

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN

New Recommended

Director Andrew J. Robinson and a quality ensemble forge a compelling revival of Bertolt Brecht's ironic antiwar play, with Anne Gee Byrd outstanding in the title role. Byrd's war-profiteering peddler is at once a sly survivalist adept at squeezing money off others' misery and a myopic underdog blindly servicing the system that plunders her. A remorseless businesswoman, this 17th-century petty capitalist nonetheless loves her children fiercely and protectively, but in the play's cruelest irony loses them tragically and violently, despite her desperate efforts to save them. This production, happily, avoids didactic pitfalls, with performances that reflect the nuances of human behavior as well as the mighty forces that compel it. Among the performers lending vivid support are John Apicella as an uprooted pastor who finds refuge in Courage's roving camp, Harry Groener as her iconoclastic sometimes lover, and Katy Tyszkiewicz as her mute and vulnerable daughter, Kattrin. Josh Clark's opining sergeant ("Peace is so disorganized") and Terry Evans' brutal commander are chillingly graphic. Staged in a renovated warehouse, the production design (by John Iacovelli) creates the intended raw, shivery ambience. Antaeus Company at the NewPlace Theater, 4900 Vineland Ave., N. Hlywd.; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 5 p.m. (7 p.m. perf replaces 5 p.m. perf Sun., May 15); thru May 22. (866) 811-4111. **Written 04/21/2005** (Deborah Klugman)