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## Greek tragedy gets intriguing take in 'Iris'

## Love and war wage a battle in world premiere at Red Eye Theater

*Rob Hubbard Special to the Pioneer Press*

"There's nothing like a wedding."  
"There's nothing like a war."

Those phrases are spoken simultaneously early in **Kevin Anthony Kautzman's** "Iris," in its world premiere from Minneapolis' Red Eye Theater. They provide the twin catalysts for conflicting and confluent actions, as the elaborate preparations for a wedding ceremony gradually crack and crumble to reveal that the event is actually intended to be a human sacrifice.

That might sound like some sort of occult-flavored horror flick, but "Iris" is based upon the Greek legend of Iphigenia, a tale told in the plays of Aeschylus and Euripides. **Kautzman** gives it a modern makeover, and it gets the Red Eye treatment in an intriguing and well-executed staging, with the dean of Twin Cities experimental theater companies mixing in plenty of movement and music.

In commissioning a work from **Kautzman**, Red Eye asked the author to engage in open-source playwriting, reading scripts posted online by Charles Mee and transforming one of them into his own (with Mee's avid encouragement). **Kautzman** chose "Iphigenia 2.0" because he wanted to discuss ideas about the attraction and inevitability of war, pitting it against love in a battle for the souls of its characters.

In "Iris," Iphigenia becomes a bubbly bride-to-be, Clytemnestra the manic mother of the bride, and Agamemnon her conflicted father. The audience is given a tour of their internal lives through extended monologues, a structure that might not work were it not for strong performances by the three leads. Celeste J. Busa adopts all of the hyperactive, "Ohmygod"-laced speech patterns that Hollywood has delivered into the mouths of American teenage girls, while John Lilleberg toes the line between stoicism and vulnerability as her worried warrior of a father.

But Melanie Wehrmacher is the standout as Lillian, the Clytemnestra character. She portrays her as a woman perpetually driven to distraction, even when not presented with the idea of her husband killing their daughter.

This passive-aggressive mom's midphrase mood swings provide many of the show's funniest and most chilling moments.

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What: Red Eye Theater's production of "Iris" by **Kevin Anthony Kautzman**

When: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 7 p.m. Sunday; through Oct. 24

Where: Red Eye Theater, 15 W. 14th St., Minneapolis

Tickets: \$20-\$5, available at 612-870-0309 or [redeyetheater.org](http://redeyetheater.org)

Capsule: Love and war wage battle in a Greek tragedy's intriguing update.

Photo: Avey Alexandres

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