



JANUARY 24, 2008

An Imaginative *Argonautika*



Shakespeare Theater's production of *Argonautika* is one of the most visually-stunning works we've seen in quite some time on the D.C. stage. And it's not just something pretty - director Mary Zimmerman, who also wrote the piece, has taken a wholly imaginative approach to representing this somewhat familiar Greek tale of hubris, adventure and tragedy.

The *Argonautika* is a journey tale, like many Greek myths. Our hero Jason is nephew to Pelias, who has a tenuous grasp on his throne and feels threatened that Jason will usurp it. To keep him out of his hair, he sends Jason and a group of warriors (with familiar figures like Hercules and Atlanta among them - one of the play's funniest moment is when Jason's crew introduces themselves in a rap-style rhyming "roll call") on a quest for a golden fleece. Naturally, this quest has obstacles.

Zimmerman's vision translates into a lot of exciting things to watch on stage, whether it's actors suddenly

transforming into constellations with the help of Christmas lights and wires, or a sea monster emerging from a gyrating green blanket thanks merely to an actor plopping on a set of googly eyes. The whimsical touches can make the show almost feel like a children's bedtime story at times, though the dialog and material is much more mature than that.

The tone of the play is casual and funny - slang expressions like "Oh, yes he DID!" are prevalent. The accessible script combined with the brilliant visuals make the ancient myth seem like an entirely new work. The second act does take on a more solemn tone - this story, after all, is the one that ends with the doomed relationship between Jason and Medea, one of history's most tragic figures. But the adjustment happens naturally, and adds a turn of poignancy to the work.

The performances in *Argonautika* are largely more workhorse than standout, though Sofia Jean Gomez makes for a particularly formidable Athena, and Allen Gilmore a crazily insecure Pelias. But in this production, the actors serve more as marionettes for Zimmerman to act out her creative concepts, and that's a perfectly respectful calling for such an impressive vision.

The *Argonautika* runs through March 2 at Shakespeare's Lansburgh Theater. Tickets are available [online](#).

By [Missy Frederick](#) in [Arts and Events](#) | [Link](#) | [Comments \(5\)](#) | [Recommend this!](#) | [\[+\]](#)
Tags: [Shakespeare Theater](#), [theater](#)

EMAIL THIS ENTRY

To: From: Message (optional):



COMMENTS (5)



By [justjack75](#)
[1] | 01/24/08 12:49PM

Not to be pedantic, but it's the Shakespeare Theatre Company and the Lansburgh Theatre.



By [chrisafer](#)
[2] | 01/24/08 03:21PM

Whatever!



By [chrisafer](#)
[3] | 01/24/08 03:22PM

Whatever!



By [justjack75](#)
[4] | 01/25/08 10:46AM

@chrisafer: I'm not saying that they can't refer to the theatrical arts in general as theater (vs. theatre) which might be an editorial preference. But we're talking about the name of an organization and a place, i.e. proper nouns, and that's not an editorial decision that can be made.



By [justjack75](#)
[5] | 01/25/08 10:48AM

@chrisafer: I'm not saying that they can't refer to the theatrical arts in general as theater (vs. theatre) which

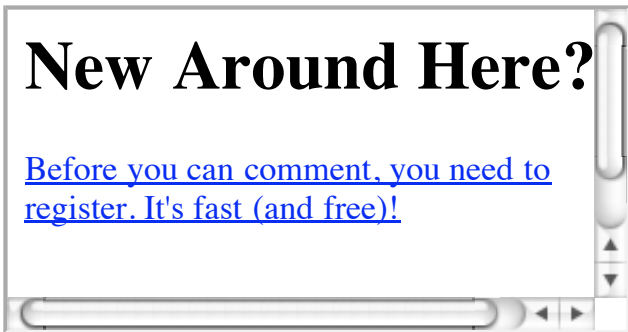
might be an editorial preference. But we're talking about the name of an organization and a place, i.e. proper nouns, and that's not an editorial decision that can be made.

POST A COMMENT ([COMMENT POLICY](#))

You must be logged in to comment. [Please Register Today](#)
sign in

Username:

Password:



New Around Here?

[Before you can comment, you need to register. It's fast \(and free\)!](#)

