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Oedipus the King, Mama!

Troubadour Theater Company at the Falcon Theatre

By Dany Margolies

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Feel free to imagine the moment when Matt Walker as Oedipus has his way with the highly padded chesticles of Beth Kennedy as Jocasta—mother and husband of Oedipus— because it shall not be described in terms medical or otherwise here. Don't blame the actors; blame Sophocles. Yikes, what a sick, gory tale. Its cautionary purpose? Fodder for the Troubadour Theater Company, of course, who combines it with the greatest hits of Elvis Presley for an ingeniously side-splitting send-up of both, ahem, art forms.

The largely improvised show arrives crisply at its 90-minute running time. Some bits might be new at each performance. At the show reviewed, after Oedipus gouges his eyes out, Walker donned trick goggles that continually squirted blood. Thank goodness someone thought to provide a blanket of diapers on which Walker and his two daughters sat while the blood flowed plentifully, as he wickedly warbled "Little Sisters." Some gags are as old as comedy: Any actor punched in the mouth spits a tooth far up the aisle. Some are new: Theme music from "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" accompanies the sphinx's riddle. But all is performed with consummate skill and showmanship.

In addition to the inspired, masterly work of Kennedy and Walker (who also directs), there's the shyly silly, subtly hilarious work of Rick Batalla, who solos on accordion, then plays Creon—pronounced "crayon" here in a slow, Mississippi accent. Jen Seifert plays the old messenger with stunning classical seriousness—which of course highlights the shenanigans all around her. As if his stellar singing voice were not enough, James Snyder, as young Elvis, plays guitar. Those playing the Greek chorus step out to take heart-stopping solos. Those with dance skills tap, tumble, and adagio. How deep is the company? Even the bass player sometimes plays an acoustic bass. Now that's deep.

But academics need not despair. Walker uses and abuses Presley's crazy-legged, ball-of-

the-foot walk, as befits the concept here. But because the name Oedipus means "swollen foot," the funny walk is slyly sophisticated. Danielle Thorpe momentarily plays a chicken. As the actor revealed, she holds a master's degree. Welcome to Los Angeles theater.

*Presented by the Troubadour Theater Company at the Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Drive, Burbank. Aug. 21-Sept. 27. Wed.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 4 p.m.
(818) 955-8101. www.falcontheatre.com.*

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