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## REVIEW: MOLORA

By **Belinda Otas**

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### 4 Stars

When you get an actress, who lives and breathes the words of her character on stage and exteriorises every action, you are onto something. Set within the intimate confines of the Pit, at the Barbican, the playwright and director Yael Farber has taken the ancient Oresteia Trilogy and given it a modern day South African twist.

*Molora*, which means *ash*, is based on the Greek tragedy of Klytemnestra and revolves round her relationship with her daughter Elektra and her son Orestes.

Elektra watches on as her mother takes the life of her beloved father. She is soon resigned to the role of a slave in her father's home - a place that is rightly her inheritance. She is also subjected to inhumane torture at the hands of the woman who gave birth to her. At the same token, she awaits the return of her brother Orestes.

The stage action is gruesome as Klytemnestra inflicts the pain of cigarette burns, drowning and the use of the wet-bag to try and suffocate her daughter. Klytemnestra heartlessness was on display for all to see during the first half of this play.

However, the road to reconciliation is even harder as they face up to the reality of life and the fate it has dealt them as a family.

Elektra's hunger for vengeance consumes her to the point where she poses this question: "If you rob us, shall we not revenge?"

Farber cleverly adapts the Oresteia trilogy to tell the story behind the painful healing process experienced by the survivors of post-Apartheid South Africa. The play is set loosely in the atmosphere of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: a time in South Africa in the mid 1990s when perpetrators of crimes under apartheid were given the chance to come clean and their victims were given the chance to know the truth.

For many people on both sides, this was a huge relief. There is an ancient African philosophy that seeks unity and reconciliation rather than revenge and punishment; this play, in the end, is the embodiment of that philosophy.

The performances are equally to be commended as is the writing and direction. Jabulile Tshabalala is formidable as Elektra and takes responsibility for her character throughout the play. At no point did she lose the momentum of the emotions created on stage. Dorothy Ann Gould is enigmatic as Klytemnestra.

At the heart of Farber's interpretation is our ability to forgive when the deeds against us is unforgivable. When do you get to that point where revenge is no longer what drives you but a will to live. Farber has once again gone to the deep reserve of her resources as a writer and director to show what the human mind is capable of.

She is also keen to let you know that revenge is consuming and the ability to move on begins to manifest when you let go of your past in order to regain your future.

*Molora* is intensely powerful, hypnotic and truly engaging.

**It is currently showing at The Barbican until 19 April.**  
For more information, visit: [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)