

MOLORA

Barbican Centre, The Pit, Silk Street, EC2

IN MOLORA, South African director Yael Farber uses the Oresteia Trilogy to explore ideas of vengeance, violence and retribution in our modern world.

Performed by just three actors and a Chorus of Xhosa women singing and playing traditional tribal music, the tragedy is stripped down to its bare essentials.

In scenes that deliberately recall the trials of post-apartheid South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission, a white Klytemnestra (Dorothy Ann Gould) defends her cold-blooded murder of her husband Agamemnon, while her daughter Elektra (Jabulile Tshabalala) swears vengeance for her father's death.

The action switches from present to past and back again, Klytemnestra's cruel treatment of Elektra played out graphically on a number of occasions.

But the evening's highlight is certainly the Ngqoko Cultural Group, which grounds the narrative in an African-village-context and distracts from dialogue that too often falls into ponderousness or hysteria.

Farber's decision to be uncompromising in the face of such themes is laudable but at times a lighter touch would benefit the whole.

- JOANNA CAIRD