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# Dispatches from the Fringe: little refuge to be found in 'Sklonište'

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Sklonište

*Photo by Jim Marshall used with kind permission from Tiger Dublin Fringe*

## Sklonište by Ailís Ní Ríain

Rating: ★★☆☆☆

Ailís Ní Ríain's "Sklonište" pays respectful homage to the people of Sarajevo who endured a 1,425 day siege between 1992 and 1996 during which time over ten thousand civilians were killed. It also attempts to be a timely reminder of how the horrors of war impact on innocent civilians. There can be no fault found with what "Sklonište" sets out to achieve. However, the manner in which it sets about doing so is not all it might have been.

During the siege of Sarajevo the word Skloniste, which translates as shelter, was spray painted onto the sides of buildings throughout the city, directing citizens to supposedly secure shelters where they could hide from snipers and the relentless bombings which assailed them daily. Scottish aid worker Jim Marshall volunteered in Sarajevo during the siege and returned years later

to amass a series of photographs of these spray paintings scattered throughout the city. These images, projected onto a large screen, form the cornerstone of "Skloniste," alongside scenes from the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics, video footage of the siege, text, animation sequences and a video of a personal testimony. A recording by Marshall's of his experiences and a discordant soundtrack of live and recorded music complete this production which was rarely as evocative or as thought provoking as it should have been.

"Skloniste" featuring music and poetry by Ailís Ní Ríain, images and dialogue by Jim Marshall with Dermot Dunne live on accordion feels like an excellent musical recital engaging with a low budget multimedia installation whose pace drags. Musically, Dermot Dunne's discordant accordion playing lent a disturbing sense of immediacy, but at others it clashed with the spoken voice sequences. Visually and conceptually though, the whole felt weak and dated. Marshall's images, initially intriguing, became monotonous after a while, as did long periods staring at a black screen. Older images of the Winter Olympics and news footage of buildings being bombed appeared degraded, translating poorly when enlarged and projected onto the large screen. Video footage was also of a poor quality and was frequently played back in slow motion, adding to already slack pacing. Collectively, Marshall's images simply weren't evocative enough and it was only towards the end when they were interspersed with others, such as children hanging out of a tank turret, did the images achieve something akin to potency.

It is said that Sarajevo was the first time genocide was played out live on television. It wasn't the last. Since then powerful images of civilians affected by war have been witnessed by millions. In this context "Skloniste's" spray painted images say too little and simply aren't powerful enough. Nor is the manner in which they are presented. Technologically, the creative possibilities available, as well as the vast array of images available of the Sarajevo siege, could have been utilised to create something which truly made an impact. Only Marshall's sometimes difficult to hear testimony, along with "Skloniste's" discordant soundtrack, ever truly evoked a strong response.

As one survivor describes it, one grenade propelled through an apartment window and everything is lost. As the current migrant crisis in Syria engenders heated debate across Europe, the horrific experience of a people for whom migration was not an option could have much to contribute to that debate. "Skloniste" has something to say on this subject of the innocent victims of war. But it could have said so much more and said it so much better.

"Sklonište" by Ailís Ní Ríain runs at [Smock Alley Theatre](#) as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe till September 12th. Show begins at 6.45 pm

Tickets: €14/€12

For further information go to [Tiger Dublin Fringe](#)

**Chris O'Rourke**



Tulsa Theater Examiner

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