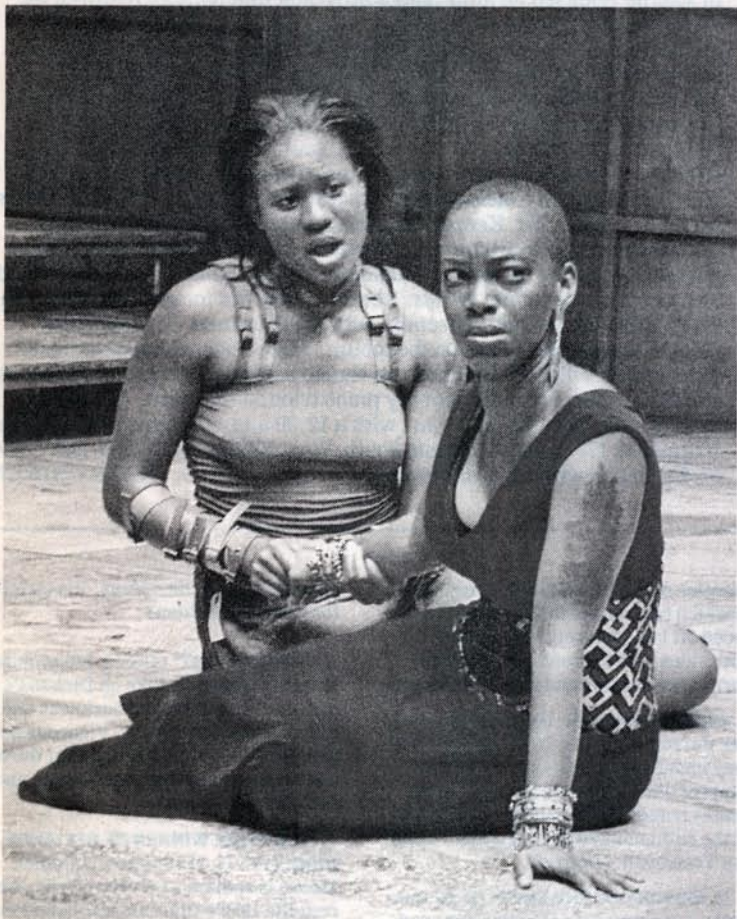


# THE Listings



Mike Messer

**APRIL YVETTE THOMPSON** Friends of Ms. Thompson needn't bother inviting her to go carousing for another week or so. Until Oct. 23 she'll be occupied by the title role of the Classical Theater of Harlem's "Medea," and the physical and emotional toll it takes leaves room for little else. "It really is a monster," said Ms. Thompson (above, front, with Caran L. Harris). "I've done a lot of Shakespeare, and the process is pretty much the same: a large preparation before the show, and stay really healthy. There's no going out drinking." The jolting production of the Euripides classic about a spurned woman who turns murderous is barely an hour long, but it is an hour full of anguish and anger and pounding on the floor. This is Ms. Thompson's second go-round in the part; she played it three years ago when the theater first mounted Alfred Preisser's gripping adaptation. "The first time I did it, my approach was really technical," Ms. Thompson said. "I sort of dissected the language." This time, though, she said, that language has been tweaked, especially for her part: references that were relevant to ancient Greece but are confusing today were removed. "It's little things, but as the actor, in my approach, those were things you had to take time and make clear, because they weren't contemporary," she said. Mr. Preisser's intent, she said, was to make the tale resonate more strongly in the present, especially with what has emerged since the original staging in 2002 about the treatment of women in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. "There's a whole world of women who live in societies where men can burn them or stone them," Ms. Thompson said. "He wanted that idea of a woman living in a society where she had no rights of her own to pop more in this production." (Harlem School of the Arts, 645 St. Nicholas Avenue, (212) 868-4444.)

NEIL GENZLINGER