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Culture Count

They've Come a Long Way From 415 B.C.

The SITi Company's new production of the Euripides classic, "Trojan Women," is loyal to the story-telling of the original play. But, said its director, Anne Bogart, there's a lot less wailing than in traditional productions of

the play.

"Their city was attacked, but they're not screaming," she said. "Troy was at the height of culture. The women were highly educated and sophisticated. They're trying to figure out how to move forward."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, Ms. Bogart finds herself thinking often about New York and New Jersey's most vulnerable survivors, and their similar sense of purpose. "They're not screaming. They're talking to each other about how to pick up the pieces. The conversation is of the highest quality."

Scholars and academics, who have dated the first production of "The Trojan Women" to 415 B.C., often dismiss it dramatically, according to Ms. Bogart. "They say it's a bad play: It's a bunch of unhappy women who become more unhappy as the story progresses. And yet it's been wildly popular with audiences and nobody quite knows why."

Her hunch is that the post-traumatic psychological landscape is perennially relevant, and that theatre (and this play in particular) feeds the human craving to explore its existential themes in a communal setting. "The words mean so much," she said.

The production also helps mark the 20th anniversary of SITi Company. "One of the reasons people don't leave is that everyone shares a sense of ownership," she said. "From the beginning, one of the priorities was to pay everyone decently. The fact that actors always knew that we fought for them really matters in the long run."

—Lizzie Simon



Erik Brynildsen/The Wall Street Journal