

St. Louis Eats and Drinks With Joe and Ann Pollack

Joe and Ann Pollack, St. Louis' most experienced food writers, lead a tour of restaurants, wines, shops and other interesting places. When we travel, you will travel with us. When we eat, drink, cook, entertain or read, when we go to the movies or theater, we'll share our knowledge and opinions. Come along for the ride!! Copyright 2011 Joe Pollack and Ann Lemons Pollack

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Till We Have Faces

The myths of the Greeks and Romans, their stories of gods and goddesses, faith and infidelity, love and loss, have been influencing writers ever since. Right up to last night at the Fontbonne University theater.

The ancient myths influenced C. S. Lewis, who wrote a novel, "Till We Have Faces," about Psyche. Lewis' book influenced Deanna Jent, who read it in college. Now the artistic director of the Mustard Seed Theatre, she adapted the novel as a dramatic, powerful play, and it opened last night, torun through May 1. Jent also directed, on a Dunsai Dai-designed set that could double for Elsinore, or Dunsinane. In an interesting twist, she chose to have Michelle Hand and Sarah Cannon both play the role of Orual, first princess and later queen. Cannon portrays her as a young woman, Hand as an older version, but they often are on the stage at the same time, conversing, arguing, plotting. It works surprisingly well.

The fine cast also includes Robert Mitchell as the King, perfectly regal and a viciously arrogant chauvinist, even where his own daughters are concerned; Richard Lewis, just right and wonderfully unctuous as the High Priest; Bess Moynihan and Rory Lipede as Orual's sisters, Redival and Psyche, respectively; Shaun Sheley as Bardia and Gary Glasgow as Fox, advisers to the king. Far upstage, in rich-looking, simple gowns, Jill Ritter is extremely impressive as the priestess, part Greek chorus, part narrator, part warning voice that comes in the night.

While it gets a little talky from time to time, the play holds interests, though Lewis fans may be held a little more tightly. Mitchell's heinous attitude toward his daughters, who have absolutely no value where he shops, is echoed through the centuries, and the three daughters are individual types, Cannon as the loyal daughter who eventually reaches a breaking point, Moynihan excellent as the epitome of selfishness and a person about as deep as the River des Peres in July. Psyche is not of this world.

The story is as old as Greek civilization, as contemporary as today. Both Lewis and Jent have looked deeply into people, and have not always liked what they saw.

Till We Have Faces, a production of the Mustard Seed Theatre, opened last night at the Fontbonne University Theater, to run through May

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