

Troy to Afghanistan – the wives and the warriors

The doorbell rings, a radio crackles – ancient and modern conflicts collide as the wife of a soldier fighting in Afghanistan is plunged into her own memories and into visions of the Trojan War.

[Tempus Fugit: Troy and Us](#), from NMT Automatics, has its focus beyond the battlefield, exploring female courage and endurance in the face of war.

The play, which combines text, physical storytelling with mask work, meshes the story of a modern Army husband and wife – informed by interviews with military personnel and partners – with the ancient tale of Andromache and Hector from Homer's *Iliad*.

Bea, like her Trojan counterpart, accepts that fighting is sometimes unavoidable. But while her husband Alec, like Hector, is enthralled by ideas of pride, courage and glory, the women have the wisdom to look beyond, to the brutality and consequences of war.

The production traces the relationship between Bea and Alec and the constant anxiety she endures while he is away and after his return.

Bea gets drawn into a radio adaptation of *The Iliad*. Mask work is used to present the fantasy relationship Bea develops with Hector, the ultimate hero, who stands in stark contrast with

the demon-haunted Alec who struggles to re-assimilate.

Genevieve Dunne, the drama's co-creator, said: "Stories of war, and the impact of war, are still overwhelmingly told from the soldier's perspective, and that remains a largely male view.

"We wanted to change this. In following Bea, and the trauma she goes through as events unfold, we are putting the focus on female endurance and feminine courage.

"We also hope that the juxtaposition between the ancient and modern worlds will allow audiences to see past their own views of the modern British military and approach the show as a piece of storytelling that opens new worlds and new ways of seeing things."

The production was originally developed for The British Museum's Troy exhibition in 2020 in collaboration with the St Andrew's University Centre for the Public Understanding of Greek and Roman Drama.

Jonathan D'Young, co-creator, added: "We wanted to look at the love, loss, grief and resilience of couples living in the shadows of war.

"The Army introduced us to couples who had been through these experiences and were prepared to share them with us – providing an insight and authenticity that would otherwise have been impossible."

Tempus Fugit: Troy and Us had a short run at The Union Theatre Southwark brought critical praise including being described as a "Truly an enactment of the phrase 'Theatre of War'." ★★★ *LondonTheatre1* and a "masterclass in text-based realism... physical storytelling and mask work" *PocketsizedTheatre*.

During the Fringe it will be performed as part of Army@TheFringe, the Army's own venue, which specialises in

high-quality, independent productions addressing issues about life in and out of uniform.

- Army@TheFringe, Hepburn House, East Claremont Street, 16-28 August, tickets [here](#).



Genevieve Dunne