

BALKAN BORDELLO PRESS CLIPS

In this international production, you can check into the Balkan Express Motel, if you dare, and fulfill an ancient generational curse. [...] It's the sort of history that might leave a person haunted, and so it does in the angry and eloquent "Balkan Bordello," a contemporary retelling of Aeschylus' "The Oresteia" by the Kosovan playwright Jeton Neziraj. [...] And its cast of 10 includes two Serbian actors who deliver performances of thrilling magnetism — Svetozar Cvetkovic as Aegisthus, Clytemnestra's pompous, prolific poet lover, and Ivan Mihailovic as a war veteran who returns alongside Agamemnon, with the captured Cassandra (Verona Koxha, a Kosovan actor) slung over his shoulder like a sack of grain." – **New York Times**

"Exciting, provocative and painful..." - **Danas, Serbia**

"One theater performance has aroused great interest in the entire Balkans. It is about the wars in the former Yugoslavia, but relies on Greek tragedies and carries a universal anti-war message."

Deutsche Welle

"The theatrical language is as allegorical as it is lyrical. The soldiers swagger, and the shedding of blood always warrants revenge." **American Theatre - USA**

"Neziraj draws on the figure constellation from Aeschylus' Oresteia trilogy. Instead of a royal palace, however, a battered-looking motel is the setting. This is where the war hero Agamemnon returns. This character, played by George Drance, an actor from the cooperating La Mama Theater from New York, can be a warlord of the Balkan Wars, but also an Iraq veteran in the U.S. Army or an Afghanistan veteran in the German Armed Forces. **Taz – Germany**

"The staging by Blerta Neziraj is carnivalesque and full of intentional mess; by the end the stage is carpeted with glitter, dollar bills, business cards and ribbons of toilet paper. **Natasha Tripney for the www.seestage.org [Natasha Tripney writes for The Guardian & The Stage]**

"...imagine that bloodshed is happening everywhere around you, caused by unhealed traumas and unresolved conflicts of the just-finished war. Imagine that even in these morbid circumstances you'll be drawn by turbo-folk music to participate in orgiastic dances. Welcome to the world of *Balkan Bordello*.

This flamboyantly dark anti-war show isn't just rich in story and style, but also in the production's prehistory. **The Theatre Times**

"Balkan Bordello... [...] was a turbo charged mash-up of theatrical styles and cultures. Based on the Oresteia, Balkan Bordello reminded me of a quote from Che Guevara – "history finds us where we are born." Which is to say, history finds us everywhere, if the history of violence and its perpetuation is universal as this play purports it to be -Kosovo's problems, though particular,

aren't just peculiar to Kosovo, they are the problems of the whole world. The play also spoke to a Western society which is starting to face its murderous colonial past. It seemed an apt way to address authorship and artistic responsibility, particularly those of Western powers and countries.

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»Balkan Bordello« tells the story of life in a post-war society based on the ancient »Orestie« trilogy. Originally the play was trimmed for Kosovar warlords who come home in the role of the battle leader Agamemnon and prove to be incapable of integrating into civil society. At the premiere in 2017, Neziraj therefore received death threats from war veterans. The story has now been internationalized as part of a collaboration with La Mama Theater in New York and Atelje 212 in Belgrade. Agamemnon and Klytemnestra are played by US actors, the lover of Klytemnestra and a war companion of Agamemnon's by actors from Serbia. Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, returns to the backward province as a cosmopolitan gay man. He is accompanied by a modern dance teacher who invites players and audience to his workshops and promises them to deal with trauma and personal development. His dance studio is a metaphor for the many so-called civilizing activities of the West. [Neues Deutschland – Germany](#)

“Why don't the moral categories arising from rote, traditional codes ever change? As long as man's mind is in constant war with itself and the world, the cycles of violence will not be broken. This is why Blerta Neziraj directs the play like a nightmarish half-dream, a state of oblivion. This suggests that every individual has the option of breaking free of the spell of this cycle by making their own decisions. When a social norm penetrates deeply into biological functioning, a conflict arises and this conflict can be resolved through a change of norms or by violence, by war. This play asks us to think and make our own choices, to become aware of this possibility, and it tells us that power is the same as responsibility, and even under unbearable circumstances one can make difficult decisions and put a stop to violence.” [Vreme - Serbia](#)

«*Balkan Bordello* is bringing Serbian audiences a brilliant cast of New York actors, performing work by Kosovo's foremost contemporary playwright, whose plays have been translated, published and directed in more than 15 languages. Neziraj has worked with major theaters such as the Volksbühne in Berlin and La MaMa. *Balkan Bordello* is a play about the Agamemnons from Pristina, Belgrade, Podgorica, Tirana, [...] New York, Tel Aviv... so is the play telling us that we need to recognize our own Agamemnons rather than projecting them as being outside of ourselves, onto others? [Danas, Serbia](#)

“Borrowing the setting from the Oresteia, play evokes an archetypal society which emerges from the war in a state of confusion, where the old order and power relations have been subverted, and the new does not seem to have any legitimacy because it is based on pure force”. [Anna Di Lellio](#)