

review - ABBAMEMNON

CRITIC'S PICK

ABBAMEMNON

Agamemnon set to the music of ABBA

written by the Troubadour Theater Company

directed by Matt Walker

Falcon Theatre

through July 13

Who ever heard of *Greek comedy*? The first play in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy is *Agamemnon*, a **Greek tragedy**. But to the Troubadour Theater Company nothing is ever really tragic. Changing the name to **ABBAMEMNON** in Troubie language means *Agamemnon* with the music of ABBA. ABBA's upbeat pop hits are hardly tragic. If you have seen other Troubadour productions, you are aware that they turn everything upside down. Nothing is sacred; nothing is as you know it. If this is your first time, be warned! Sleek and tight and ultimately zany, with a running time of 80 minutes, **ABBAMEMNON**, now on the Falcon stage, comes up another Troubie winner.



The Troubies have been showing their faces on the LA theatre scene for about 14/15 years. When they began, improv ruled and short scenes would go on and on ad infinitum. Now artistic director/director Matt Walker comes out and blows the whistle on overplaying to keep things moving along. It works. **Abbamemnon**'s storytelling wastes very little time. Sure there's schtick and over.the.top antics. They're expected. However, they are at a minimum and do not prolong the plotline...too much.

Remember your mythology? In this Oresteia *Agamemnon*, upon which the book is based, monologues emanate from minor characters like guards (Beth Kennedy) and heralds (Joseph Keane), who serve as part of the Greek chorus. There are really just a few principals on hand, like Clytemnestra, Abbamemnon's wife (Monica Schneider), the king Abbamemnon himself (Matt Walker), Menelaus (Jason Turner), Cassandra (Katherine Donahoe), Abba's daughter Iphigenia (Darrin Revitz) and Aegisthus, Abba's vengeful cousin (Rick Batalla). It's when the background about the House of Atreus, Abbamemnon's family tree, comes in that plot starts getting complex with references to and glimpses of cannibalism and such, but the Troubies handle this amazingly well, in flashbacks and skimming it all down to the core by having one or two people handle the storytelling with deliciously comic aplomb.

Musical highlights include fractured - lyrics changed to suit the plot - portions of: "Mama Mia" renamed "Abbamemnon", "Dancing Queen", "Waterloo" renamed "War Is Due", "Voulez-Vous" ("Voo Doo Voo"), "Money, Money, Money", "The Winner Takes It All" and "I Had a Dream". And the beautiful lesser known "Cassandra" with terrific musicians Eric Heinly, Kevin McCourt at the keys, Linda Taylor on guitar, Dana Decker on bass, and Ginger Murphy/Jon Krovoza on cello.

The entire ensemble are in top form with a standout performance from Monica Schneider as Clytemnestra. What a beautiful voice! Also the best work from Katherine Donahoe as Cassandra and Jason Turner as Menelaus. Walker, Kennedy, Batalla, Rob Nagle in a smaller chorus part, Joseph Keane very funny as the "sword-bearing" herald and everybody else are all great, not disappointing for a mere second. The Troubies always have fun with food and drink. So, Beth Kennedy has her very own laugh track slurping her diet soda, and when we get right into the cannibalism aspect of the drama, the Troubies cannot resist to advise: *It is so important to recognize your food*. The gigantic puppet heads representing the gods are a lot of fun to watch as is the opening curtain speech to listen to, with a jingle warning audience about the short length of the play as a one act and the urgency to PEE now while there is still time. Did I say the madness was at a minimum? Well, for the Troubies, it is, but there's still plenty to enjoy...

Go see **Abbamemnon** through July 13 only! You will most certainly laugh and laugh some more.

5 out of 5 stars

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