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The Curse Of Oedipus/Thebes 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 Thursday and Friday nights with their original cast, and the Saturday night and Sunday matinees 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 always spot-on casting of the roles, Antaeus has enough of a reputation that high-quality technical designers and qualified directors want to be considered as it generally means that intelligent thought is being brought to the process.

So it is 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 often brilliant theatre.

Probably the 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, along with 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 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. It's based on the rigidity of the Olympian Apollo's view that reasoning is mankind's greatest development, versus Dionysius' (only a half-god, but still...) ideal of freedom and revelry and as the best parts of humanity. The two gods (**Mark Bramhall** as Apollo and **John Apicella** 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 (**Ramón de Ocampo**), 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 his Queen, Jocasta (**Rhonda Aldrich**), 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 – my, what didn't they allow for their religious experiences in the theatre? The play has all of the above, with blood and blood-red lighting to express 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 reflecting on. **Elizabeth Swain, Drew Doyle** and **Phil Proctor** 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'** incredible costumes (on a miniscule 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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