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Curating Culture

Antaeus' Hedda Gabler Is Shocking and Making Perfect Sense

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Reviewed by [Tracey Paleo, Gia On The Move](#)



Jaimi Paige and Tony Amendola
Photo by Karianne Flaathen

I was so emotionally affected. Shut down cold. And at first, I couldn't say why. The experience of *Hedda Gabler*, maybe for the first time ever, was THAT startling.

Antaeus Theatre Company's *Hedda Gabler* opened last week very quietly, and ended quite literally with a bang. A still fairly new adaptation by Australian playwright Andrew Upton which premiered in 2004 at the Sydney Theatre Company, has been set in the early 1920's instead of its original time period of the 1890's and under the careful guidance of director Steven Robman, has been brought to life by the notably excellent performances of Antaeus' *Generals* cast (Jaimi Page, Adrian LaTourelle, Ann Noble, Tony Amendola, Daniel Blinkoff, Amelia White and Elizabeth Dennehey).

It is simply not to be missed.

Stepping far away from mere cerebral intrigue, as has been on offer with much theater as of late, Antaeus' *Hedda* is *actually* moving, indeed perception shifting, and distinctively so, which is the biggest surprise of all.

Classic productions of *Hedda Gabler* have often tended towards a stylistically sad experience mucking through Ibsen's taut dialog and agonizingly slow pace – Hedda is so remote. Not here though.

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There is an *'edge of the seat'* factor to this production. Actress Jaimi Page plays a complicated yet so incredibly clear, we begin to understand why Hedda is such an existence who seem to almost obligatorily revolve around her, whether they like it or not. This extraordinarily understandable update finally focuses a modern audience right in the middle of the unknowable Hedda, newly married, trapped in a world she cannot bear and long

Described by Joseph Wood Krutch an American writer, critic, and naturalist, Gaabler Ibsen himself whose interest (then) in the science of mental illness has certainly oppressed being, although never quite explains her. In the current interpretation Bernard Jay Paris' (*Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Characters*) explanation that seems to fit best, that all of Gabler's actions stem from her *'need to be compensatory as her craving for power... her desire to shape a man's destiny.'*

It may be the finality of Gabler's extremely abrupt act of suicide, after the destruction of the point home. Hedda's acts may ultimately be monstrous, but she is not necessarily abnormal. This one willful decision is better than being trapped in *'someone else's life'*.

This *Hedda Gabler* is not without its kinks. Although the language has been updated there are occasional words and phrases that don't seem to fit in the mostly naturalistic delivery. But the cast marvelously overcomes any dialog imperfections while also subtly apportioning out a highly nuanced piece.

Antaeus' *Hedda Gabler* makes perfect sense.

Hedda Gabler

Written by Henrik Ibsen in a version by Andrew Upton

Directed by Steven Robman

Starring Tony Amendola, Daniel Blinkoff, Mimi Cozzens, JD Cullum, Elizabeth Dennehy, Nike Doukas, Karianne Flaathen, Adrian LaTourelle, Kwana Martinez, Lynn Milgrim, Ned Mochel, Ann Noble, Jaimi Paige, James Sutorius

Now Playing until July 17, 2016 with remaining performances on:

Thursdays at 8 p.m.: May 26 (preview); June 16, 23, 30; July 7, 14

Fridays at 8 p.m.: June 10, 17, 24; July 1, 8, 15

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: June 11, 18, 25; July 2, 9, 16

Saturdays at 8 p.m.: June 11, 18, 25; July 2, 9, 16

Sundays at 2 p.m.: June 12, 19, 26; July 3, 10, 17

The Antaeus Theatre Company

5112 Lankershim Blvd.

North Hollywood CA, 91601

(1½ blocks south of Magnolia)

PARKING:

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

For Tickets and information call:(818) 506-1983 or [visit: www.Antaeus.org](http://www.Antaeus.org)

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