

Education Notes

MEDEA



**SHOCK
THERAPY
ARTS**

by Euripides. Created by: SAM FOSTER & HAYDEN JONES

Performed by: SAM FOSTER, HAYDEN JONES & SARAH MCLEOD



Medea

noun:

1. Classical Mythology. a sorceress, granddaughter of Helios, daughter of Aeëtes and wife of Jason, whom she assisted in obtaining the Golden Fleece: when Jason deserted her, she killed their children.
2. (*italics*) a tragedy (431 b.c.) by Euripides.



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ABOUT THE COMPANY

SHOCK THERAPY ARTS

Shock Therapy Arts is a Not for Profit Social Enterprise, founded on the Gold Coast in January 2015 by Sam Foster and Hayden Jones.

Shock Therapy Arts has strategically established itself as a leading company in the delivery of high quality, relevant, multidisciplinary performance, and a leader in the Arts and Culture sector on the Gold Coast and in South East Queensland. The company aims to continue this growth to become a leading Arts Organisation Nationally and Internationally, and a Queensland cultural icon. In 2023, with the blessing of their mentor, Zeal Theatre, Shock Therapy expanded into New South Wales schools.

Company founders Sam Foster and Hayden Jones have a wealth of industry experience, artistic vision and enthusiasm that drives the ethos of the company. They have recruited a team of the arts industry's most experienced artists, designers, accountants, lawyers, strategic advisors, administrators and producers to help them achieve their vision to create Transformative Arts Experiences.

Shock Therapy Arts have won multiple industry awards, have published assorted scripts, and have been programmed by major festivals and venues nationally and internationally.

FOR ALL ENQUIRIES AND BOOKINGS:

education@shocktherapyarts.com

www.shocktherapyarts.com

AWARD WINS

MATILDA AWARDS

Best Independent Production

- THE FORWARDS
- VIRAL
- THE PILLOWMAN

Best Director

- Sam Foster
- THE PILLOWMAN

Best Supporting Actor

- Tama Matheson
- THE PILLOWMAN

AWARD NOMINATIONS

MATILDA AWARDS

Best Actor

- Zachary Boulton and Sarah McLeod
- FUEL
- Sam Foster and Ellen Bailey
- THE FORWARDS
- Sam Foster
- VIRAL

Best New Australian Work

- UNDERTOW
- VIRAL

Best Independent Production

- UNDERTOW

Best Sound Design

- Guy Webster
- UNDERTOW

Best Audio Visual Design

- Nathan Sibthorpe
- VIRAL

MEET THE CREATORS



Sam Foster
– ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Sam is a storyteller, performer and theatre maker. He is an award-winning Actor, Director, Writer, Producer, Stunt Performer and Stunt Rigger as well as being a Physical Theatre Performer, Movement Director and workshop facilitator. He is the co-owner and co-founder of Shock Therapy Arts.

Sam works in theatre, film and large-scale events and has worked for a number of companies and festivals throughout his career. His career has taken him to New York, London, Namibia, South Africa, Denmark, Norway and India as well as all over Australia.



Hayden Jones
– ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Hayden is a performer and contemporary performance maker, working across a range of forms including theatre, installation, immersive experiences and cross art-form collaborations. He has worked as an Actor, Director, Writer, Producer and workshop facilitator, for some of Australia's most recognised and innovative arts organisations. He is a co-founder of Shock Therapy Arts.

Hayden also has an extensive background working in Youth Theatre, Children's Theatre and Theatre-in-Education, writing and directing shows for young people, and touring nation-wide performing and teaching workshops.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Education is at the coal-face of what we do at Shock Therapy Arts and where we see the greatest potential for impact. In addition to aligning our shows with the syllabus, we take a holistic approach to education, incorporating wellbeing, relationships, and complex global, social and personal issues into our shows. Whether it's through the themes and narrative, or the skill and technique in theatre making, a performance can ignite a fire in a student that changes their life or make them never want to watch a play again. We take this responsibility seriously and aim to make the experience a memorable one that will stay with the audience long after the show ends.

It has always been our mission to provide schools with performances that are dynamic and stylistically interesting and challenge, inspire and entertain students. Making and performing these shows also push us as artists to work to the peak of our ability to handcraft each and every product that we offer to schools, because every audience deserves our very best.



Theatre has a unique ability to impact people in two main ways; through the power of narrative and through the power of live performance. The combination of these two factors makes theatre memorable and participatory... well at least it should if you get it right!

Stories stay with people, they live on in your memory, and this memory is strengthened by the experience of seeing actors bring this story to life in real time, right in front of you as they “become” the protagonists and antagonists of the narrative. Now more than ever, live theatre seems to be able to connect with people in a way that other forms of storytelling can't. As we move further into the digital age and the form of storytelling is constantly changing, the impact of and need for live performance seems to be more apparent and urgent than ever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shock Therapy Arts would like to thank everyone who in some way supported or contributed to this work. We would like to acknowledge Arts Queensland for supporting the statewide tour of Medea through the Playing Queensland Fund and City of Gold Coast for being our major sponsor.

Huge thanks to the Creative team: Sound Designer - Guy Webster, Lighting Designer - Geoff Squires and our Medea, Sarah McLeod. Thanks and gratitude to Jorge Serra for the hero image; Saffron Jensen Photography Graphic Design; the board of Shock Therapy Arts Ltd consisting of Paul Bishop (Chair), Andrew Larder (Secretary) Inke Loos (Director) and Vyvienne Abla (Director); Executive Producer, Shari Indriani Irwin, and our Education Manager, Michelle Watkins.

Love and gratitude to our family and friends for their ongoing love and support, especially Mike and Julene Foster, Barbara and Keith Maher, Wendy and Erkki Rintala, Veronica Neave, Kaspar Foster, Marja-Liisa Rintala, Charlii Gregory, Hunter Gregory, and Essi Rintala-Jones. Thanks to Stefo Nantsou, Tom Lycos and the Zeal Theatre family for the years of knowledge, inspiration and support you continue to give us.

*Shock Therapy Arts acknowledges the Traditional Custodians
of the land on which we present our work.*

*We pay our deep respects to the Elders past, present and emerging,
and recognise their connection to land, waterways and sky.*

We respect their cultural heritage and beliefs.

*We acknowledge the First Peoples of Australia as the first artists, the first storytellers,
the first communities and the first creators of culture.*

ABOUT THE SHOW

"MEDEA" ORIGINAL TEXT BY:	Euripides
BASED ON TRANSLATIONS BY:	Robin Robertson (Published by Random House) J. Michael Walton (London: Methuen Drama)
DEvised & DIRECTED BY:	Sam Foster and Hayden Jones
LIGHTING DESIGN:	Geoff Squires
SOUND DESIGN:	Guy Webster
MUSIC:	Sam Foster and Guy Webster
DURATION:	60 minutes + 10 minutes post-show Q&A
SUITABILITY:	Grades 8 – 12
THEMES:	Betrayal and Revenge Passion Gender, Power and Manipulation
PERFORMANCE STYLES:	Greek Theatre Physical Theatre Contemporary Theatre Realism Epic Theatre Theatre of Social Comment Monologue Chorus Multiple Role Mime Mask Live Music

***WARNING:**

MEDEA contains references to infanticide.



Geoff Squires

– LIGHTING DESIGN

Geoff has lost count of the number of shows he has lit in a career that spans almost 40 years. He has lit for not only Queensland Theatre and La Boite, but also diverse companies like Shock Therapy Arts, Playlab Theatre, Circa, Expressions Dance Company, Trocadero, Matrix, Fractal, and Acronym Theatre Company. In addition to the usual theatres, he has lit shows in warehouses, docks, cafes, buildings, beaches, and a few in Boggo Road Goal. Geoff has toured extensively nationally and overseas. He taught Technical Theatre at many tertiary facilities and also runs his own design and production business, Pro-Nel Lighting. Geoff received a MATILDA Commendation 2000 for Lighting Design, a MATILDA BACKSTAGE AWARD Commendation 2001 for Sustained Contribution to Theatre and a MATILDA AWARD for Lighting Design for INSIDE OUT 2019.



Guy Webster

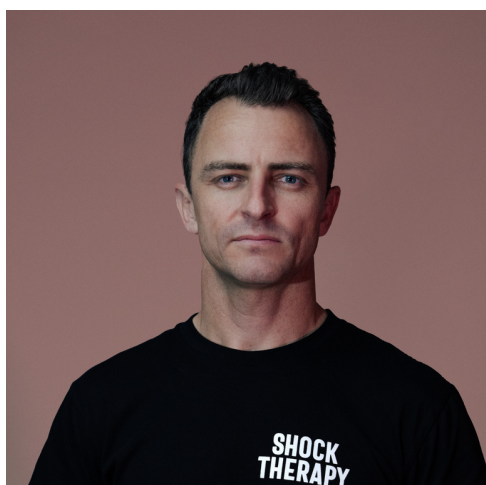
– COMPOSITION AND AUDIO DESIGN

Guy is a composer, sound designer, producer and artist working across the mediums of theatre, dance, sound art, installation and new media. His broad body of work has featured in theatres, festivals, live music venues, galleries and conferences throughout Australia, Japan, Europe, UK, USA and China while his live performances have seen him share the stage with the likes of Beth Orton, Ed Harcourt, Powderfinger, The Cruel Sea, Mad Professor and Sarah Blasko.

CAST

MEDEA was first performed in 2019 in Queensland schools, featuring Ellen Bailey as Medea, together with Sam Foster and Hayden Jones. In 2020, the role of Medea was played by Ngoc Phan for the mainstage premiere at Brisbane's SunPAC Theatre and Helen Cassidy joined the team in 2022 taking on the lead role for the Queensland In-Theatres tour.

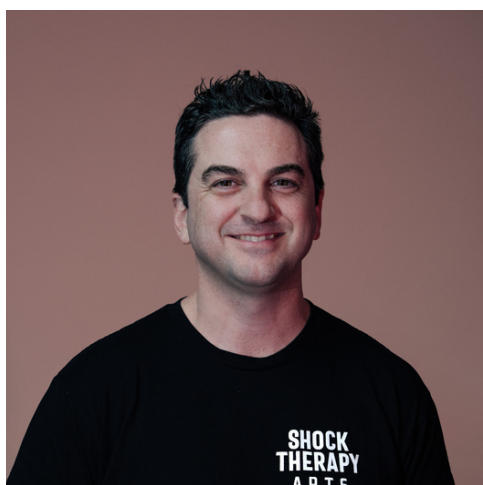
In 2024, we welcome Sarah McLeod into the role of Medea.



Sam Foster
– ACTOR

Characters portrayed:

- Chorus
- Jason



Hayden Jones
– ACTOR

Characters portrayed:

- Chorus
- Creon
- Aegeus
- Tutor
- Messenger



Sarah McLeod
– ACTOR

Characters portrayed:

- Medea

CURRICULUM LINKS

QUEENSLAND CURRICULUM LINKS

QCAA

GENERAL DRAMA

IA1, IA2,

Unit 1: Share

Unit 2: Reflect

Unit 3: Challenge

DRAMA IN PRACTICE

ARTS IN PRACTICE

QCAA 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Critical thinking

- analytical thinking
- problem-solving
- decision-making
- reasoning
- reflecting and evaluating.
- intellectual flexibility

Creative thinking

- innovation
- initiative and enterprise
- curiosity and imagination.
- creativity
- generating and applying new ideas
- identifying alternatives.
- seeing / making new links

Communication

- effective oral and written communication
- using language, symbols and texts
- communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences

Collaboration and teamwork

- relating to others (interacting with others)
- recognising and using diverse perspectives
- participating and contributing
- community connections

Personal and social skills

- adaptability/flexibility.
- management
- character
- leadership
- citizenship.
- cultural awareness
- ethical (and moral) understanding

NSW CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAMA STAGE 6

PRELIMINARY COURSE

Improvisation, Playbuilding, Acting

Elements of Production in Performance

Theatrical Traditions and Performance Styles

HSC COURSE

Studies in Drama and Theatre

Group Performance + Individual Project

DRAMA STAGES 4 & 5

Making, Performing and Appreciating

CREATIVE ARTS LIFE SKILLS - DRAMA

ENGLISH STAGES 4 & 5

TEXT TYPE: DRAMA

Understanding and responding to texts

Reading, Viewing and Listening to Texts

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

The Arts - Drama

GENERAL CAPABILITIES:

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal & Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Literacy

STYLE/Form:

- Theatre for Young People
- Physical Theatre
- Forum Theatre.
- Brechtian / Epic Theatre
- Australian Theatre.
- Contemporary Theatre

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING:

Elements of Drama

- Role, character and relationships
- Voice and movement.
- Focus
- Tension.
- Space and time
- Language, ideas and dramatic action
- Audience

DRAMATIC CONVENTIONS:

- Direct address
- Magic realism
- Narration.
- Monologue
- Multiple role playing
- Mime
- Live music.
- Slow motion
- Flashbacks / flashforwards
- Cinematic component

PURPOSE:

- To challenge
- To educate
- To empower
- To inform

SYNOPSIS



Medea's husband, Jason, has left her to marry a younger woman, Glauce, the daughter of their ruler, Creon: King of Corinth. Jason's decision to abandon his wife and their sons devastates Medea. She not only grieves for the loss of her husband and her marriage, but the future she had worked so hard to construct.

Medea's rage and desire to destroy Jason and those who support him lead her on a path of vengeance and annihilation. Her blind fury allows her to plot the most evil of blindsides – not only the murder of his Jason's new bride and her father, but the slaughter of his sons. Her conniving ways see her manipulating her husband and king in order to carry out her wicked plot. She does not, however, execute Jason; she wants him to feel the utter destruction and pain that he had bestowed on her and the hollow parallel futures that they would both share apart. The use of lighting and shadows helps to create a dark and desperate mood, with a heightened tension that is palpable. Although her motherly instincts cause inner conflict in her, Medea justifies her bloody revenge.

The play's final words belong to the chorus, releasing the tension and warning of the unpredictability of life. The play finishes with an eerie soundscape, providing the audience time to digest the events they have just witnessed.



THEMES

BETRAYAL AND REVENGE

Medea had sacrificed so much in her life in order to satisfy her revenge on Jason. His betrayal by taking a new wife leads to several other instances of treachery in the play. Medea betrays her motherly oath and although she commits the most vile of crimes, murdering her own children, there is some sympathy felt for her despite these evil actions. Jason's abandonment and dishonouring of Medea caused the loss of her identity. The revenge she seeks is at a cost to her own future life, happiness and peace, sacrificing all for impeccable vengeance.

PASSION

Medea's devotion and dedication to Jason was exceptional and saw her discard her own family to aid her husband's rise to power, even killing her brother and forsaking her father. Her passionate love for Jason could only be surpassed by what turned to vehement loathing. The passion that courses through her veins supersedes all else, enabling her to commit murder. The passionate rage in her heart was far stronger than her reason.

MANIPULATION, GENDER AND POWER

When *MEDEA* was written in 431 BC, the patriarchy was the ruling force. Men had all advantage and power over women. Medea took her own advantages by manipulating the two men who seemingly had the most control over her: Creon, her king, and Jason, her husband. Both of these men underestimated Medea: her intelligence, her thirst for her own power and her lust for revenge. Although the phrase, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" was coined by William Congreve, it most certainly befits this tragic hero. She lulled both men into a false sense of security by playing her grief, subordinate ineptness and her womanly weaknesses, providing a perfect cover for her cunning plan. She used her children as weapons to engineer her fatal scheme. Euripides' portrayal of Medea as a twisted and scarred and 'real' woman gives us a strong, aggressive, female protagonist who rises above her oppression.

STYLISTIC INFLUENCES

Shock Therapy Arts often take an eclectic approach to their style of theatre, drawing on a range of theatrical influences to create work that feels inventive and contemporary. Below are some of the main stylistic influences found in *MEDEA*.

GREEK THEATRE



IMAGE SOURCE: COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:SOUSSE_MOSAIC_THEATRE_MASKS.JPG

Theatre flourished in Ancient Greece from approximately 7th Century BC through to the 4th Century BC. Theatre originated as a festival to worship Dionysis, the god of winemaking, festivity and pleasure. The physical theatre itself was an outdoor, open-air amphitheatre that could seat over 10,000 spectators.

As with most Greek tragedies, they were serious and grim, with a moral lesson to be told. The **MEDEA** storyline follows the path of the protagonist. It follows the hardship and pain that Medea has endured. Whether the audience sees Medea as a hero or villain, Euripides certainly succeeded in evoking sympathy for her.

In Shock Therapy's **MEDEA**, conventions of chorus, mask and music are used. The chorus is an integral part of Greek plays, providing commentary on the storyline and the characters. The chorus provides insights and recaps, sometimes explaining the inner dialogue of a particular character and also posing thoughts to help the audience examine the deeper meaning behind what is going on. Masks are worn by the actors who are in the chorus. This allows the actors to portray a variety of different characters and also depicts heightened emotions. Music was also incorporated into the plays as accompaniment to songs and to create special effects.

- Research the following terms and find out what they are in relation to Greek Theatre: *The Orchestra* | *The Theatron* | *The Skene* | *The Parados*
- What effect do the masks create?
- What are some other Greek tragedies? How are their storylines similar?

EPIC THEATRE

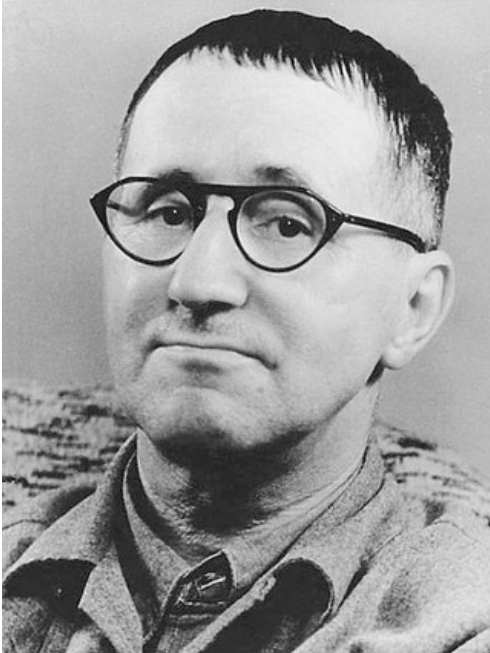


IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://CITATY.NET/AUTORI/BERTOLT-BRECHT/](https://CITATY.NET/AUTORI/BERTOLT-BRECHT/)

“We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.”

– Bertolt Brecht

The term Epic Theatre was coined by 20th Century theatre practitioner Erwin Piscator. It became an ideological and stylistic approach to theatre and gave rise to several practitioners such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold and, most famously, Bertolt Brecht. Epic Theatre uses a range of conventions including narrative, montage, disjointed and non-linear episodes, metaphor, multiple role playing and stepping in and out of character, music and song, signs and captions and many more. Epic Theatre productions will often reveal elements of the staging process itself. The actors' characterisation and the use of set and props are designed to reinforce an idea rather than reality.

The productions that Shock Therapy Arts present are a direct response to current events and provide social commentary on themes and topics that can sometimes be avoided. The use of narration, montage, minimal set and costume, multiple characters, breaking the fourth wall, tableaux, song and music draws on the styles and techniques that became a feature of Brecht's work.

- What Epic conventions were used in **MEDEA**?
- Did you think they used the conventions effectively?
- Did the use of the minimal set tell the story clearly enough? How was the use of the scaffolded construction effective in linking dramatic elements?

STYLISTIC INFLUENCES (CONTINUED)

PHYSICAL THEATRE



Physical theatre bases the storytelling through physical movement rather than words and dialogue. The dramatic action can incorporate dance, acrobatics, mime, tableaux, stage fighting, actions, gestures and movement to communicate a story. A physical language is developed by the group of performers and the performance is often created through improvising around certain themes and set tasks. This 'physical language' is then crafted into a structured series of movements that help to convey the story. Physical theatre can also include characterisation. Each character has their own unique movement quality, their own tempo, rhythm, weight, size, etc. The actor must use their physicality to create the character they are portraying. The actors in the Shock Therapy company play multiple characters in their shows.

In **MEDEA**, the script requires the performers to shift and change rapidly from one character to the next. This requires the actors to have a high level of physical awareness and control.

- What were some of the ways that Shock Therapy physicalised **MEDEA**?
- How did the physical components in the storytelling make it more compelling to watch?
- Choose one of the actors and select two of the characters they played. What and how did they change to create multiple roles?

Q&A WITH THE PLAYWRIGHTS

WHY “MEDEA”?

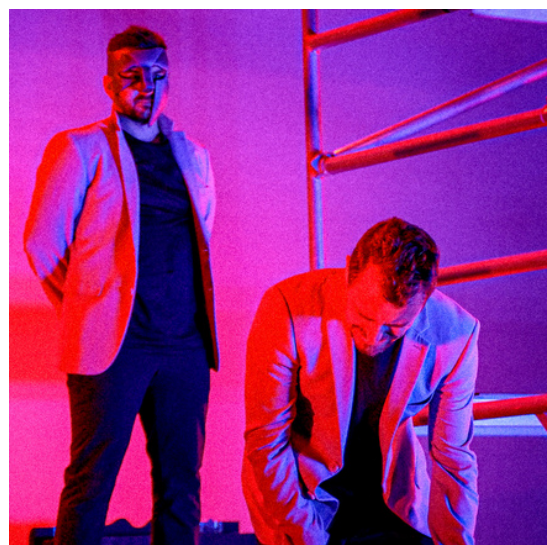
We have always been interested in Greek Theatre and Greek Mythology so we were keen to put our own spin on this classic piece. Also, we are always trying to think about creating work that speaks to the time and addresses current social issues. Even though it was written 2500 years ago, we are still living in a world where women are treated very differently to men and although there have been many positive changes and steps towards gender equity, I think Euripides would agree there is still a long way to go.

WHAT WAS YOUR APPROACH ADAPTING AND TRANSFORMING AN ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY FOR AN AUDIENCE OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

We started by looking at a number of translations of the text and working out which ones we were most drawn to and which ones we thought would work best for a younger audience. We narrowed it down to about 2 or 3 different translations and then started to mash them together and even add a bit of our own language in parts. From there we started to look at the main themes in the play that we wanted to focus on as well as the main theatrical conventions that we wanted to explore. We had some basic ideas around a set that could be utilised in a variety of different ways and when we found the scaff tower we knew that was what we were looking for. Using the script as the leaping off point we then began to explore and play with the set and how we could stage each scene. At the same time we were playing around with how we could incorporate music into the show. After a while, all these elements started to come together and we had a show.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES GAIN FROM WATCHING YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THIS WORK?

Hopefully they are engaged and entertained and the production causes them to consider the themes and actions in the play and how it connects to the modern world. We hope that young audiences are inspired by the staging and use of space and it gives them ideas on how to interpret classical works like *MEDEA*.



Q&A WITH THE PLAYWRIGHTS (CONTINUED)

“MEDEA” IS A PARTICULARLY HARD-HITTING PLAY. DO YOU THINK OF THE MEDEA CHARACTER AS A HERO OR VILLAIN?

Both and neither. It all depends on who's perspective you look at it from really. Euripides did a great job of creating empathy for Medea and understanding the circumstances which drove her to do what she does. Although what she ultimately does is unthinkable, we are made to feel as though in some way it is her only option after all that she has been through.

THE USE OF MULTIPLE CHARACTERS IS A FEATURE IN ALL SHOCK THERAPY ARTS. THE ACTOR PLAYING MEDEA, HOWEVER, ONLY PLAYS THIS ROLE. WHY DID YOU MAKE THIS DECISION AND HOW DOES IT COMPLIMENT THE OTHER ACTORS PORTRAYING MULTIPLE ROLES?

It is Medea's story and it is such a huge and complex emotional journey that she goes on that we didn't want the audience to jump in and out of her story. We wanted them to follow her journey from the beginning right to the end of the play, which would not have been possible if the actor was stepping in and out of the role. The other characters in the play come in and out of the story so it felt justified to have these characters shared by the other actors.

WHAT DIFFICULTIES DO YOU FACE AS A DIRECTOR OF A SHOW YOU ARE ALSO ACTING IN?

It can be tricky at times but it is helped by the fact that there are two of us. Often one of us will sit outside the other person's scene and give notes, we also tend to bring in some trusted comrades to give us feedback. Over the years we have gotten used to juggling these two roles and knowing how to switch hats between actor and director. Sometimes we will film a rehearsal run and watch it back as well, plus over the years we have just gotten better at understanding what works on stage.

“MEDEA” IS A PLAY THAT DEALS WITH SOME DIFFICULT ISSUES, TOPICS AND THEMES AND THE DEVICE OF CHORUS PROVIDES AN AUDIENCE WITH A COMMENTARY. WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT BETRAYAL, REVENGE AND POWER THROUGH THE USE OF A CHORUS?

In our production we tweaked the role of the chorus a little from the traditional context. While they do still serve the purpose in parts of providing commentary to the audience, in our production we also used them as “allies” of Medea. In some scenes they attempt to be the voice of reason to her, in other scenes they are her comrades and confidants. The chorus are also used as a sort of moral compass for the audience as well. Their comments help the audience to have a more objective view of the situation, removed of the heightened emotion that Medea is directly experiencing.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What do you know about MEDEA?
- What do you know about Shock Therapy Arts?
- The play is performed by three actors playing multiple roles. What and how do you think they will be able to succeed in this?
- What do you know about Greek Theatre conventions?
- What are some words / themes you associate with the image below? Brainstorm ideas on post-its and put them on the board / wall.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY: CHORUS

1. Create a small group of 4-5 students.
2. Allocate one of the following typical, every day activities to each group
 - a. Hanging the clothes on the line
 - b. Cleaning your teeth
 - c. Walking the dog
 - d. Putting make-up on
 - e. Riding a bike
 - f. Eating breakfast
3. Write a piece that narrates the activity. Write at least six sentences describing the activity - use detailed and descriptive language.
4. Choose one member of the group to be the 'Protagonist'. They will perform the actions (in an exaggerated fashion) as the rest of the group (as the Chorus) narrate them. The Chorus must all speak in unison.
5. If time permits, go a step further by adding choreographed movements for your Chorus to do, or even add a song!

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

Your feedback is vital to us.
CLICK HERE to complete our 2 minute SURVEY

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What are the key themes of “*MEDEA*”?
- Did the play end as you predicted? Why / why not?
- Tension is an incredibly important element in “*MEDEA*”. What were the climactic moments in the play? How and why did these moments affect you as an audience member?
- How did the staging, lighting and the props impact the production?

ACTIVITY #1: “MEDEA” IN A MINUTE

1. Create groups of three-four students.
2. Identify 3-5 pivotal moments that you recall from *MEDEA*. (e.g. Medea and Jason arguing, death of Glauce and Creon).
3. Bring each moment to life in a frozen tableau to recreate the story.
4. Share with the class – hold each tableau for 5-10 seconds before transitioning to the next.

ACTIVITY #2: INTERVIEW WITH EURIPIDES

1. Read the Interview with Euripides (below).
2. Act out or record sections for the class to create a podcast.
3. Create a similar Interview using Medea and/or Jason.

ACTIVITY #3: SCRIPT EXCERPTS

1. Read the scripts (later in the notes)
3. Act out excerpts for the group, considering the elements tension, status, relationships

AN INTERVIEW WITH EURIPIDES (CREATED BY DR MICHAEL FOSTER)



KARL: *Good evening listeners Karl Skene with you. In tonight's podcast we take you back To Ancient Greece where my guest is the famous playwright Citizen Euripides - author of that controversial masterpiece of Greek tragedy, "MEDEA". Welcome to the program, Citizen Euripides.*

EURIPIDES: **Thank you and welcome to the 5th century BCE**

KARL: *Tell us sir, how would you define drama?*

EURIPIDES: **"Drama" comes from the Greek word 'Dran' meaning something 'done'- it is action not merely movement but argument, struggle, persuasion, threats, seduction, sound, music, dance, speech and passion.**

KARL: *Does the idea of 'theatre' differ in its meaning?*

EURIPIDES: **The word Theatre comes from the Greek 'THEATRON' meaning 'seeing Place'**

KARL: *Could you explain your concept in more detail?*

EURIPIDES: **Well, "the seeing place" refers to the space, the arena, the auditorium. A space shared by actors, dancers, singers, musicians AND ... the spectators. My simple definition of theatre might be "the art of acting out", in this "seeing Place" or "theatron", showcasing the wants, needs and concerns of a society.**

KARL: *In the 4th Century BCE (100 years from now), the philosopher, Aristotle, in his analysis of Greek Drama will say (and I quote): "That theatre is a mode of expression so transparently manufactured and artificial but, is simultaneously the agent of the most intense perception we may ever have of the real." What is your response to that opinion?*

EURIPIDES: **Yes, I agree, that's true ... Aristotle will be the first to develop this defence, his dramatic theory of "Catharsis" or cleansing It's a defence of tragedy, as purgative, restorative indeed , a purveyor of high truths. Aristotle will also identify the elements of drama as... plot, character, theme, diction, music and spectacle.**

KARL: *Are these elements present in your latest work "MEDEA"?*

EURIPIDES: **Yes, absolutely All these elements are clear and ever present in "MEDEA". As you probably know, Greek Drama typically centres on a central character (the Protagonist) often a person of high rank or stature who undergoes a 'decline of fortune' Medea is this person whom we witness playing out their inherent 'fatal flaw'. Her husband Jason is the Antagonist assisted by his father in law Creon the King of Corinth together these two are the opposers of the action-this gives the tragedy its fundamental conflict.**

KARL: *The common element in Greek tragedy is that the fate of the 'hero' is pre-ordained – your Greek audiences had this understanding and, in most cases, were familiar with the specifics of the narrative. Is that true?*

EURIPIDES: **Yes BUT how that fate is dealt with is the nature of the drama and the conflict AND this depends on the choices of the hero. Typically, they become instruments of their own destruction Usually as a consequence of their failure to accept the fate which the Gods have assigned.Expressed slightly differently.... The conflict represents a protest against the limits of human power leading to a determination to achieve self-fulfilment ... which is doomed to failure.**

KARL: *Speaking of your treatment of the gods - what can you tell us?*

EURIPIDES: **It's a good question. In fact, I ran into a little trouble with this due to the fact that I broke the convention of my predecessors which was to fear and appease the Gods.**

KARL: *Really?*

EURIPIDES: **Oh yes indeed my chorus of Corinthian women are at times quite indecisive rather than authoritarian and pedantic and indeed show some disrespect to the Gods -Unheard of in the work of Sophocles or Aeschylus.**

KARL: *Modern critics argue that you are the greatest of the Greek dramatists-what do you think?*

EURIPIDES: **Well, that's very flattering but you know in my time Medea was only placed 3rd out of 3 in the Dionysia of 431 BCE.**

KARL: *How interesting! Please explain these to our listeners.*

EURIPIDES: Primarily, I attempted to emphasise humanity in a more realistic manner than my colleagues ,with all its warts and all. Although, like my fellow playwrights, all violence occurs off stage.Secondly, I investigated the wisdom of social actions, such as the purpose of War, the status of women and the reasons for human cruelty; this is evident in “ The Trojan Women” and certainly in Medea.Thirdly, in terms of technique it was me who introduced techniques such as rapid reversals, intrigues, chase scenes, romantic and sentimental incidents. Significantly, I reduced the role of the chorus and moved from poetic to conversational language which became standard practice for centuries to follow! AND It was I who introduced stage machinery to the theatre The Machane, which enabled the very first ‘flying’ of actors and equipment.

KARL: Is there anything else you would like to add?

EURIPIDES: Come to think of it, I’m quite proud that some scholars and critics from the 21st century believe that I could have been the first Feminist playwright.

KARL: Yes, I am aware of that opinion.

EURIPIDES: It could be explained by the fact that my heroes were predominantly women, women who had suffered oppression, cruelty and hardship at the hands of society which of course was patriarchal- dominated by men . The Women I portrayed were strong, often manipulating passionate and proud -all qualities which ultimately led to their downfall. Although in Medea’s case she escapes unpunished -quite a departure from convention that one!!In Medea we witness an internal clash between public obligation (Maternal duty and spousal obedience, devotion to the GODS) and personal emotions (Rejection, injustice, jealousy, revenge ETC) and the Gods set the tragic action in motion whereby the tragic hero makes an inevitable tragic miscalculation.

KARL: Well, thank you so much Citizen Euripides for sharing that self analysis and chookas for your future productions .

EURIPIDES: You’re most welcome – I don’t usually mix with people. I prefer my own company. This fancy technology of yours allows me to voice my opinion without interruption. It’s great!

KARL: In closing I would like to remind listeners that the majority of evidence used in this podcast is educated guesswork based on archaeological research -predominately artworks, anecdotes and especially paintings or fragments of vases and other pottery AND of the hundreds of plays believed to have been written and performed in the 5th and 6th Century BCE in Greece - only 46 survive intact.

Next week my special guest will be English playwright William Shakespeare.

Thank you and Good night!

CHORUS

She stays in her room and cries the days away,
thinking of her father and her home.
All abandoned and betrayed for a man who now betrays her.

She loathes to have her children near,
And cannot bear to look at them.
A plan is already forming in her mind.
She has a temper on her that is vile, and violent,
And she will never rest.

The storm is upon us.
There is greater passion to come: lightning flashes
To burst these black clouds of grief.

MEDEA

Women of Corinth,
I have come out here
To show you who I am.
I will not be judged – by anyone.
There is no justice in the eyes of men,

I am alone in Corinth, an outsider
In a strange city far from my family –
My only company a husband
Who took me as plunder from some foreign campaign
And now dishonours me. I have no mother, no brother,
No kin to turn to, to shelter me from shame.

So I shall ask this one favour from you.
If I can think of any way, any plan,
To make my husband pay for all this hurt,
Will you keep my secret?
A woman is too timid, too weak, they say, for war
Would faint at the sight of battle-steel –
But when she is injured in love,
When her bed has been defiled, she'll have your blood.

CHORUS

We promise. You have every right
To punish your husband, Medea. And every reason to grieve.

CREON So, Medea, sour-faced, glowering with rage
Hear this: go into exile, immediately.
Take your children with you.

MEDEA No! After so much abuse, one question Creon:
why are you sending me away?

CREON I'm afraid of you, to put it bluntly;
Afraid that you will do some harm to my daughter.
You are a clever woman. You are skilled in evil arts.
Smarting at the loss of your husband from your bed.
And now I hear that you've been making threats

MEDEA My reputation, yet again! It goes before me like a curse.
My father should never have allowed me an education,
never raised me to be intelligent.
But Creon, what damage can I do?
I am no insurgent against the state. I will keep my peace.
I yield to you as king. You have won and I have lost.

CREON Conciliatory words, indeed.
But still, I dread to think what evil cooks within your heart.
The softness of these words makes me trust them less.
No, I am decided. You are hereby banished, and must leave now.

MEDEA I beg you. One day. That's all I ask. Let me stay for one more day.
I need to think clearly where to go,
How to provide for my children –
As their father seems to have little interest.
Take pity on them, at least. You have kindness in you;
You're a parent too. I can bear exile, but cannot bear to see them suffer.

CREON It is not in my nature to be a tyrant. I've been merciful before.
I know, even now, that I might be making a mistake,
Very well, you have your request. But I warn you, woman:
If tomorrow's sun sees you and your children still within these lands,
You die. I give you my word.
One more day is surely not enough to bring us harm.

MEDEA

I'll tell you my plan – which will give you little pleasure.

I will request Jason to visit. I'll ply him with soft words:

'I've changed my mind - you're right; it's quite the best decision
To make a royal marriage. One favour only: let the children stay.'

Not that I would ever leave them here. No.

They will be my messengers of death bearing gifts to the princess.

A finely woven gown of silk and a diadem of gold.

But in this finery I will smear the fatal oil, so when she puts it on
she will die in agony, as will anyone who touches her.

That much is easy, but what comes next I can hardly bear to say..

I shall kill the children. My children.

No one will ever take them from me.

There is nothing left for me to lose.

Let no man say of Medea that she is mild as milk;

I am not like other women: I am of some other kind.

I love my own – and will destroy all those who stand against me.

I was born for a life of the greatest glory.

CHORUS

We must remind you of humanity's simple laws. You must not.

MEDEA

There is no other way.

CHORUS

But how can you bear to kill your own children?

MEDEA

It is the way to hurt him most.

CHORUS

And bring you the deepest misery.

MEDEA

Be that as it may. Enough: we have passed the time for talking.

Fetch Jason - tell him nothing of my plans.

CHORUS

I beg you: think again. Do not hurt your sons!

How will you find it in yourself? How will you dare!

Enough to drive a blade into the flesh you love?

When they look up at you, will you be butcher enough

To spray the walls with blood?



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