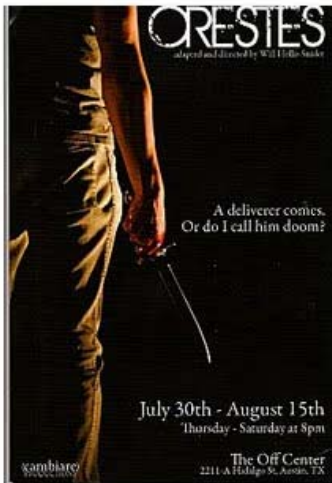


Orestes: Classic Greek drama with intensity that doesn't quit

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Any theater fan in Austin will tell you that a trip to the Off Center always promises something unique and interesting, and Orestes, the latest production by Cambiare Productions, doesn't disappoint. A modern adaptation that still has its roots firmly planted in Greek soil, this classic story tells the tale of a man ordered by the gods to kill his mother in revenge for the murder of his father, which inevitably leads to him being haunted by furies and hunted by his men. Adapted and directed by Will Hollis Snider, the force behind Gobotrick's The Nina Variations and Elektra, as well as HBMG Foundation's Sonata Escondida, and starring a cast of some of Austin's best, the show is full of intensity, leaving audiences aghast by play's end.

One of the strangest, and at times, most difficult, parts of Greek theater is how much history is involved. Coming into the play without some basic knowledge of the Trojan War and the events of the Iliad and the Odyssey might be harmful to the experience, since so much of the play relies upon those histories to tell its story. The death of Agamemnon, the killing of Iphigenia, and Menelaus's war to save Helen all are central points in the story, and without knowing the back story, things can get confusing at times. That said, even non-history buffs will find the play's bold performances and avant-garde direction enjoyable.

We first meet Gabriel Luna's titular character as he is being haunted by furies, roaring with the frustration of the damned, and things don't ever seem to calm down. There's hardly a moment in the play where he isn't pulling his hair out and screaming, which in most cases would be a sign of over-the-top acting, but in the case of this play, it fits right in. Most of the characters in the show crank their energy level to 11, and the tension just doesn't quit. Despite the intensity, there are few performances in the piece short of stellar, with even the smallest roles bringing out their best. One particular actress bringing the best out of a small role is La Tasha Stephens as the Voice of the People, who practically tears the heavens with her righteous anger, who may not spend much time officially on stage, but makes the most of her few minutes in the spotlight. Also delivering the goods within a small window of time is Steffanie Ngo-Hatchie, who brings one of the few upbeat performances in the show, giving us a starry-eyed, innocent in Iphigenia, which makes her end even more tragic. The females seemed to steal the show a large chunk of the time, from Molly McKee's beautiful performance as Orestes' sister Elektra, to the heartbreaking performance of Karina Dominguez as his mother, Klytaimnestra, with the only weak link lying in Smaranda Ciceu's Helen, who never quite can get across the right level of emotion for the role. The boys also bring the goods, from the driven, no-nonsense king Menelaus, as performed by Cambiare artistic director Travis Bedard, who also doubles as co-producer and scenic director, to Derek Kolluri's painfully honest performance as Orestes' father Agamemnon.



Whether you're a fan of Greek theater or new to the whole scene, there's something for everyone to like with Cambiare's latest production. Those expecting a light-hearted show, however, should look elsewhere, because this show brings the tension early, and will have you on the edge of your seat, biting your nails until the show's finale.

Orestes is playing at the Off Center until August 15th, so be sure to get out to and see it before it leaves Austin for good. To purchase tickets and find out information on upcoming shows from the company, be sure to visit the website for [Cambiare Productions](#).