aricia (Alison O'Donnell) and Hippolytus (Henry Maynard) embrace in the atmospheric setting of the castle

physical space so that in scenes where Sword plays multiple interacting characters, their spectres remain after she moves on, making the account remarkably vivid.

Ilibagiza is terrified of discovery

and desperate to hear news of her family. Sword's performance examines Ilibagiza's struggle with her faith under these testing circumstances and is deeply poignant, even for an atheist audi-

ence. Miracle in Rwanda is an uncluttered yet immensely affecting exploration of fear, faith and cruelty.

By telling the story of just one young woman Sword opens up the

imagination to the hundreds of thousands of others that are as yet untold. A brilliant performance that should be seen by all.

■ *Until August 27*

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