

BETTY CAPLAN

MEDEA PROJECT

Barry Edwards' Medea Project is a bold effort. It makes no attempt to tell the whole story, the excitement resides in the exploration of key highlighted moments. After all, we know the story, don't we? Although few are aware that Euripides, a smart operator if ever there was one, refashioned the ending to suit his patrons the Corinthians (see Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*), but that's another story. The four actresses are all Medea, the four actors all play Jason, juxtaposing different aspects of the drama to bring out the inherent irony.

Using a rich collage of texts drawn from Heiner Muller, Jean Anouilh and Euripedes, Edwards' production works entirely on the emotional level. Much of the action is purely physical, the actors expressing extremes of rage and passion and at all times the text is made concrete. Medea tells her children sweetly to say goodbye to their father whilst she is being carried off like a rag doll over Jason's shoulder. Medea's helpless fury is underlined in a passage, repeated several times, in which she attacks him violently whilst he stands, wall-like, making no response. The fact that this is duplicated four times makes it even more powerful. There is perhaps nothing more crippling than having our feelings completely ignored. The actors become the victimised children, playing wildly with water, reminding us of the fate which awaits them and of which they remain innocent.

A simple set constructed of wooden slats is interestingly used; at time the actors beat against it as though it were the walls of a prison, whilst at other times it seems to act as a container for their unmanageable feelings. At the end, in a solemn ritual, the whole tings comes down like the Rhine bursting its banks at the end of Wagner's Ring Cycle, and the actors walk over it into the audience, a splendid gesture which crease a fitting ending.

Altogether it is a remarkable tour-de-force on Edwards' part to have created a piece which

stretches the actors and offers genuine theatre to an audience as well. It is inspiring to see that some people aren't intimidated by the current climate.