

Theatre preview – The Suppliant Women – Lyceum Theatre



The Suppliant Women – Aeschylus

“If we help, we invite trouble. If we don’t, we invite shame.”

A new version by David Greig

Directed by Ramin Gray

Composer John Browne

Once an iconic reassurance for those in peril on the sea, the potent media image of beach-strewn orange life-jackets now resonates with disturbing, moral ambiguity. A totemic symbol of migrant/refugee life or death desperation and exploitation. Charon, the Ferryman, demanded but an Obo for the passage to Hades. Now, his predatory, people-smuggling acolytes hold wives, sons and daughters at gun-point hostage and worse.

Earlier this March, Birmingham Opera Company, renowned for their urban-guerilla, stealth by night, performances staged ‘Dido ‘n’ Aeneas’. A heart-viscerating adaptation of Purcell’s barbed-wire Love-bouquet Baroque tragic opera, where Virgil’s Trojan diaspora washed upon the shores of Carthage in below-budget safety standard life-jackets. Dido became their succour and salvation. Dido showed love to strangers from troubled lands. Inevitably, the Gods made love her Nemesis but she knew that hate meant worse. Do we hold Gods responsible for this crisis? A Brexit panacea for the lazy of conscience?

London Parliament Square was bedecked as a ‘life-jacket graveyard’ earlier this week with 2500 #thiscouldbeme labels marking each single one brought from Hellenic island shores –

from whence bodies, both alive and dead, were rescued or recovered.

Written 2,500 years ago, Aeschylus's, *The Suppliant Women* is one of the world's oldest known plays – here now in a new version by The Lyceum's Artistic Director David Greig.

At its heart are fifty young women in full chorus arguing for their lives, speaking through the ages with startling resonance.

Fifty women leave everything behind to board a boat in North Africa and flee across the Mediterranean. They are escaping forced marriage in their homeland, hoping for protection and assistance, seeking asylum in Greece.

The Suppliant Women embraces nuanced techniques of Ancient Greek theatre – but in a thoroughly modern milieu, recruiting and training the citizens of Edinburgh to create an extraordinary theatrical event.

Part play, part ritual, part theatrical archaeology, it offers an ethnic and eclectic (Gods forbid an *Electra*) connection to the deepest and most mysterious ideas of our humanity – who are we, where do we belong and if all goes wrong – who will take us in?

[The Suppliant Women](#) is a co-production with Actors Touring Company and will feature a chorus of young women from Edinburgh playing the title role.

*For in dread of my kin, my own,
Away from the shore I flee,
Away to the mist, where none
Shall care for me.'* – Aeschylus

David Greig's new menu of delights at The Lyceum augurs promisingly. Whatever he has cooking up for us this year and the next, the delights will be savoured in the tasting. Book

early to avoid disappointment!