

British Theatre Guide

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Spiral

Abigail Hood

Veritas Theatre Company

Jermyn Street Theatre

2–19 August 2023

Following on from the plays [Dangling](#) and [Monster](#), Abi Hood has delved once again into the dark areas of missing people, domestic abuse and painful searching. The result is a fascinating piece that leaves the audience squirming uncomfortably and investing into the characters and relationships on offer.

Hood has taken *Dangling* and paired the characters down to four, and this is a masterstroke as it allows for a more intense development of characters and relationships within the story. Actor-director Kevin Tomlinson sees echoes of Chekhov's flawed characters in Hood's writing and in *Spiral*, this is more than evident.

Hood was inspired to write *Dangling* and *Spiral* by seeing an advert in a London paper where a family had placed a plea for a missing loved one: "Dear Steven, we love you, we miss you. We hope you found what you were looking for."

Spiral delves deeper than *Dangling* into the pain that is left behind by those still searching and the havoc caused by the not-knowing. The charity Missing People has also been involved with the production, holding post-show talks in the wonderfully intimate Jermyn Street Theatre. Hood has really keyed into a subject area that is perhaps underexplored in this country, given that a person is reported missing every 90 seconds in the UK.

This is an intense performance; there are long sections of characters sitting around talking, à la Chekhov, and often not much physical action is taking place. What a delight to allow the words to really do the talking here, without an overly designed or stylised concept which seems to be prevalent in a great deal of theatre today. The lighting and staging are fairly sparse, though I was drawn to the newspaper headlines adorning Felix Walter's simple set design, a nod to Sophie, the missing person at the centre of this story.

A visit to the Jermyn Street Theatre and perhaps beyond if this tours (which it feels like it should do) will offer an evening of excellent writing and impressively naturalistic acting. There are some wonderful performances from the quartet, with Hood's Leah and Jasper Jacob's Tom in particular shining. This is an unlikely but moving relationship, and every scene has a vitality that avoids sentiment or overplaying. The sharing of chips and champagne to celebrate Sophie's 16th birthday works well in conveying pain and joy in equal measures. Jacobs is beautifully subtle in his portrayal of Tom, creating a vulnerable and confused character consumed with his loss.

Some of the scenes are very difficult to watch and Kevin Tomlinson's Mark is particularly unlikable. There is a scene in the second act in particular that almost makes you want to jump up onto the stage and intervene! The coercive control and toxicity of the relationship is instantly recognisable

as Mark constantly puts Leah down, pushing the blame of his behaviour onto her. I would have liked to find out a little more about Mark, the pathetic character that he is, or perhaps seen more of Mark and Tom together, the unlikeliest of pairings.

Rebecca Crankshaw deserves special praise for her portrayal of Sophie's mother and Tom's wife, Gill. As with the others, this is a believable performance of a character that moves from anger to exhaustion as she tries to process the loss of her daughter and her husband's offbeat behaviour.

Spiral is well worth a visit, either as it bows out in London or if it does tour. As with *Dangling*, the episodic structure and naturalistic writing gives a filmic quality to this play, and so I wouldn't be surprised to see a Harlan Coben-style TV drama applied to Hood's impressive take on the plight of those missing and the people who are left behind.

Reviewer: [John Johnson](#)