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Fractured fairy tales

“Mythical Creatures” provides a feminist twist to ancient legends

BY VICTORIA DAVIS

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Mother (Bridget Doxtater) and daughter (Emma Staudenmaier) argue in Miranda Belle's play "Sea Mother."

With their faces hidden behind plain white paper masks, 11 figures dressed in black appear on stage. They freeze, until three more characters arrive, doused in sparkles and blue face paint, running through the frozen statues yelling, "Oh, creatures! Awake, awake, awake! And show the world that you are real!" One by one, the figures take on new life and their images start to transform.

Mythical Creatures, presented through Feb. 9 at the Bartell Theatre by the [Kathie Rasmussen Women's Theater \(KRASS\)](#), is a production of 10 short plays derived from the fairytales we all grew up hearing as a child. The myths of Medusa, Little Red Riding Hood, Scottish selkies, Daphne and Apollo, and others have been reimagined for the modern generation. And they speak deep truths about the women who have always been the backbone of these stories.

"Something that I've tried to do is bring a little more complexity to the women of these myths that often were portrayed as not having any complexity," said director Nichole Young Clarke.

Images of a villainous Medusa, a helpless little girl in a red coat, and lovesick selkies are shattered the moment these figures take off their white masks.

Meaghan Heires plays a confident and curvy Red, who aims to use her adult wiles to claim her long-awaited love prize: The Big Bad Wolf. A wonderfully animated Annie Jay portrays a neglected and vulnerable Medusa, while Bridget Doxtater delivers a tearful performance as an enslaved selkie who longs for freedom for herself and her daughter. The performances are emotionally riveting.

These performers, as well as their male co-stars (Ashton LaReau, Steven E. Smith and August Hirschboeck), give these stories a new life. One of the most powerful pieces is Patricia Davis' reimagining of the Greek myth of Daphne (Nicole Lane Starr), a nymph who is turned into a laurel tree after escaping Apollo's attempted rape. Daphne and her father, the river god Peneus (Shauntel Burzynski), argue, with Daphne demanding to know

why she has to be punished for Apollo's evil. This performance alone, which left the audience speechless and the room silent, is well worth the price of admission.

The evening also features comedic takes on classic tales. A mother employs the Boogeyman to make her son go to sleep, a young woman tries to kill her boyfriend when she thinks he's a vampire, and Jason, leader of the Argonauts, finds himself caught up in a dragon's drag show.

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