

CRITIC'S CHOICE TOP FIVE PLAYS



Brave take on Euripides: Mairead McKinley (Electra) in *Orestes* at the Tricycle.

Orestes

Tricycle, NW6

Even though we pay dutiful lip-service to Euripides's greatness, today's timid directors run scared of most of his plays. The Shared Experience company, under Nancy Meckler's quirkily inventive direction, bravely begin to close the gap with the rarely revived *Orestes*. This is a fresh, psychologically nuanced reading of the original — though Helen Edmundson's free version of the play, with its brooding meditation on Matricide and Guilt, Revenge and Justice proves almost liberated to the point of escapism. (020 7328 1000).

Until 2 December.

Nicholas de Jongh.

2 Graves

Arts, WC2

A lone actor stands on a bare stage and launches into a murky tale of darts and retribution — in verse. It's not the easiest sell and the newly re-opened Arts Theatre offers a considerable size of auditorium for just one performer. But Jonathan Moore steps up to the oche and has us gripped.

His deadpan estuary accent provides a lovely counterweight to the deliciously baroque account of how one mis-thrown dart, at the 1978 World Championships, comes to wreck a family. (0870 060 1742). Until 7 December.

Fiona Mountford.

Dirty Dancing

The Aldwych, WC2

Dirty Dancing, adapted by Eleanor Bergstein from her fairytale script for the madly popular American movie, proves a virtual replica of the original. And even if it offers little of the film's pelvic-thrust dancing, this stage version offers something distinct and more intimate than the celluloid experience. Josef Brown's muscle-flaunting Johnny Castle and Georgina Rich's virginal Baby bring the game of mutual seduction into close, breathless focus. (0870 4000 805). Booking to 20 October, 2007. NdJ.

Faust

21 Wapping Lane, E1

Inside this abandoned building that looks like a maximum-security prison is a vital hub of theatrical activity. Theatre in

one of the looser senses of the word, for this new work from Punchdrunk is a site-specific installation. Issued with a white mask, you proceed to one of five floors, on which the action unfolds simultaneously in two continuous 90-minute loops. Directors Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle cleverly ensure that the quality of sensory experience more than compensates for the fragmentary narrative. (020 7452 3000). Until 30 December. FM.

Summer and Smoke

Apollo, W1

Of all Tennessee Williams's plays none has been more mysteriously neglected here than this poetic lament for a sexually desolate preacher's daughter. Adrian Noble's production misses Williams's bleak comedy but reveals the play's enduring vitality as Rosamund Pike's Alma seeks a soulful and spiritual bond with the violently sexual Doctor next door, John Buchanan. Williams wrestles fascinatingly with sex and love — and it makes a fine match. (0870 890 1101). Booking to 12 December. NdJ.