Written by Thom White Tuesday, 29 January 2013 06:00



Friday's world-premiere performance of playwright Tommy Smith's *The Bock Eye* – a modernized adaptation of Euripides'

The Bacchae -

seemed much longer than the 60 minutes it runs from beginning to end. That's not, however, because the piece is dull, or because director Saffron Henke's pacing is too slow. It's because the production is so packed with entertainment and clever and hilarious lines that it seems too much to be contained in just one hour. I enjoyed Augustana College's presentation of this new work so greatly that I was a bit exhausted at its end, and gasped when I looked at my phone and saw that it was only 8:30; I was shocked that I could laugh so much in so little time.

Smith's play follows the plot, roughly, of the original Greek tragedy of Dionysis, the demigod of wine and ritualistic madness who was born out of Zeus' leg when Dionysis' then-pregnant mortal mother was killed by Hera. Dionysis wants his heritage and his right to full godhood known – which he plans on accomplishing by using his godly powers to drive a town into ecstasy – and he also wants revenge on his mortal family for their unintentional prevention of his full godliness. In *The Bock Eye*, Smith abandons the language of Euripides in favor of more modern dialogue, with profanity liberally and hilariously peppered throughout the play. (I'm fairly certain Euripides' version doesn't include the line, "It's a rap battle, bitches!") And not only is Smith's script sometimes outrageously funny, but his plot is also interesting, and continually had me eager to know what would happen next all the way to the show's conclusion (one that's different from *The Bacchae*'s).

Henke keeps the pace of the presentation moving at an almost rapid clip, which helps create a frenzy of fun as we follow the debaucherous madness that's unfolding on stage. The design concepts by costumer Adam Parboosingh, meanwhile, match the play's descent into sexual chaos, most noticeably in the costumes of the female Greek chorus. Initially, these five females (played by Rowan Crow, Victoria Dudley, Alyssa Nelson, Elise Roberson, and Aubrey Waddick) are beautifully dressed in period clothing of different decades – a Greek toga (of course), a U.S. Civil War-era gown, a 1950's-style outfit complete with pillbox hat and veil, a 1960s-mod dress patterned with colored squares, and a modern business suit. Yet as the play progresses, their wardrobe and appearances gradually grow disheveled, with skirts tucked into odd places, hair increasingly ratted, and makeup smudged across their faces.

Diony-mite!: "The Bock Eye," at Augustana College through February 3

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