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Hedda Gabler



Antaeus Theatre Company bids farewell to their long time, if cramped, NoHo home in favor of a brand new Arts Complex in Glendale with a stunning production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. Originally, the play was denounced for its portrait of a young, privileged and restless young woman so frustrated by her lack of control that she tries to destroy everything she can possibly get her hands on.

Here in 2016, some 125 years later, Antaeus' production of *Hedda* still sizzles. Director Steven Robman has chosen to move the play forward 30 years – a wise choice, since it leaps the bounds of bustles and stays and gives Hedda's dilemma a social relevance that may have been too subtle for its own time.

Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, another famous play from roughly the same time period, mirrors Ibsen's Hedda and her dissatisfactions. As constructs, the two title characters share similar, less appealing traits and fend away from stereotypical, one-dimensional saintly or degenerate women found in most 19th theatricals. In both cases, the portraits are camera-clear, a feat that before had only been achieved in novels. Thanks to his impressive cast, Robmen attains this same level of cinematic clarity, using the tiny theatre stage's enforced intimacy in revealing close-ups.

The Generals (the cast I saw) features Jaime Paige as the heedless Hedda, with the sterling support of Adrian LaTourelle as Jørgen Tesman, her stuffy husband; Ann Noble as Thea, a much simpler school friend; and Daniel Blinkoff as Løvborg, her dissolute ex-lover. Tony Amendola, playing the sinister Judge Brack; Amelia White as the family doyenne, Aunt Julle and Elisabeth Dennehy Berte as the abused maid; round out this superb ensemble.

But the story couldn't have been told properly without the striking set by Se Hyun Oh that demonstrates his smart use of stage history; his elongated setting echoing Strindberg's suggestion for designing *Miss Julie*. Without Leigh Allen's molded lighting, though, his concept for the requisite adjoining room couldn't have been half as effective. 1920s costumes by Leah Piehl are simply stunning. But, although Cricket Myers' gramophone ambiance worked well, I don't know how to make gunshots work in such a small space. Suffice it to say, if it goes off in the first act

PHOTO (by Karianne Flaathen): Jaime Paige as Hedda in "The Generals" cast of *Hedda Gabler*

Hedda Gabler continues with a mixed cast performing on Thursdays and Fridays at 8:00 p.m. and alternating casts Saturdays at 8:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m. through July 17, 2016 at Antaeus' Theatre, 5112 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood 91601. Tickets are \$30 weekdays, \$34 on weekends. For reservations phone (818) 506-1983 or online at www.antaeus.org.

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