



David Edgar's Pentecost, an epic play unashamedly takes on a range of big themes at the Other Place, Stratford

One nation under a grave

David Edgar's Pentecost is an epic play in a tiny space. It covers a vast array of themes: art history, the refugee crisis, resurgent nationalism, the contradiction between cultural and linguistic diversity and Eurocentric political ideals. The play eventually buckles under the weight of so much cargo but it's refreshing, in these parsimonious times, to find a writer taking too much on board rather than too little.

I found the first half entirely gripping. Edgar's setting is an abandoned church near the border of a South-

East European country. A hidden fresco is discovered that may be an imitation of Giotto or could be the work of an earlier, unknown genius thereby changing the history of Western art. With great skill Edgar shows how the fresco, rediscovered by a local curator and restored by a British scholar, opens up the divisions within the state and Europe itself: the Orthodox Church, the Catholics, the Ministry of Culture, not to mention art historians and the German-Italian sponsors of the restoration, all have a vested interest in the fresco. It becomes a means of

Billington On Pentecost

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