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Contextual & Critical Studies
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Assignment – Oedipus: The Visionary.

Oedipus: The Visionary
21st November 2008
Jellicoe Theatre

This play is a modern adaptation of the Greek classic Oedipus, which, in Greek Mythology was about a man named Oedipus, who was the son of King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes. It was believed that a curse on Laius foretold that any son born of Jocasta would end up killing him.

Sophocles retold this famous myth in his tragic play, *Oedipus Rex (Oedipus the King)*

Oedipus: The Visionary is a controversial play with an impacting twist, performed by National Diploma Performing Arts Students in their Second year and adapted by David Greig, the play was made to shock people with its use of bad language and scandalous storyline. Set in Africa, Oedipus embarks on a quest to find the killer of Laius (the former king), but as his search continues, startling secrets and prophecies are revealed.

Although the play is originally very old, it has been brought to modern times, with modern language and clothing used throughout.

Whilst the audience are entering the theatre the set has ambient orange lighting and fast paced energetic music in the background.

The energy of the play is supposed to be quite high but I personally found it to be a little laid back at times, although many of the lines were chanted in groups by the Thebans to create volume, I couldn't feel a great deal of energy during these moments.

However, the actor who played Oedipus was very good. He made me feel how I believe he intended to make the audience feel by standing close to people he was shouting at, causing tension throughout most of the play. He also had a good level of energy about him, always acting the part well apart from a few occasions on which he forgot his limp and walked perfectly normally.

The Thebans always acted in a large group which I think was done to try to create a feeling of volume, denoting that there were a lot of them at the times and they always stuck together.

The Thebans were all wearing black and white, apart from the priest who stood out a little more by wearing a white Nike t-shirt, perhaps being a part of the modernisation but I still don't think that it fitted in very well as there was still a mixture of old style clothes during the play too, such as the jackets worn by the guards.

Creole was played very well and I think the actor pulled off the drunken and crazy nature that Creole tended to portray during the play.

The relationship between Oedipus and Jocaster came across as being very strong, as there were a lot of moments of closeness between them where they would be holding hands or putting their arms around each other whilst talking. This was played well by both Oedipus and Jocaster who acted the scenes with a great deal of sincerity.

The set was designed with pillars either end of the stage and mountains in the background, to one side of the stage was a pool and table, separated by a tall fence with a gate in the middle. When the scene changed, the stage was changed by moving the fence to different areas to create a different partition which I think worked really well.

There were a few props used within the play such as the table and chairs, fence, gun and beer bottles which were filled with something which looked the same colour as beer but could have been improved by looking fizzier when poured out into the glasses.

Throughout the play there was use of African tribal music which fitted the overall feel of the play perfectly.

Lighting was used to create different feels too; there was orange lighting on the stage throughout the day to represent the sun shining down on them, and blue lighting at night to portray the night sky.

Overall I think that the play was impressive and doesn't particularly need that much improvement.

The cast all kept in character and were convincing whilst performing the play.

Oedipus was adapted to shock the audience and I think that it shocked me, not only with the frequent cursing but also because I had no idea what the storyline was about and was not expecting what happened to happen!

I would recommend seeing the play if you are interested in seeing the modern adaptation, but personally feel that as gripping as the twist in the play is, if I had already seen the play before elsewhere I wouldn't feel the need to see it again.