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Mildred Marie Langford and April Nixon in Amina Henry's *Troy* at The Rosenthal Theater. (Photo by Giovanni Solis)

Troy

Reviewed by [Emily Hawkins](#)
Hero Theatre/Rosenthal Theater
Closed

RECOMMENDED

Not being able to provide for her children is a mother's greatest fear. The constant worry and stress about their safety and happiness are present from the moment they are brought into the world. These universal anxieties are on full display in Hero Theatre's current production of *Troy*. As part of their Stories through Classics series, Hero has tasked three playwrights with reimagining classic tales and putting them into a modern context — specifically, tackling an issue that affects our communities.

Amina Henry's premiere of *Troy* transposes the tale of the Trojan women to the ghettos of Los Angeles. At the theatre's downtown location, it's not difficult to picture the impending fate awaiting Holly, a widowed mother, as she struggles to collect enough money to pay for her two months past-due rent. Arriving at the Inner City Arts Rosenthal Theatre, audience members would likely pass a few tents and sleeping bags under freeway overpasses and on street corners. This play portrays what might occur to one of the people living in those tents.

April Nixon's captivating performance as Holly is a nuanced depiction of a mother putting on a brave face, not just for the sake of her children's happiness, but for her own survival. As she recounts the deaths of her sons to Andie (the equally compelling Mildred Marie Langford), she cloaks her anger and disappointment in the guise of acceptance and humor. Langford's caring demeanor evokes sympathy, underscored by her own challenging circumstances as a new mother dealing with absence of her alcoholic boyfriend. In spite of her own problems, she manages to comfort Holly and her daughters.

The musical numbers, which include a mailman's three-minute song about writing letters and a child's lament — she doesn't understand why they're poor when she's a "good girl" — could be dispensed with. While occasionally compelling, they unnecessarily extend the running time and become a bit tedious.

Troy's technical elements usher the audience into Holly and Andie's world of metal wire chairs and secondhand wardrobes. Maggie Dick's costumes capture the essence of each character. Manny's (DeForest Taylor) thuggishness is accentuated by his oversized Lakers Jersey and baggy sweats. Christopher Scott Murillo's apartment building façade, Anthony Aguilar's lighting and Jeremy J. Lee's sound add heightened reality to the story, with their simulation of an impoverished neighborhood.

Leaving the theatre, Cesar Cruz's quote, "Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comforted," resonated in my mind. Perhaps this production has brought comfort to the women from local shelters who have seen it free of charge. And for those of us lucky enough not to have worry over where our next meal might be coming from or if we'll be able to sleep in the same bed every night, it evokes an uncomfortable awareness of others' plight. *Troy* makes an impact that lingers long after the show has ended.

The Rosenthal Theater – Inner City Arts, 720 Kohler St., Downtown L.A.; Closed.
<http://www.heretheatre.org/>. Running time: two hours with one 15-minute intermission.



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