

[Back to Dale Reynolds' Reviews - Home](#)

The Curse Of Oedipus/Corinth Cast (Antaeus Theatre)



Of all the major theatre companies in L.A. County, Antaeus ranks right up in the top five. Concentrating on the classics of Western literature, their huge roster of quality actors makes even the diciest of projects bloom with professional life from the casting.

Because what they produce is generally exemplary, as a protection against finding an actor lost to a performance due to their penchant for getting paid- work in the Industry (da noive!), they double-cast each show. So, two casts (in this case "Thebes" and "Corinth"), lets them play a Thursday and Friday performance their original casts, and the Saturday night and Sunday matinee in a mix'n'match, which ensures any audience-member will always have a great cast to watch, no matter which night they attend.

In addition to the spot-on casting of the roles, Antaeus has enough of a reputation to ensure high-quality technical designers and qualified directors will want to be considered as it generally means that intelligent thought is being brought to the process, even when they're paid a pittance of what they earn elsewhere.

So 'tis with director **Casey Stangl** and the producers of this World Premiere (after extensive revisions with the author) of **Kenneth Cavander's** *The Curse of Oedipus*. Coming in at 2½ hours, which flies-by without notice, Antaeus has solidified its reputation as a producer of radiant theatre.

Probably their largest cast yet, with 22 hard-working actors, Stangl's genius is very much on display. Based on the three Theban plays by Sophocles, as well as other legends, and poems of the era, Cavander has condensed *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone* into a brawny and muscular two-act drama.

Drawing from Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, Cavander (who translated the original works) has the wit to show the two different sides of humanity, as acknowledged by the Greeks, on the dichotomy of the Apollonian and Dionysian sides of humanity. It's based on the rigidity of the Olympian Apollo's view that reasoning is mankind's greatest development, versus Dionysius' (he's only a half-god, but still....) ideal of freedom and revelry as the best parts of the human race. The two gods (**Barry Creyton** as Apollo and **Stoney Westmoreland** as Dionysus) appear throughout the play, arguing as to the merits of their positions. It's never dialectical, adding to both the levity and the gravity of the actions.

Oedipus, a prince of Thebes (**Terrell Tilford**), has fled his home to escape, he hopes, the Delphic oracle which prophesized that he would kill his father and marry (or "straddle") his mother. But he didn't know that, when entering Corinth, he would kill the king of that country who was his biological father, and end up marrying the Queen, Jocasta (**Eve Gordon**), fifteen years his senior, and procreate two sons and two daughters.

To the Greeks of that era, incest, however accidental, was a solid taboo, so they pretended that the gods sent a plague to punish Corinth for this unholy marriage.

Suicide, murder, eyes punctured, deadly brotherly rivalry – what didn't they allow for in their religious experiences in the theatre? The play has them all, with blood and blood-red lighting to reflect our horror of what we are seeing.

And it's all such fun!

A shout-out must be given to the chorus' of both cast, four men and four women, who radiate utter belief in what they are reacting to. **Reba Waters Thomas, Desireé Mee Jung, and Rafael Goldstein** stood out here.

François-Pierre Couture's ingenious set (two levels of rock, with white line crisscrossing the stage), and his evocative lighting, are all enhanced by **E.B. Brooks'** fantastic costumes (on a minuscule budget) and **Jeff Gardner's** expressive sound design. It's a theatre-fanatic's wet-dream: quality everything in a 50-seat house. It's truly amazing how excellence can be produced when push comes to shove and you have access to the very best of folk.

So see this! (Either cast; they're both extraordinary.)

The Curse of Oedipus plays Thursdays through Sundays at the Antaeus-at-the-Deaf-West Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd (just south of Magnolia), North Hollywood, through August 10th, 2014. Tickets: 818.506.1983 or at www.facebook.com/AntaeusTheatre.

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2