



Rude Mechanicals Actually Fix TROILUS AND CRESSIDA with FIXING TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

by Joni Lorraine Mar. 15, 2018

Much to the chagrin of a theatre-goer and theatre practitioner or two, I am always willing to admit, a tad shamefully if I must, that I am a theatre geek who isn't into Shakespeare. Despite the surprising ease with which learning Shakespeare's lines has come to me when playing a role, or, despite how juicy those roles were, I still can only conjure up a general respect for his works and an occasional appreciation for any one single production. And then The Rudes starting fixing him. And I can't say no to The Rudes. It seems from the show notes and the execution of this production of FIXING TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, that the Rudes were thinking specifically of me when they began their series of fixing Shakespeare. Third in the series, this version of TROILUS AND CRESSIDA might be closer to what Shakespeare intended in his day. I'll leave that debate to scholars, but suffice it to say, if Shakespeare was produced like this as a rule, teenagers would eagerly attend the theatre to learn more. And I mean that in a good way.

The third in The Rudes series of fixing Shakespeare, FIXING TROILUS AND CRESSIDA is, like TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, still a play about the Trojan War. It's still about Troilus and Cressida (played charmingly by [Noel Gaulin](#) and a simply stunning Crystal Bird Caviel) who are brought together by Pandarini (Cassandra Reveles). It's still about Achilles ([John Christopher](#)) and a bunch of other warring Trojans and Greeks, namely Ulysses ([Jeff Mills](#)) and Agamemnon (who in this version is Agamomnem, "kind of a big deal," (played just brilliantly by kind of a big deal Lauren Lane.) This version still has Troilus and Cressida falling in love, getting it on and then Cressida becomes a Trojan prisoner of war. Meanwhile, her father Calchas who had been captured by the Greeks (Mical Trejo) is traded as well. Troilus's brothers Paris (Derek Kolluri) and Hector (Rommel Sulit) are war crazed and obsessed, and Hector is more than willing to kill Achilles despite his sister Cassandra's (Kelli Bland) prophecies that he will fail. As in the original, Achilles is unwilling to fight, until his lover Patroclus (Vincent Tomasino) is killed. Helen, yes of Troy (a sublime Catherine Grady) is still questioning her place in the whole story. Lots of people die, and then, the Trojans send that horse. Did I give it away? Oops.

Director Alexandra Bassiakou Shaw has done terrific work here with [Kirk Lynn](#)'s script, and in the rehearsal space at Zach, staged as a thrust, Shaw makes sure no one misses a moment of the action. And her casting is just about perfect (and DIVERSE!) Shaw (and writer Lynn) has recognized that one of TROILUS AND CRESSIDA's chief issues is in how much it swings from bawdy comedy to tragedy, and, they, well, they fixed it. It's possible you won't even notice the long first act. Every love scene plays out authentically. Gaulin and Caviel stay believably rooted in a genuine sense of love, and Grady gives us a strong no nonsense Helen in the midst of much mayhem and barking about battle and war. And the mayhem and barking are suited to this version of TROILUS AND CRESSIDA as well, played hilariously by the rest of the excellent cast, but none so inspired as Lauren Lane as Agamomnem. And when the cast must settle in for Act II and take on the tragic, Shaw's direction is neither jolting nor confusing, we follow the actors right where they take us.

The lighting and sound are straight-forward in this production, and the set I thought, a tad disappointing. However, it cannot be emphasized enough that The Rudes are making due with the spaces available to them, committed as they are to bringing their work to each of Austin's ten districts after a 300% increase in their rent caused a loss of their own space (and the space of many other theatre companies in Austin.) I echo the Rudes information in the program for the show - if it's disappointing that such brilliant talent as the [Rude Mechs](#) are being "priced out of your civic life," let your Councilperson know. And support the theatre arts in this community. It's easy to do when there are shows like FIXING TROILUS AND CRESSIDA to see.