

Potent drama in Thomas Noone's *Medea*

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Javier G. Arozena as Jason (left) and Alba Barral as Medea (centre, right) with Thomas Noone Dance in *Medea*
Photo Manu Lozano

Thomas Noone Company in conjunction with Mercat de les Flors, Barcelona, at the Oxford Playhouse

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Maggie Foyer

The character of Medea, who operates at the extreme edge of the spectrum, is a gift for a dramatic dancer and Euripedes' play *Medea* is both a temptation and a challenge for a choreographer. However Thomas Noone, an Englishman working in Spain, has taken the plunge and created a powerful new version of the ancient myth for his company of six talented and very hard working dancers. The UK premiere is part of Dancin' Oxford's 10th birthday celebrations.

The setting is austere, a simple grey drape, the music, a commissioned score from Jim Pinchen, is harsh and unforgiving and it is left to the dancers to inject the blood-red passion. In Alba Barral, Noone has found his Medea. She carries the intensity that defines her every gesture into extreme dance, fierce but always in control. She seldom leaves the stage and in stillness or movement, she is a presence to be reckoned with.

Medea's murder of her children is always shocking but it is Jason, Javier G. Arozena, who has the harder task to win audience sympathy. He is always on the backfoot and a fractious moody presence, but a fine dance partner.

Noone's very physical brand of contemporary dance shapes the story. It is at its most telling in the innovative duets and trios where love and loathing are not always easy to separate. Glauce (Gemma Güell) and her father King Creon (Jerónimo Forteza) join the tangled mix of emotions and alliances. In the interweaving of the dancers, Noone has created space for each to define their characters and prove their worth. The two children, Erik Regoli and Eleonora Tirabassi, provide the youthful innocence in this world of damaged adults and this they do with honest simplicity.