

## ARTS

# The Trojan Women demand meaning



Foreground: Irene Poole as Andromache and Andrew Church as Astyanax  
Background: Jason Roger Sweeney as Soldier, Scott R. Mealey as Talthybus and Rosalie McDougall as Hecuba.

PHOTO: DWIGHT GRIFFIN

"I demand meaning. I demand it!" —  
Hecuba, Queen of Troy

BY JULIE TRAVES

**S**YNTHESIS OF THE SENSES: sounds, smells, sight, heart, and mind — in the theatre, is this possible? After seeing the Dalhousie Theatre Department's presentation of *The Trojan Women*, the answer to this question must be a booming yes!

**THEATRE**  
*The Trojan Women*  
Dal Theatre Productions

Unfortunately, theatre is often a distant, unapproachable experience for the audience. In the production of *The Trojan Women* on the other hand, the audience is sent on a journey into anguish and despair, and sometimes humour, but most importantly thought.

At first we are struck by the conventional aspects of the play, namely a strict adherence to Greek tragic theatre (for all you Classics and Theatre students this will be immediately obvious). The superb costumes, commented on by many members of the audience, and the use of the conventional Greek chorus, create a strong amplification of the feelings and themes of the play.

"Okay," you say, "but what about the play? Is it really worth the time and money to see? If I don't care too much about Greek tragedy or dramaturgy, will I like, or even understand, what's going on?"

Once again a resounding yes, to all questions. First of all, while the play is set in the devastated city of Troy, the language of the play is easily understandable. Further, this is a new interpretation of Euripides' classic, written by Gwendolyn Macewen, and it centres on largely

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contemporary themes: namely war, the role of women in society, and religious faith.

If you are looking for a place to check your brain at the door, a warning must here be inserted to avoid this play at all costs (or to attend but spend your time admiring the costumes and fellow audience members). On the other hand, if you are interested in a thought-provoking mind-bender of an evening, this play will provide a special treat. It directs an exploration of the "disgusting toys of war" and "women(s) live(s) beneath the shadow of men" using the gripping performances of Queen Hecuba, her daughter Cassandra, her daughter-in-law Andromache, and Helen herself.

In the dedication of the play we are given the first indication of where its sympathies lie: "This play is dedicated to the love and spirit of nurturing women everywhere." Certainly

this aspect of the script shines through in the speeches by all the women, including the chorus, with lines such as "men are beautiful, predictable, utter fools." The women in the play share a voice that is intriguing, thought-provoking, and in many cases, an accurate reflection of the feelings of contemporary women. It is difficult to find sympathy for men in the play except for in the portrayal of the Soldier (although even here compassion is matched by a brutal realism in the soldier's outlook).

Going to see *The Trojan Women* is certainly not a conventional evening activity, but it is definitely worth the time and money. The play opens Wednesday, February 12 and runs each evening at 8:00 until Saturday the 15, with a 2:00 p.m. matinee on Saturday as well. Tickets are 10\$, 9\$ for students & seniors. For more information call 494-2233.