

Athol Fugard's My Children! My Africal, visiting the Lyttelton auditorium of the Royal National Theatre from the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, is a schematic trio for a black township schoolmaster, his star pupil and a white girl whose participation in a school debate leads to political maturity.

For once, Fugard's sentimentality overwhelms his dramatic lyricism. The author's daughter, Lisa Fugard, plays the schoolgirl, and Rapaluna Seiphemo the boy who rejects literature for action and joins the banished revolutionary party in the north (the play pre-dates Nelson Mandela's release). The matchless John Kani returns to London as the idealistic Mr M who 'feeds children to his hope' and is horrendously betrayed.

Coveney on My Children!

Clipped By:



ianharris

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