

Edinburgh International Festival 2017 – Oresteia : This Restless House****

☒ Four hours plus of blood soaked, funereal pyre smoked havoc. A charnel house writhing in chaos quivering on foundations of betrayal and immorality.

Welcome to the reimagined Mycenae palace of King Agamemnon set in an aseptic, flickering neon lit modern context. Past, present and futures ghosts occupy the immediacy of consciousness and conscience. Ghosts haunt, they pervade – they infect and they dictate. But first, the curse-burden must run its course. The sins of the father and mother fall on both sons and daughters.

Writer, Zinnie Harris, plays some maverick wild-cards with indulgent licence. Director, Dominic Hill lets lose the rabid dogs of gore. Much of Aeschylus` poetic glory might feel compromised by tokenised deference to the vernacular and yet again, as with her Rhinosceros, more alt.ironic self-referencing the Edinburgh International Festival sticks out like a sore pun. But that is her pugnacious `do you want some, then?` Punk swagger snigger with attitude The Lyceum allows for.

With concluding part three, Harris presents `Electra and her Shadow` , a radical departure from Aeschylus` Eumenides, `The Kindly Ones` where the punishing Furies concede to civic law as opposed to continued carnage. This takes on a Freudian analysis of the tortured internal states. The spectral presence of murdered daughter Iphigenia resonates like a persistent, poisonous internal metronome. Both Agamemnon and Clytemnestra must confront the Gods and their destinies. For him, he is damned if he does, damned if he does not.

Clytemnestra says damned be to the Gods and drinks herself ten years into a vodka bottle of oblivious denial and suppering revenge displacement.

But in between – this very `Restless House` is compulsively consuming. Its near pornographic primal ritualism lent compelling contemporaneous relevance. Zinnie Harris has met and matched her Muse with this full-on the throat throttling Snuff Opera. An EIF premier at The Lyceum, it transfers from last year's highly praised run at Glasgow's Citizens Theatre.

It is complicated and there is a lot of anger management to be addressed. Part Shame of Thrones, part Bonfire of the Tragedies, it brings a disturbing nuance to the conciliatory gesture of burying the hatchet – albeit in organs internal, external, paternal and maternal.

Blood will have blood, they say. Blood made manifest and through metaphor spilling and spurting throughout and across this trilogy with unarrested, viscious viscosity. An seeming unstoppable vortex of vengeance spiralling ever downwards in to the bowels of Hades. Highly recommended. Best not grab a post-show chip-supper though. You just never know what might be in that pie.

