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## Review: Getty Villa Outdoor Performance of 'Persians' by Aeschylus

09/05/2014, Rowanne Henry (<http://museumstories.com/author/rowanne/>), [Leave a comment \(http://museumstories.com/2014/09/05/getty-villas-outdoor-theater-season-opens-persians-by-aeschylus/#respond\)](http://museumstories.com/2014/09/05/getty-villas-outdoor-theater-season-opens-persians-by-aeschylus/#respond)

The Getty Villa's (<http://www.getty.edu/visit/villa/>) popular outdoor theater series opened this week with the play *Persians* ([http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/outdoor\\_theater\\_14.html](http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/outdoor_theater_14.html)) (performances run Thursdays to Saturdays through September 27). It's hard to imagine a more beautiful, and fitting, setting for this Greek tragedy than the Villa's amphitheater. The performance starts at 8:00 pm but gates open at 6:00 pm which gives you ample time to visit the Museum galleries, the gardens, and have a

twilight dinner in the Museum's Cafe  
([http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/outdoor\\_theater/dining\\_options\\_14.html](http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/outdoor_theater/dining_options_14.html)) before the play starts.



([http://i0.wp.com/museumstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/siti\\_sara.jpg](http://i0.wp.com/museumstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/siti_sara.jpg))  
*Persians* is noteworthy for several reasons, said Getty Museum Director Timothy Potts during his opening remarks. Written over two thousand years ago, it's the Western World's oldest surviving play; and the author Aeschylus is one of the most influential ancient Greek playwrights.

In the play, Aeschylus recounts the Battle of Salamis when the outnumbered Greeks defeated the Persian naval forces in 480 B.C. What's most surprising about the play is that Aeschylus (who probably fought in the battle himself) tells the story from the defeated Persian's point of view. Rather than glorifying the Greek victory, Aeschylus presents a sympathetic portrayal of the devastated Persian royal court.

A grieving queen Atossa summons her deceased husband Darius from the gates of Hades to bear witness to the tragic consequences of their son's, King Xerxes, quest for power and conquest. Few Persian soldiers survived the battle of Salamis which left the Persian Empire broken and defenseless. As Darius' ghost wisely exclaims, "All wealth is worthless in the underworld."



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/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Getty-Persians-Performance1.jpg) New York based *SITI Company* presents a contemporary translation of the play which, according to director Anne Bogart (<http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/persians-an-ancient-play-remade-for-the-21st-century/>), was no easy feat. When the play was originally performed, it was only half spoken word, the other half was comprised of archaic song and dance. Even this updated version can be difficult to follow at times so I recommend reading the Getty's very accessible *A Guide to Aeschylus' Persians* (<http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/a-guide-to-aeschylus-persians/>) by Shelby Brown before you see it.

The 90 minute production has no intermission. And the appropriately stripped down, minimalist, production demands the audience's full attention. You won't find any high-tech special effects, laser light shows, or blaring musical scores in this play. But in its simplicity, I found myself moved by the plays' smallest moments.

The mesmerizing image of the cast swaying silently together to the rhythmic sounds of the sea still lingers in my mind. The image poignantly describes, without words, the horror of the fallen Persian soldiers' bodies left drifting in the bloody tides of the battle's aftermath. Though the play is ancient, Aeschylus' cautionary tale of unbridled political ambition remains as relevant today as it was in antiquity.

#### **TICKET INFORMATION:**

Where: Getty Villa Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman Theater, 17985 Pacific Coast Highway, Pacific Palisades

When: 8 p.m. Thursdays to Saturdays through September 27, 2014

Running time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Tickets: \$40 to \$45. To buy tickets call (310) 440-7300 or go online ([http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/outdoor\\_theater\\_14.html](http://www.getty.edu/museum/programs/performances/outdoor_theater_14.html)).


#### **IMAGE CREDITS:**


SITI Company's production-in-progress for Aeschylus's *Persians* at the Getty Villa. Photo: Sara Radamacher.


All other photos by Rowanne Henry, Museum


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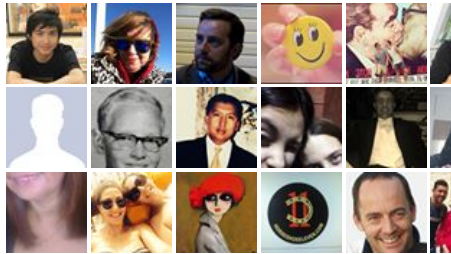
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