

Theatre and Dance

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Dorothy Ann Gould (by Ruphin Coudyzer)

Molora at the Playhouse

By Andrew Pedroza

An Oxford Playhouse and Farber Foundry co-production in association with BarbicanBite 08, Wednesday 2 - Saturday 5 April

Yael Farber's "Molora", an adaptation from the Greek Trilogy "Oresteia", is a must see production. Set in South Africa during a time of recovery and transition from a post-apartheid nation, it tells the tragic story of Klytemnestra and Elektra, mother and daughter, perpetrator and victim, and the confrontation between the two as they testify at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the brutality they endured and caused towards each other in a time of turmoil.

What made this show special and unique was the layout of the stage. Instead of being seated in the main auditorium, the audience abandons the house seats and is directed to a studio constructed directly onstage. Seated from three sides surrounding the newly designed stage, the audience members are literally feet away from the actors. This intimacy between actors and audience members heightened the show's intensity and made the encounters witnessed in the production a hundred times more haunting.

Farber's direction is astounding and her passion is apparent while watching the production. So much detail went into the show, from the subtle shadows that dance across the stage, to the flawless transitions she incorporates from scene to scene. Her use of stage is impressive. She demonstrates through limited sets a creative clear cut vision that makes the performance, however agonizing to watch because of the show's content, artistically beautiful.

Not only does the direction shine in this production, the acting from the cast is some of the best I've ever seen. The cast is true to their characters and dish out flawless emotions throughout the entire performance. Unafraid to release the demons within themselves, the cast spills their hearts across the stage in sweat, blood, and tears. From the unnerving and malicious Klytemnestra, played by Dorothy Ann Gould, the abused and vengeful Elektra played by Jabulile Tshabalala, and the savior Orestes played by Sandile Matsheni, the cast unleashes hellfire upon each other.

Another aspect that carried the show was the Ngqoko Cultural Group which represented the chorus which I thought was exceptional. Revolutionising the chorus used in ancient Greek theatre, this ensemble performed as musicians and various other characters through song, chant, and dance.

"Molora" is a one of a kind theatrical experience that I highly recommend. Although violent and extreme at moments, the story has a powerful message that examines the choice between revenge and redemption.