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'Big Love' a new take on an old tale

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DALLAS--With Big Love, Charles L. Mee's interpretation of Aeschylus' The Suppliant Women, the oldest extant Greek play, the playwright breathes new life into an ancient story.

The characters' dialogue fuses the poetry of Greek tragedy with the accessibility and flow of modern conversation. And in the Dallas Theater Center's North Texas premiere, the show is costumed (by Linda Cho) and designed (a magnificent set by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture) to suggest that, while the play is set in the present, it can't be tied to any particular period. This works perfectly with the play's timeless theme of gender dueling.

The Suppliant Women tells the story of 50 sisters who flee their Egyptian home when they are ordered to marry their cousins. When the suitors catch up to them and matrimony is inevitable, the brides agree to kill their grooms on the wedding night.

In Mee's version, the brides are represented by Lydia (Miriam A. Laube), Thyona (Kate Nowlin) and Olympia (former Fort Worth actress Lorca Simons). They leave Greece for Italy and end up at the estate of Piero (Mark Alan Gordon) and Bella (Franca Barchiesi). The grooms, who arrive in an awesome helicopter drop scene, are Nikos (Remy Auberjonois), Constantine (Adrian La-Tourelle) and Oed (Fort Worth's Markus Lloyd).

Thyona leads the murderous plot against the suitors, but Lydia actually falls in love with Nikos and spares his life. She is put on trial, but her actions are deemed justified.

Richard Hamburger injects his production with Olympian physicality. The finest scenes are the two separate segments in which the brides and grooms pontificate on the opposite sex, all while tumbling and hurling themselves on the padded stage.

The three lead actresses are outstanding, but Nowlin is especially dynamic as the headstrong Thyona. ONLINE: www.dallastheatercenter.org

Big Love

Through March 23; 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 8 p.m. Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Sundays; at the Arts District Theater, 2401 Flora St., Dallas Tickets: \$19-\$59. Call: (214) 522-8499.

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