

THEATER

The Mary Goldwater Awards

Theatre Lobby's 13th annual award ceremony will take place on Monday, April 24, 2000, at 8:00 p.m. at the Writer's Center, 4508 Walsh St., Bethesda, Md. (Phone: 301/654-8664). The outstanding work of five Washington area theater artists and two groups will be honored:

***John Benoit**, actor, for his role as the writer in *The Good Doctor*, by Neil Simon, Stanislavsky Theater Studio with Theater J.

***Catherine Flye**, actress and director, for her leadership in the Interact Theatre Company, and for her acting in *Blue Heart*, by Caryl Churchill, at Studio Theatre.

***Brian Keating**, sound designer, for *Edmund*, by David Mamet, at Source

Theatre, *R & J* at the Folger, and *Hughie*, by Eugene O'Neill, Washington Stage Guild at Source Theatre.

***Lisa Rose Middleton**, director, for *Inns and Outs*, by Cateen Sinnette Jennings, at Source Theatre.

***Kate Norris**, actress, for her roles in *The Adding Machine*, by Elmer Rice, at the Washington Jewish Theatre, *Bug*, by Tracy Letts, at Woolly Mammoth Theatre, *Hamlet* at the Folger, and *Taming of the Shrew* at the Washington Shakespeare Company.

***The Keegan Theatre**, for the high quality of their productions, especially the recent *Dancing at Lughnasa*, by Brian

Friel.

***The Stanislavsky Theater Studio**, for its amazing synthesis of movement, words, music and design, especially in *The Idiot*, adapted from Dostoevsky.

Theatre Lobby was founded as a pocket theater producing plays from 1950 until 1972, when its carriage house building in St. Matthew's Court was torn down. In 1985, upon the death of Mary Goldwater, a talented actress as well as TL's major supporter, a trust fund was established in her memory. The Mary Goldwater Awards recognize theater artists who show excellence despite the constraints of limited resources.

Elektra/Agamemnon

Klytemnestra/Clytemnestra

■ Terri Corcoran

Two generations of murderous Greek tragedy are currently on stage in D.C. as SCENA Theatre presents Euripides' *Elektra* (through April 30 at the Warehouse Theatre, 1021 7th St., NW), and the Georgetown Theatre Company does a lively adaptation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* by William Ramsay (through April 15 at Grace Church in Georgetown). Both plays portray the horrible cycle of violence begetting more violence, as a series of revengeful murders is carried out within ancient Greece's House of Atreus, while the ever present mythological gods manipulate – and sometimes laugh at – these poor mortals.

SCENA's Robert McNamara has mounted and directs an extraordinary production of *Elektra*, in a translation by Kenneth McLeish. Performed in a rather ramshackle (but promising!) theater space, it's easy to get into the play's mood of destruction and chaos. It's not even possible to tell where Michael Stepowany's effectively abstract set design separates from the building around it – the set is a very natural outgrowth of the theater itself.

The cast – mostly unfamiliar names to Washington area audiences – are superbly compelling actors. The drama is intense, but never burdensome as the play's pace is swift and to the point and accented with some dark humor. The "chorus" here is very cleverly conceived: three people (Ellen Boggs, Melanie Tatum, Kim Curtis) are placed above and below on platforms

with microphones, dressed like punk rockers (costumes by Jelena Vukmirovic). They enhance the proceedings with commentary and background on the story in precisely crafted and choreographed poetic words/songs; they are most effective at portraying the inner demons of the conscience-torn characters.

Actress Lara Crawford Ring is breathtaking in her performance of Elektra. It would be hard to find more capable or striking actors than Ring and the rest of the cast. Thomas Adrian Simpson is immediately commanding as Elektra's husband the farmer when he opens the play with an introductory monologue. Eric Schoen, as Elektra's brother Orestes, is masterful – the emotional hysteria of Elektra and Orestes upon murdering their mother Klytemnestra is one of the most outstanding acting/directing sequences to be witnessed anywhere!

Ioanna Gavakou, straight from Greece, is powerfully imposing (and darkly comical) as Klytemnestra. The authentic Greek accent doesn't hurt either! David Harscheid is a delightful Old Man. Teman Treadway plays Orestes' friend Pylades and also teams up with Schoen as the menacingly humorous Kastor and Polydeukes, Klytemnestra's deceased brothers-turned-gods who sum up the play in a cleverly unorthodox way! Intermittent videos created by Robert McNamara and played on three onstage monitors are interesting, but are more distracting than

they are necessary – the action onstage is more than sufficient to hold one's attention and grippingly tell the story.

Across town at the Georgetown Theatre Company, the mood is somewhat lighter in the story of Agamemnon, who sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia to the gods in return for favorable winds to sail his ship to fight in the Trojan War for his brother Menelaus. Upon his victorious return from Troy, his wife Clytemnestra (mother of Elektra and Orestes) and her lover Aegisthus murder Agamemnon, leading to Elektra's and Orestes' revenge of their father's death in *Elektra*.

William Ramsay has written a humorous, upbeat version of *Agamemnon*, centering around the god Hermes (a delightful Ricardo Frederick Evans in gold-winged sneakers), who narrates and is very amused by the treacherous deeds of the mortals in whose lives he interferes. The script is clearly written and the play is staged and directed creatively by A. Lorraine Robinson, making intelligent use of a very small theater space.

The play isn't all comedy – the tragic dilemmas and sufferings of Agamemnon (Charles Wellington Young), Clytemnestra (Catherine Aselford) and Iphigenia (Yan Xi) are in abundance, although not as searing as in *Elektra*. Mr. Young is a strong focal point as Agamemnon.

Here, the Greek chorus is handled artfully by the expressive talents of Alia Faith Williams and Mikael Manoukian.