

Theater & Dance

‘Isis’ review: Ancient gods solve a murder, Freud’s involved — what’s hard to follow?

By Jane Horwitz

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“I am Isis, greatest goddess of old!” proclaims a statuesque blonde (Cate Brewer) while unfurling her silver cape. That pronouncement kicks off the comic-mythic whodunit “Isis & Vesco Investigate the Curious Death of Dr. Freud.” The hour-long piece by Monique LaForce earns lots of laughs, but it overplays its conceit like the kind of “Saturday Night Live” sketch that should have ended sooner.

Once she’s made her big entrance, Isis starts talkin’ tough, announcing that she’s working undercover as an NYPD detective. She aims to avenge the very, very long-ago homicidal attack on her husband, the god Osiris (Paolo Santayana), by his brother Seth. Isis’s new partner is Vesco (Sun King Davis), a financial fraudster who is avoiding jail by “consulting” with the cops; he comes on to her from the get-go. She kinda hates it and kinda likes it.

Toss in LaForce’s rhyming film-noirish dialogue, the jazzy soundtrack, the gods and mortals slipping in and out of the Afterlife, and you have quite a smorgasbord.

Osiris, who works undercover in the Afterlife, poses as a hip-hopper, relating fake dreams to Dr. Freud (Terence Aselford). Leaving us to ask: why? And what does the CIA have to do with it? And what’s the love/hate thing between Freud and Jung (also played by Terence Aselford)? Why does the medical examiner (Catherine Aselford) snort cocaine off a corpse?

LaForce cleverly sends up cop-show cliches, psychobabble and the ancient deities’ bizarre family trees, but the narrative and timelines in “Isis and Vesco” digress and confuse unnecessarily.

Some performances stand out: Davis brings to Vesco a wonderfully thick smarminess. Brewer’s Isis commands the stage. Terence Aselford’s Freud and Jung keep it low-key and droll. And Katie Jeffries is a riot in multiple roles.

Horwitz is a freelance writer.

Isis & Vesco Investigate the Curious Death of Dr. Freud

by Monique LaForce. Directed by Carl Brandt Long. At 7:45 p.m. Thursday and 4 p.m. Saturday at Redrum — Fort Fringe, 612 L St. NW. About 60 minutes. \$17 plus the one-time purchase of a \$7 Fringe

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