

**King Lear**

by William Shakespeare  
directed by Bart DeLorenzo  
The Antaeus Company  
@ Deaf West Theatre, NoHo  
through August 8  
alternating casts:  
Fools led by Dakin Matthews  
& Madmen led by Harry Groener

**D**ifficult to believe, but this is the first full production of a Shakespeare play performed by the Antaeus Company, which was founded to keep the classics alive. And that they have, most splendidly with Festivals, challenging new visions like *Cousin Bette* by Jeffrey Hatcher and Chekhov, but not the Bard - until now. This lavish yet economical *King Lear* proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that it has been most definitely worth the wait.

Making *Lear* come alive is far from an easy task. It requires acting champions. There's a once powerful king gone mad, and two of the most sinister daughters ever to trod the boards. Then there are the technical challenges of the expansiveness of the heath, the devastating storm, let alone the battles looming in the background... that must seem completely real onstage. Under Bart DeLorenzo's economically brilliant staging, the Antaeus Company triumphs in all areas.

The Fools cast is led by the ever-resourceful Dakin Matthews whose quick turns from anger to lunacy are emotionally compelling. Whether called upon to be most sanely authoritative, or reduced to the whimpering of a child, he delivers fully and magnificently. Kirsten Potter as Goneril and Francia DiMase as Regan perform their dastardly tasks with a cool and cunning edge, yet always real and leveled. Equally true to form is Rebecca Mozo as Cordelia, the dutiful daughter. Seamus Dever brings seething fire to his dark intentions as Edmund and Ramon de Ocampo is breathtaking as the legitimate victimized Edgar. Norman Snow plays the Earl of Gloucester with restraint and valor, as does Morlan Higgins as the loyal Earl of Kent. Stephen Caffrey is just delightful as Fool, Shakespeare's soothsayer and mouthpiece of wisdom.

Tom Buderwitz' mobile set pieces in wood serve supremely for both interior and exterior locales. A. Jeffrey Schoenberg's costumes, Lap Chi Chu's dark lighting design and John Zalewski's phenomenal sound effects are noble factors all in an elegant production.

The Antaeus Company stands heads above all others as the premier American conveyor of world-renowned literary classics.

- Don Grigware