

Can One Avoid That Which Cannot Be Avoided?

by Bedő Zoltán, translated from the Hungarian by Szabó Réka

At the opening of its new performance, *We Only Live Once*, the Sfântu Gheorghe MStudio company made us confront the ever-certain, inherently mysterious reality of our own demise. Can one person's life be worth more than another's? Would we sacrifice ourselves to keep someone else alive? And if we would, should we even be allowed to do so? These are the timeless questions at the center of Euripides' drama, *Alcestis*, which Tom Dugdale has adapted in contemporary language and placed within a contemporary world.

The story is simple. A victim of a severe car crash, Attila, should by all rights have died. However, the god, Apollo, brings Attila back from the dead, with one condition: Attila must find someone to die in his place. Still young and full of plans for the future, Attila sets out to find a volunteer. But he soon realizes the error of his judgment, since as it turns out, we cling to our existence even when our end is near. That is our human nature. Not even Attila's incurably ill father agrees to die for him, and in the end, only his wife steps forward. He rashly accepts her proposal, and then falls to pieces.

The collage technique favored by Tom Dugdale as a directorial approach, is clearly evident, with the textual, musical, and physical elements combining to make a complete and unforgettable performance. Presented with great depth and in a ruthlessly honest tone, the performance provoked stunned concentration and finally, enthusiastic applause, from the Sfântu Gheorghe audience.