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Performing Arts: Theater

THE TROJAN WOMEN

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The ancient Greek play, The Trojan Women, by Athenian author, Euripides (480-406 B.C.), tells a tale of war, death, capture, rape and the agony of the women left alive in the ruined City of Troy. Mortals bemoan their fate; gods and goddess devise their futures.

Wide Eyed Productions' "The Trojan Women" is currently playing at The Kraine Theater. Gilbert Murray wrote the translation and Jerrod Bogard the adaptation. In a program note addressed to the audience, Director Kristin Skye Hoffmann writes, "Regardless of the era in which the dramatist chooses to set the play, the themes will transcend those bounds of time and space." She goes on to illuminate the current crimes against women, to celebrate their strengths and to offer hope in life.

Euripides doesn't offer much hope in his telling of The Trojan Women. In this production, the cast's strong emotional portrayals accentuate the dire circumstance they find themselves in. Amy Lee Pearsall as Hecuba, Queen of Troy, deftly moves through passages expressing strength, anger, sadness and calm. William Reid, as Talthybius the Greek herald, voraciously bears his news. Athena (Judy Merrick), Cassandra (Melissa Johnson), Andromache (Krista Peterson) and Helen (Jael Golad) justify their actions with assertive feminine poise.

On the other hand, at times, the actors' enthusiasm often gives way to screeching and screaming, which obliterates clear speech causing the story and plot line to get lost in the process. The exception is Justin Ness (in dual roles of Menelaus and Poseidon) whose fine diction never errs.

In this production the set design (by Alfred Schatz) is an odd choice. There is a "rustic kitchen corner" equipped with a sink, an ironing board hanging on the wall and a high-seated stool. The floor space is covered with oriental rugs. Scattered around are tied bundles of newspapers and wooden pallets. Huddled amongst the debris are the Trojan women. The chorus members often remain in amorphous heaps on the floor until they are called upon to lament the ruin of Troy.

EYE ON THE ARTS, NY -- Christine Dobush