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Dallas Morning News, The (TX)**Killer union**

DTC's 'Big Love' boldly tackles details of marriage, murder

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When **Big Love** was over Tuesday night - and it was all too soon - the stage was littered with blood, cake and corpses, and the mind with conflicting thoughts. We'd been to a circus of ideas, and it left an afterglow of a different color. It may be something like what the ancient Greeks felt after seeing a play by Aeschylus, and playwright Charles L. Mee is determined to bring it to us.

Big Love is Mr. Mee's radical update of Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women*, perhaps the oldest extant play. Mr. Mee may crowd it with hip references to Vera Wang, cellphones and Olay moisturizing body wash, but make no mistake, he respects Aeschylus. He simply knew that if the actors just stood around bellowing through masks, we wouldn't listen. So he brings the old story into the new world with a vengeance.

And director Richard Hamburger is there to make sure all the bells and whistles ring and blow, from hailstorms of confetti to the coup de théâtre of a helicopter invasion. This is an incredibly athletic piece, with actors falling, fighting and tumbling throughout. Mr. Mee juggles people and ideas with equal grace.

Like the original play, **Big Love** tells the story of women rebelling against forced marriage. Fifty Greek sisters - represented by Lydia (Miriam A. Laube), Thyona (Kate Nowlin) and Olympia (Lorca Simons) - arrive at an Italian seaside villa seeking asylum, followed by their insistent grooms-to-be: Constantine (Adrian LaTourelle) for Thyona, Oed (Markus Lloyd) for Olympia, and Nikos (Remy Auberjonois) for Lydia.

A fierce debate ensues. Thyona declares men beyond hope, "the product of a damaged gene." Constantine makes a case for male domination: "Tomorrow will take today by force. ... Time itself is an act of rape. Life is rape."

His logic is chilling but uncompromised. Everyone here gets to have their say, though not everyone gets their way. Even Thyona, who persuades her sisters to acquiesce to the wedding and then kill their husbands, is thwarted when Lydia spares her groom, having fallen in love with him.

Despite the extravagant stagecraft, Ms. Nowlin's Thyona steals the show with words. She's articulate, scary and magnificent, the one no one will want to agree with but everyone will admire. And she's emblematic of an astonishing, thrilling whirlwind of a play that makes physical jousting and the interplay of ideas into one seamless, unstoppable force.

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Big Love, presented by the Dallas Theater Center at the Arts District Theater, 2401 Flora St., through March 23. Tuesdays through Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Fridays at 8 p.m., Saturdays at 2 and 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$19 to \$59. Call 214-522- 8499, or go to www.dtcinfo.org. For adult audiences; includes full nudity, strong language and sexual situations.

PHOTO(S): (MILTON HINNANT/Staff Photographer) In the Dallas Theater Center's **Big Love**, (from left)

Miriam A. Laube, Lorca Simons and Kate Nowlin agree to the ultimate betrayal.

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