

JUNE 03, 2005

Get Out Of Bed And Look Alive



What's going on this weekend? How about a trip to Bavaria in the 1620s, to a war-torn region divided between Protestants and Catholics, and all via the rafters of a North Hollywood warehouse? The Antaeus Company's successful run of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage And Her Children: A Chronicle Of The Thirty Years' War* has been extended for two more weeks. Laist caught one of the remaining shows this Thursday and was enthralled.

The story takes place during the 30 Years' War, and famously follows Mother Courage (the incredible Anne Gee Byrd) and her canteen wagon of food and supplies in the path of various regiments. She lives by the war and mourns when peace temporarily breaks out. Her goal is to get her three children, the war-loving Eilif (Matt Jaeger), the mute but evocative Kattrin (a radiant Emily Eiden) and her simple son, Swiss Cheese (Nathan Patrick) through the war alive. As the consequences of keeping her children safe conflict with Courage's own strong instinct to save her own hide, some truly awful things happen on stage. By the end of the story, nothing has changed (the war is still raging), but everything is gone.

The show is sparsely and gesturally staged by Andrew J. Robinson (an Antaeus regular) in a warehouse that the company rebuilt for the purpose. Audience members are seated on three sides of a barren square, as if around a campfire. The rough-and-ready music on banjolele, guitar, and autoharp - any instruments in a war zone - adds to the humor and the storytelling spirit. With bleak but warm lighting by Ellen Monocroussos, and John Iacovelli's splintery set jutting out from the rafters, the characters don't get to rest from their problems for long. They travel round in circles, just trying to get by, till one by one they get crushed by the war. Almost against itself, the play is bitterly funny.

Although this is Antaeus's first year producing a full season, the company is 15 years old and has created a vibrant interest in classical theatre during its lifetime. We are sorry to hear that they will be losing their production space, like so many LA 99-seat theatres, in a year or less. (The goodwill of local businesses towards this company (everything from the lights to the chairs were donated) shows how much Antaeus has become an important part of the community.