EVERYTHING REMAINS RAW

Tuesday May 22nd 2007

THE STAR TONIGHT
MOLORA
REVIEW BY DIANNE DE BEER
RATING ****

In selecting a Greek Tragedy to explore the cycle of violence, and the irresistible human impulse for revenge, uncompromising director Yael Farber creates sophisticated theatre in its rawest form.

It is gut-wrenching stuff as the emotional and immediate impact of the production overwhelms on a purely sensory level.

The guttural sounds of the Chorus grab you by the pit of the stomach and never let go. Dorothy Ann Gould’s Clytemnestra echoes the sounds of the Chorus as she plunges her voice into what seems an almost dark void. Her character takes you into a world most would shy away from.

This is not a play for the faint-hearted. Through the measured removal of the floor cover, which appears to contain a story that unfolds layer by layer, Farber creates a painting in visual splendour with not a brushstroke out of place.

Its the age old story of revenge, told in a rich ritualistic style, as a mother and her daughter tempt and torture one another - the torturer trading places with the tortured in her nightmares and life.

“Notions of a rainbow nation gliding effortlessly into forgiveness are absurd”, writes Farber in her director’s note. While Cynthia Ngwenya, mother of one of the Guguletu Seven said: “If it means... this man who has killed my son, if it means he becomes human again... so that all of us get our humanity back... then I support it all”.

“It seems”, reasons Farber, that never before have we faced ourselves and our capacity for vengeance more than since the shocking events of September 11th 2001. It is the response of the victims of apartheid, followed by high praise from the world community and then the attack of vengeance post 9/11, that all play a part in the creation of this astonishing work.

But it is Farber’s phenomenal ability to tell a story which, in all its simplicity, becomes intensely complex. Her use of the Ngqoko Cultural Group is sheer genius, as they are both the chorus and the conscience while infiltrating the text on every possible level. Their other-worldly chanting, the ancient musical sounds and their omnipotence, drives the production and thrusts the Greek tragedy powerfully into an African context.

From Gould’s almost beastly interpretation, to Tshabalala’s potent performance, the two women tragically draw the horrific picture of an uninterrupted vengeance that can even take a playful turn.

As Matsheni takes flight, he completes the cycle of vengeance, and reason - which has been banished up to this point - is given its rightful place.

Molora [Ash] can be viewed from many different perspectives, but these discussions only come in a more sober retrospection of the work. While watching, one is irresistibly drawn into the vortex of a dismantled family who turn on, rather than to, each other.

THE MARKET THEATRE
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
EVERYTHING REMAINS RAW

In selecting a Greek tragedy to explore the cycle of violence, and the irresistible human impulse for revenge, uncompromising director Paul Farber creates a sophisticated theatre in its rawest form.

It is gut-wrenching stuff as the emotional and immediate impact of the production overweights on a purely sensory level. The cultural sounds of the chorus grab you by the pit of your stomach and never let go. Dorothy Ann Gould’s Clytemnestra echoes the sound of the chorus as she plunges her voice into what seems an almost lifeless void. Her character takes you into a world most would shy away from.

This is not a play for the faint-hearted. Through the measured reciting of the floor cover, which appears to contain a story that unfolds layer by layer, Farber creates a painting by visual splendour with not a stroke out of place.

It’s the age old story of revenge, told in a rich choric style, as a mother and her daughter tempt and torture one another – the tormented playing places with the tortured in her nightmares and life. "Virtuoso of a Rainbow Nation" sliding effortlessly into forgiveness are absurd, "writes Farber in his director’s notes. While Cynthia Ngxum, mother of one of the Gospelsen Seven, said: "If it means this man who has killed my son, if it means he becomes human again... so that all of us get our humanity back... then I support it all!" It is a song, reasons Farber, that never before have we faced ourselves and our capacity for vengeance more than since the shocking events of September 11th, 2001. It is the response of the victims of apartheid, followed by a high praise from the world community and the attack of vengeance post 9/11, that all play a pivotal part in the creation of this amazing work.

But it is Farber’s phenomenal ability to tell a story which, in all its simplicity, becomes intensely complex. Her use of the Njekolo Cultural Group is show genius, as they saw both the chorus and the core, reimagining the text on every possible level. Their otherworldly chanting, the ancient musical sounds and their omnipotent drive, the production and frames the Greek tragedy powerfully into an African context.

With such a cast, and a breath-taking performance, the two women tragically draw the horrific picture of an uninterrupted oppression that can even take a playful turn.

As Malthusi takes flight, he completes the cycle of revenge, and reason – which has been banished up to this point – is given its rightful place.

Mokhele (Ash) can be viewed from many different perspectives, but these discussions only come in a more recent retrospection of the work. While watching, one is mesmerized and invisibly drawn into the victims of a disassembled family who turn on each other, rather than each other.