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Antaeus' HEDDA GABLER Review

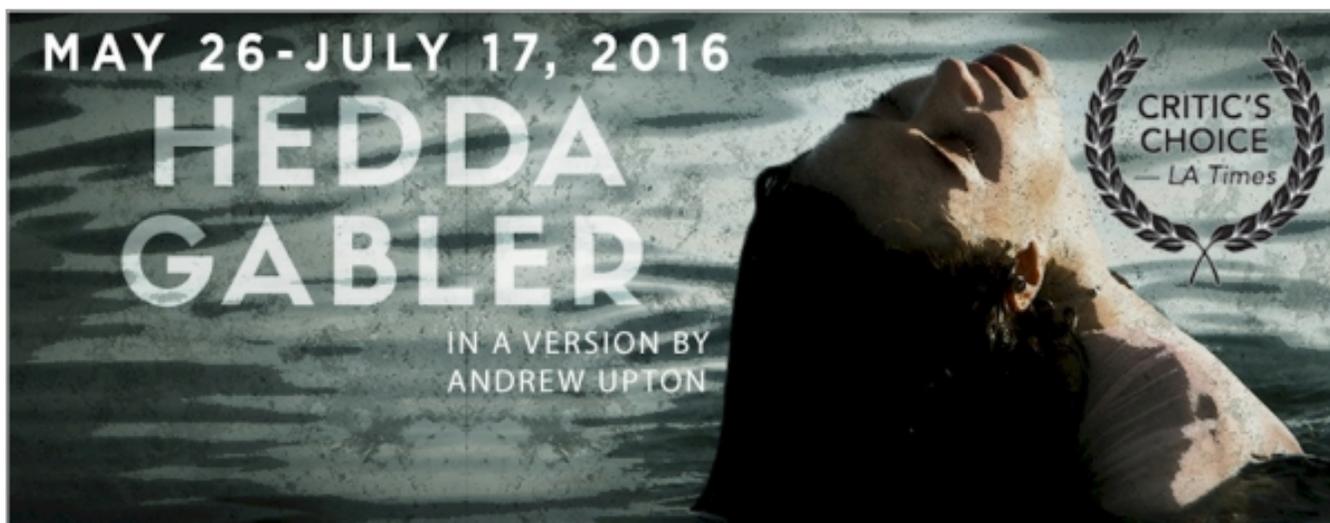
👤 Written by [Radomir Vojtech Luza](#)

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If you are interested in a play about manipulation, misery and mores run don't walk to the Antaeus Theatre Company's production of Henrik Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" running in the North Hollywood Arts District through July 17.

This is the story of Hedda Gabler, an attractive, articulate and intelligent woman caged in an unproductive and suffocating marriage where isolation and alienation lead to rage and terror.

Looking for the key out, the great literary anti-heroine manipulates the destinies of those around her with a passion and relish unseen in most characters in theatre history.

This female Iago is the lynch pin upon which the play, relying on playwright Andrew Upton's more contemporary version, turns.

Ibsen's words, as updated by Upton, are as powerful as ever.

They stalk, steal and subjugate, turning a waterfall of desperation into an ocean of anger, frustration and recrimination.

Moved up 30 years and set in the roaring 1920's to get away from Victorian mores and the problems created by their particular conventions, one still wonders why the change in time and script are necessary instead of allowing Ibsen's beautiful language to stand on its own merits.

The mores, like or agree with them or not, are an incredibly vital part of this play.

Nonetheless, it is us, the audience, who become more and more invested in Gabler's bewitched machinations until the need to and the need not to become one.

Ibsen's vision, as seen through Upton's words, is a strong indictment of Victorian conventions, human circumstances and psychological and social mores.

The play, as directed by Steven Robman, forces us to not only look into the mirror at our own lives, but do something useful and creative about the problems we find.

Robman's direction underscores a deep and abiding understanding of Ibsen's meaning and purpose here.

It also allows the actors the room and space to be themselves without going outside of the constructs of their characters.

Robman directs with a deft touch, but a down-to-earth style that squeezes the truth out of each moment and focuses the narrative on each character's motivation instead of his or her pandering.

The veteran stage director has assembled a stellar traditionally partnered cast which on the second Saturday night that this critic saw the show was called "The Generals."

The gifted ensemble comprehends the stultifying conditions of Ibsen's 1891 Europe with the breath, depth and meter of each syllable and syntax like owls do midnight.

Stand outs include:

Nike Doukas (Hedda Gabler) who captures the desperation, disgust and degradation of her

character with deftness and sincere joy. The veteran Antaeus actress infuses Gabler with horror built upon the psychological and sociological twists and turns of a deeply troubled woman. Doukas is utterly believable as the revengeful and resourceful Gabler. She does not struggle to show us, the audience, why and how Gabler is Gabler. A bravura characterization built on straightforwardness and simplicity.

Adrian LaTourelle (Jorgen Tesman) who almost runs away with the play with a convincing turn as Gabler's dull husband. LaTourelle wears his emotions on his sleeve while balancing the husband he wishes to be with the one devoted to his all-devouring wife.

The stage and television veteran (NCIS, Castle, NCIS: LA, Boston Legal, Without a trace, Criminal Minds, Numb3rs and Sons of Anarchy) displays a modesty and humility that belie his power as an actor. LaTourelle is in the moment and unselfishly gives to the other thespians in the play, rather than taking from them. A thorough and eye-opening portrayal from an actor Antaeus will no doubt consider casting in the future.

But it is Tony Amendola (Judge Brock) who steals the show with an engaging, spot-on and full performance rich enough to move and touch us, the audience, into considering whether his character is, in his own way, the male equivalent of Gabler.

Amendola's stage presence and delivery are non plus ultra. His character considers himself the cock of the walk, and the Antaeus Founding Member makes certain that that frame of mind comes across in no uncertain manner.

The stage, film and television veteran leaves nothing behind on this stage. He always seems to be hungering for more, attempting to satisfy his character's cravings and needs in one way or another.

Amendola is Judge Brock. There is little or nothing separating him from the character. Every step, syllable and pause account for another moment in his character's memory of history.

This critic hopes to see Amendola on the stages of North Hollywood or Los Angeles again soon.

Furthering the message of the play are Se Hyun Oh's scenic design, Leigh Allen's lighting design, Cricket Myers' sound design and Leah Piehl's costume design.

All in all, "Hedda Gabler" succeeds because of the classically tragic flashes, flourishes and floods in the writing, not despite them.

The production bleeds talent and accomplishment not only for the playwrighting and acting, but the decision of Artistic Directors Rob Nagle, Bill Brochtrup and John Sloan to stage this play

as a final farewell to Lankershim Boulevard and North Hollywood.

It simply is not an easy play to produce, what with the human emotions and feelings involved on the boards alone, not to mention the production and casting choices away from them.

The play can easily be considered a Greek tragedy in its own right, but luckily has found a calling and niche all its own.

Ibsen's brilliant writing and Upton's unique take make for a "Hedda" unlike any in recent memory.

It was highly unfortunate that on the second Saturday night that this critic saw the play, the theatre was but about two-thirds full.

Regardless, it will be difficult to walk or drive down Lankershim Boulevard and not see the familiar marquee and name.

Antaeus is moving to a new, much larger, theatre space in Glendale in the Fall and it will no doubt leave a gaping hole in the theatre fabric of North Hollywood for a long time to come.

Theatre 68 has agreed to take over the theatre on Lankershim, but the professionalism, abundant talent and sheer presence that Antaeus brought to the No Ho Arts District will be sorely missed, to say the very least.

This critic, for one, will have to fill a vacancy in his artistic soul left behind by Antaeus' departure.

The company is certainly one of the best, if not the best, classical theatre companies in the country.

And that is saying a lot for a theatre company that has, since 2010, had to struggle against and compete with the television and film industry in a city not known for its theatre or theatrical heritage.

All the best in Downtown Glendale dearest Antaeus, wonderful miracle.

You will certainly have a home in every heart that sat perched above your wooden stage for these past six years.

And in many that did not.

The memories are already flowing like the Amazon.

Performances:

Thursdays at 8 p.m.; Fridays at 8 p.m.:

Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m. and

Sundays at 2 p.m.

Tickets:

Thursdays and Fridays: \$30

Saturdays and Sundays: \$34

Admission & Information: (818) 506-1983

WHERE:**The Antaeus Theatre Company**

5112 Lankershim Blvd.,

North Hollywood, CA 91601

(One-and-a-half blocks South of Magnolia)

PARKING:

\$8 in the lot at 5125 Lankershim Blvd., (West side of the street), just South of Magnolia.

Street parking along Lankershim Blvd. also available.

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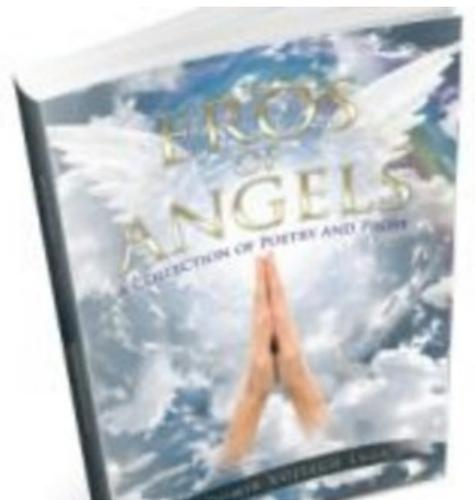
Radomir Vojtech Luza

RADOMIR VOJTECH LUZA (radluza@sbcglobal.net)

Radomir Vojtech Luza was born in Vienna, Austria in 1963. He owes his love of art and politics to his Czech parents, Radomir Sr. and Libuse Podhraska Luza.

The former was a resistance fighter against the Nazis in WWII, and the latter at 15 the youngest actress ever accepted into the Czech National Dramatic Conservatory where she loved studying and acting the works of William Shakespeare and the Greeks until Adolf Hitler closed the doors in 1943.

Luza is the Poet Laureate of North Hollywood, a Pushcart Prize Nominee and the author of 26 books, including his latest, the 404-page EROS OF ANGELS, a collection of poetry and prose. Eros of Angels The President of the North Hollywood West Neighborhood Council has had his poetry published in nearly 80 literary journals, magazines, anthologies and websites such as the front cover of Papyrus, KYSO Flash, Askew, Cultural Weekly, Spectrum II and III, LummoX I-IV., the Boston Globe, Spare Change and roguescholars.com. The SAG/AFTRA/AEA actor has featured his verse across the country over 100 times. The veteran stand-up comedian has also organized and hosted over a dozen readings in cities such as New York City, Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., Jersey City, NJ and Los Angeles. The Tulane University graduate currently co-organizes and co-hosts UNBUCKLED: No Ho POETRY with Mary Anneeta Mann on the first Saturday of each month at T.U. Studios in North Hollywood.



Eros of Angels

Radomir Vojtech Luza gives you Los Angeles and Eros of Angels. This 400-page collection of poetry and prose touches on a variety of subjects: philosophy, theology...

View on www.erosofangels.com.

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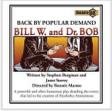
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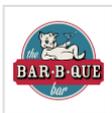
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