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Phèdre
Written by Jean Racine
Translated by Wallace Fowlie
Directed by Aubrey Snowden
The Access Theater Gallery
380 Broadway, 4th Floor
212-352-3101

Review by Carly Dahlen

The evocative opening dance number in Aubrey Snowden's *Phèdre* transports us into a postmodern world of ancient politics mixed with tabloid-worthy gossip. The play, written by 17th century playwright Jean Racine and presented by the Wide Eyed Productions company, features characters of classic nobility updated to reflect today's royalty: the Hollywood elite. From an incestuous obsession, to an illicit affair, to a lie that overtakes the characters, the events in the play fit the bill for a tabloid-era interpretation.



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Entertainment Greekly: Jake Paque and Genevieve Gearhart in an update of Jean Racine's *Phedre*.

The story centers on Phèdre (Kym Smith), an aging Hollywood actress grieving the disappearance of her high-powered producer husband, Theseus (Colin McFadden). In the midst of her mourning, Phèdre professes her love for her stepson, Hippolytus (Jake Paque) — a brooding youth hopelessly attracted to the young starlet Aricia (Genevieve Gearhart). These complex relationships between characters become even more complicated when Theseus suddenly returns, and Phèdre's assistant, Oenone (Vanessa Gibens), concocts a lie to defend her mistress' honor to Theseus. Oenone's plan backfires, events spiral out of control and tragedy ensues for all involved.

Though the classic play is, at times, out of sync with its contemporary setting, the emotive performances — especially by Paque, Smith and McFadden — overshadow any anachronistic inconsistencies. The actors interpret the classic text with ease, and successfully communicate complex emotions through the dense dialogue. Even with the actors' successful interpretation of Racine's words, it would be helpful to see a more consistent use of Hollywood tabloid elements to further communicate the story to a contemporary audience. In spite of some thematic and temporal irregularities within the production, there are a few moments of effective postmodern interpretation through the use of multimedia elements, a techno/alternative rock soundtrack and group dance and movement. Also, the sparse set and modern-day costumes allow for further audience interpretation of time and space. Overall, *Phèdre* is an innovative approach to classic tragedy, and a successful showcase of young New York acting talent.



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