

CurtainUp Review

Hecuba

By Simon Saltzman

“Be like a painter. Stand back; see me in perspective.”
---Hecuba, pleading with Agamemnon

Thanks to Kristin Linklater, it is time to reverse the age old biblical quotation often attributed to teachers (Mt 23:2-3 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.") Linklater has some fine acting credits, but she is most renowned over the past 40 years as a teacher of voice and speech training, as well as Shakespeare.

To see and hear Linklater's astonishing performance as Hecuba in Euripides' Greek classic is a great treat. Her concentrated visceral fury as the fallen Queen of Troy never wanes but steadily builds into a towering inferno of dramatic intensity. Aided by an easy to access, yet lyrical, translation by William Arrowsmith, Linklater heads up a company that cannot help but be responsive to the onslaught of her words, the expressiveness of her face and the vividness of her body language.

Largely as the result of Helen's actions, the Trojan kingdom is being ransacked and decimated by the victorious Greeks. Pity the once proud Trojan queen who, with her daughter Polyxena (Heather Tom) and the rest of the Trojan women (chorus), is now enslaved. With her bare feet wrapped with narrow strips of cloth, her short cropped white hair virtually bristling with rage, and her loose royal garment free to follow the centrifugal force within, we see Linklater become an emotional eddy drawing to her everyone who comes within her range.