

from Great Directors at Work: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook

p. 87 Photographic aesthetics almost perfectly complement Brecht's aesthetics: freezing a motion or condition; stopping the action for a closer, longer look; isolating a detail or moment or element or shading and then expanding it into meaning, into an image.

p. 87 Atomizing the play into details is fundamental to a theatre that is always committed to making its audiences more conscious.

p. 87 On the brightly lighted stage every detail, even the smallest, must of course be acted out to the full. This is especially true of actions which on our stage are glossed over almost as a matter of principle, such as paying on conclusion of a sale.

p. 88 "The pace at rehearsals should be slow," recommended Brecht in the *Couragemodell*, "if only to make it possible to work out details; determining the pace of the performance is another matter and comes later."

p. 88 Brecht spent hours on Galileo's handling of his telescope or an apple, hours on Grusha's picking up the baby, hours on any activity that materialized a character's relation to the world. And these hours were spent not talking but trying: "Brecht would

say that he wanted no discussions in rehearsal - it would have to be tried."

p. 88 The rehearsal periods at the Ensemble were accordingly long, even after the lengthy preparation of texts, models, ideas, and designs. Like the Moscow Art Theatre before it, the Ensemble was notorious for its leisure: months spent only on blocking, and weeks devoted to tempo rehearsals, technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and something that Weber described as "marking" or "indicating" rehearsals. ("The actors, not in costumes, but on the set, had to walk quickly through all the actions of the show, quoting the text very rapidly, without any effort at acting, but keeping the rhythm, the pauses, etc., intact.") Then previews, adjustments, more tearing down and reassembly of details, and at last an opening. Even after shows, Brecht continued to tinker obsessively. As Weigel once said, "A Brecht play is not finished even when it is on the stage." Something could always mean more or mean more specifically.

p. 90 Brecht believed that "ideally...the blocking should be able to tell the main story of the play - and its contradictions - by itself, so that a person watching through a glass wall, unable to hear what was being said, would be able to understand the main elements and conflicts of the story." A visual correlative, we might call it.

p.90 Brecht - "Positions should be retained as long as there is no compelling reason for changing them; and a desire for variety is not a compelling reason. If one gives in to a desire for variety, the consequence is a devaluation of all movement on the stage; the spectator ceases to look for a specific meaning behind each movement, he stops taking movement seriously. But especially at the crucial points in the action, the full impact of a change of position must not be weakened...If changes of position are needed to make certain developments clear to the audience, the movement must be utilized to express something significant for the action and for this particular moment; if nothing of the sort can be found, it is advisable to review the whole arrangement up to this point, it will probably be seen to be at fault, because the sole purpose of an arrangement is to express the action, and the action (it is to be hoped) involves a logical development of incidents, which the arrangement need only present."

p. 91 Brecht wanted weighted ingredients, buttress for his dramatic structure, thematic or psychological relevance, and logic.

p. 91 Brecht's rehearsal cliché was "What's the position?" and it was just as revealing of his nature. He might ask "What's the position?" about subjects as diverse as emotion and class relations, but his question always required a physical response.

How could actors make a particular point physically, so that it became apparent or visible on the stage?

p. 91 One character's attitude toward another, especially the socially significant attitude, is displayed through the creation of an onstage picture, through making visible the characters' physical relation.

p. 92 Meaning conveyed through specific detail was fundamental to Brecht's theatrical art, and he insisted on it from his earliest days as a director.

p. 95 Brecht advocated blocking that seems unpremeditated, effortless, and natural, no matter how thoroughly planned in rehearsal or disciplined in execution:

The actors take their positions and form their groups in very much the same way as the marbles tossed in a wooden bowl in certain roulette-type children's games fall into hollows, with the difference that in the games it is not decided in advance which marbles will fall into which hollows, whereas in theatrical arrangements (blocking) there only seems to be no advance decision.

p. 95 All of Brecht's details were not dry, trivial, fussy, or obvious to the artistically inclined, but were part of a method of making ideas funny or affecting or vivid.

p. 105 Lovers of tragedy should note that Mother Courage smiled more often than she frowned.

p. 120 The famous modelbook photographs show this moment clearly. Weigel's hands, still in her lap, did not betray any special tension, but her body was bent by some mysterious force thrusting up against her lower back. That force pushed her chest out, her shoulders up, and her head back. Her eyes were closed and unreadable. The audience's focus was on her silent mouth, frozen open in a agonized expression. The Chaplain, who suddenly discovered himself inappropriately in the middle of this scene, was barely noticeable as he moved discreetly toward the wagon. Weigel was still stationary, her body still stricken, her mouth still open. We have come to call this "the silent scream."

Brecht was helpful to me especially when it came to blocking. The two notes from page 90 were certainly pertinent information. As far as the blocking telling a story without words, that is what the Quest Story was. The second note from page 90 which discusses movement was also a wonderful piece of information. As an actor, I am always aware of how long I have been in a position and when a stage picture needs to be varied. Brecht helped me to realize that movement should never be done for movement's sake, or, in his own words, "the consequence is a devaluation of all movement on the stage..." Learning this made

me trust that stillness could indeed be exciting to an audience, and would make movement even more interesting.

Another vital piece of information was found on page 91, when Brecht discussed stage positions and how they should reflect a character's attitude. When working with masks, this is especially important. Although I did not wear a mask during the production, all of the other characters did, and I tried to match them in my acting style. When using masks, you cannot use your face and all acting is done from the neck down. I used this style as well, although I had the advantage of being able to use my face.

Peter Brook - The Holy Theatre 50

from The Empty Space

The entire chapter in Peter Brook's book on the Holy Theatre is incredibly important. It was impossible for me to make notes because every word was absolutely essential. So, I decided to briefly capsule Brook's main ideas.

The Holy Theatre is a call for the return to the origins of theatre. Theatre spawned from ritual and ceremony. Our modern theatre has moved away from these ideas, and now audiences are uncomfortable with silence. By recreating these original conditions, it is possible to make the invisible visible and move the audience to experience a "happening".

In my own opinion, the way to create these conditions so that a happening might occur closely coincide with Artaud's ideas on the Theatre of Cruelty, whose main idea is to invade the audience's comfortable dark space and force them to take an active emotional part within a production. By creating this environment through the Holy Theatre, the audience may have a happening, which causes them to be more alert, awake, and open. Thus, and audience is influenced in a much stronger way than what they are accustomed to.

Brook's ideas were one of the most important things that I learned during my research. It helped my understanding of what it was exactly that Mahle wished to accomplish with this production. The most important thing for me to understand was the necessity of silence, and how we are now uncomfortable with

it. By understanding that, I began to get a clear picture of exactly what kind of reaction we were hoping to get from our audience.

Greek Dramatic Conventions

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from The Greek Theatre and its Drama

p. 292 About 430 B.C. the machine came into use. Possibly this is employed in *Medea* in order to carry away the heroine and the bodies of her children in the chariot of the sun god, but it is doubtful. It is almost certainly a mistake, however, to attribute the machine to Aeschylus. Whether Euripides was its inventor or not, he was extraordinarily fond of using it.

p. 294 It has often been charged that Euripides was guilty of using *deus ex machina*, but it is a charge without warrant. His principal motive was never to relieve himself of the embarrassment into which the confusion of his plot had involved him.

p. 298 In a technical sense "prologue" came to denote the histrionic passage before the entrance song of the chorus.

p. 299 It is a peculiarity of Euripides that he oftentimes combined startling innovations with a reversion to archaic, or at least much earlier, technique. Therefore, it is not surprising that he preferred prologues which smack somewhat of this primitive type...He regularly set the whole body of data before the spectators at once in an opening soliloquy.

p. 303 The prologue is not always spoken by a divinity; oftentimes a mortal appeared in this capacity. Sometimes this

mortal took no further part in the dramatic action, and sometimes he did. In the latter case he occasionally displayed as prologist a greater knowledge of the situation and of what was going to happen than he afterward seemed to possess as an action character.

p. 304 In later times the soliloquy of the prologist was sometimes deferred until after an introductory scene of two.

p. 304 Of course monologues were not the invention of the playwrights, being found as early as Homer. Yet true soliloquies, as seen in Shakespeare, are a late development in Greek drama. The epic hero, when alone, may appeal to some divinity or the elements, or he may address his own soul; he never simply thinks his thoughts out loud. So long as the tragedies began with a *parodus* the *choreutea* would nearly always be present; and a character who was otherwise alone could address his remarks to them.

p. 308 The least satisfactory motive for a monologue was an appeal to the elements. Euripides must have felt self-conscious in utilizing a device so threadbare and patent. My conviction is based on the retroactive way in which he employed the motive in the *Medea*, on the fact that he often preferred to introduce monologues without any motive rather than to resort to one so bald and artificial as this.

p. 309 In the first place when two characters meet on the stage and talk it is necessary for them either to appear simultaneously at the two entrances (and it is self-evident that this method cannot be employed very often without seeming ridiculous) or for one of them to enter first and fill up a slight interval before the other's arrival by soliloquizing.

p. 311 Since there was no drop curtain in the Greek theater, all characters had to go off as well as come on; no tableau effects to terminate a scene were possible. Moreover, in order to avoid the simultaneous exit of all the persons in a scene, it often seemed best to detain one of them beyond the rest and allow him to fill a brief interval with a soliloquy.

p. 311 In the third place, unless a new character is to enter the stage at the very instant that an old one leaves it, the actor who engages in successive dialogue with each of them must cause a slight pause by soliloquizing. Such a soliloquy is technically known as a "link"...Links are often extremely short, sometimes being no more than a cough or hem; they are frequently employed to cover the condensation of time, especially when they occur between the exit and re-entrance of the same character...So long as the chorus retained its vigor, dramatists found it easier, except in the prologue or during occasional withdrawals of the chorus in the course of the action, to fill gaps by remarks addressed to the coryphaeus than by entrance soliloquies,

exit soliloquies, or links.

p. 312 It still remains to speak of another kind of soliloquy, the aside, more accurately speaking, the apart. The vastness of Greek theaters and the almost constant presence of from twelve to twenty-four choreutae rendered this artifice an awkward one for ancient playwrights. Nevertheless, asides are occasionally found in Greek drama.

p. 312 For the absence of ironic aparts, however, Greek tragedy was richly compensated by the frequent occurrence of of dramatic irony. Irony of course is a mode of speech by means of which is conveyed a meaning contrary to the literal sense of the words, and may be divided into two classes - "verbal" and "practical" or "dramatic". In the former the dissimulation is manifest to all concerned, else the sarcasm, passing unrecognized, would fail of its effect and recoil upon the speaker, while in the latter concealment of the hinted truth is essential. It may be the speaker himself who fails to perceive the inner meaning of his own words, or he may employ "subjective" irony, i.e., consciously use his superior knowledge, to gloat over his victim or inveigle him to doom by an ambiguous utterance. In either case, however, the double entente is usually known to the audience, a considerable part of whose pleasure consists in viewing with prophetic insight the abortive efforts of the dramatic characters to escape the impending catastrophe.

p. 313 Dramatic irony consists, not only in the contrast between the outer, apparent meaning and the real, inner meaning of an ambiguous phrase, but also in the contrast between the real and the supposed situation. Thus a man whose ruin is impending often mistakes the position of his affairs so utterly as to indulge in entirely unjustified expression, feeling, gestures, or acts of rejoicing and triumph.

p. 315 The themes of tragedy were almost invariably drawn from mythology and the outlines of the story would therefore be known to practically everyone of consequence in the audience; furthermore, the not infrequent practice of foretelling the denouement in the prologue would put even the ignorant in a position to recognize subtleties in the language of the characters.

Three pieces of information in this section were helpful to me. First of all, on pages 298-299 prologues were discussed. The Quest Story was a prologue in that it set up the story for the audience. Secondly, the information on monologues on pages 304 and 308 was very beneficial. Monologues were difficult for me because there were nine other people on stage who were playing parts of Medea that I was not able to physically acknowledge. Although I was technically alone, the stage was crowded with people. Knowing how monologues delivered in Greek theatre helped me to deal with that problem. Thirdly, the information on irony

on page 312 was helpful. There were entire scenes that were nothing but dramatic irony, and this section helped me to identify the use of that irony and take full advantage of it.

Kabuki
from Kabuki

p. 90 During a *Kabuki* performance, people besides the actors appear on the stage and engage in various actions...Everything that can be handled behind the stage is of course handled there, but there are many things which an actor is unable to manage by himself on the stage, and for these he has to depend on the assistance of people who are not actors.

p. 91 By means of a little revolving stage, the song narrator appears in full view of the audience, together with his accompanist, on a platform to the right of the stage. As the play progresses, this person sings of the setting, the time, the situation, the relation between the dramatis personae, their emotions, etc. It is a kind of narration; but the narrator is actually there on the stage, and is therefore closely related to the actions of the actors. Sometimes this narrator speaks the lines for an actor, while the actor merely goes through the actions.

p. 92 Assistants would have to appear on the stage to help the actor; and the audience would be expected to pretend that these assistants are invisible...These assistants who appear on the stage with the understanding that the audience consider them invisible are called *kurogo*. They are dressed in black from head to foot, and even their faces are concealed behind thin black cloth. They are not supposed to have any individual significance

or personality on the stage. They arrange stage properties, do duty for a prompter, attend to minor changes in the lighting, look after the appearance and costumes of the actors on the stage, attend to sound and other effects and various stage tricks, and when a character "dies" on the stage they hold up a piece of black cloth, behind which the dead man can leave the stage without being seen by the audience.

p. 94 Even the front curtain used between acts is pulled along by a stage-hand and is concealed in the wing of the stage, instead of being raised upwards by mechanism. Furthermore, clappers are sounded while the curtain is being pulled, in order to add rhythm and an emotional appeal to the simple drawing of the curtain. This curtain, made of cotton, used to have several holes in it, through which the actors, who were already on the stage waiting for the opening of the curtain, used to take a look at the audience.

p. 96 In *Kabuki* plays, we find lines that convey hardly any sense, lines that are composed simply of adjectives, like the words of some of the latest "hit" songs. Indeed, the most famous lines in the plays are precisely those lines that convey little meaning. The *Kabuki* actors chant or speak those lines on the stage, entranced by the tone or ring of the passages, but not at all impressed or moved to sympathy by their purport.

p. 97 People do not look for sympathy for, or understanding of, the problems of life in *Kabuki*. They expect to be carried into a trance, in which they may forget everything else in the atmosphere that is created upon the stage.

p. 98 Thus, what the *Kabuki* aims at presenting is complex and varied. And in most parts the emphasis is laid not on the purport or significance but on form and pictorial beauty produced on the stage.

This information on *Kabuki* was helpful because as is wonderfully stated on page 98, what this theatre stresses is "visual beauty". This show was primarily visual, and it was good for me to understand what influenced that decision and why it was made. Also, page 91 talks about the role of the narrator. This description exactly fits the role that our narrator took during the Quest Story. Finally, on page 96, a description is given of some of the lines in *Kabuki*. Many of the lines in the show resembled this description, and it was helpful to know what purpose those lines were to serve.

Kabuki Make-up, Costumes, and Acting Styles

from The Kabuki Guide

Acting Styles

p.39 *wagoto* - (literally, "soft" or "gentle" business) is the relatively realistic acting style associated with the handsome young lovers who are the heroes. The *wagoto* hero is slightly foppish and effeminate.

p.39 *aragoto* - (literally, "rough" or "violent" business) is a style exemplified by the exaggerated posturing and costumes. Reserved for fantastical characters and villains, which has led to character stereotyping in *kabuki*.

p.47 *nori* - (literally, "riding the shamisen strings") A type of delivery used for speeches of heightened emotion. The speech is delivered in an extremely rhythmic fashion, to musical accompaniment, and the actor's actions become stylized, resembling dance.

p.47 *watari-zerifu* - A "divided" or "passed-along" speech, shared by several actors. If only two or three actors share a speech, it is called divided. If several actors pass along a speech, each taking a turn, it is called a passed-along speech.

p.47 "*Kabuki* is essentially musical drama, for in many cases what

is said is less important than the delivery, which, timed to the accompanying music, should be rhythmical and easy on the ear."

p.43 Acting styles vary on the type of play. Historical plays are typically very stylized, and contemporary drama is relatively realistic.

p.44 Another characteristic of *Kabuki* is the "staggered" or "sequential" style of acting. The action is not synchronized with the words of either the actor or the narrator. Instead, only after the narrator, in a historical play, has informed the audience that the character is about to weep will the actor do so.

p.44 Even with more contemporary drama that is typically realistic, certain patterns are adhered to. Murders and fight scenes, for example, that would be gruesome if produced realistically, are highly stylized.

Makeup

p.39 *kumadori* - The most obvious feature of the *aragoto*, it is a makeup style which involves painting the face with bold lines of principally red and blue.

Costumes

p.41 Costumes can undergo a sudden onstage transformation during the course of a play or dance. This phenomenon is not found in any other type of drama in the world. They were developed because *kabuki* was performed only during the daylight hours, and such effects had to take the place of lighting effects. There are two types of transformations:

p.42 *hikinuki* - ("pull-out") The upper and lower sections of the actor's kimono are separate, but hidden by a wide sash. The threads are pulled from the sleeves and skirts, loosening the top and bottom halves of the outer kimono, which are removed at great speed to reveal a new kimono beneath. This is used strictly for visual appeal.

p.43 *bukkaeri* - ("flip-down") Threads are removed from the shoulders and sleeves only, and the front and back panels come away and hang like a skirt to create a new costume with new colors and textures. This is used to symbolize a change in personality, the revelation of one's true nature.

Color and Sound

p.54 "*Kabuki* expresses itself in strong, basic colors such as red, black, and green, not in the sober and restrained hues of classical Japanese art. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say

that *Kabuki* positively delights in violent clashes of brilliant, even vulgar colors, in a way seemingly at odds with the refinement and elegance usually held up as the ideal of traditional aristocratic taste."

p.55-56 The sounds of *Kabuki* can be called "aural colors," those that appeal not to the eye but to the ear. As for *Kabuki* music, it is known as *hayashi*, and can be broadly divided into two main categories: *debayashi*, which is music performed onstage in full view of the audience; and *kagebayashi*, which is performed offstage, out of sight."

p.56 "In *Kabuki*, sounds are also used to achieve the kinds of effects that are created visually in other forms of drama. The large drum, for example, can be struck in various ways to evoke rain, wind, a rushing river, or ocean waves. Even the soundless sound of falling snow can be effectively conveyed. This and other sound effects have a hallucinatory quality that excites the audience's interest. Again, the emergence of a ghost is accompanied by the wailing of a flute and a dry rattle on the large drum."

p.56 "A sound fundamental to *Kabuki* is that of the *hyoshigi*: two wooden blocks that are struck together at increasing speed as the curtain is run open or shut at the beginning or conclusion of a scene. An art in itself, the striking of the *hyoshigi* is an

important staging convention."

The most important information in this section was the information on acting styles. The other information, although interesting, was not really that beneficial. The information that I did find helpful, however, was on page 47. *Nori*, the idea of a type of delivery used for heightened emotion, was used in our production. I used this idea during the Dance of Rage. The sounds and delivery were far more important than what I was actually saying. Also, the information on the same page about *watari-zerifu*, or divided speeches was very important. This could apply to any speeches that I shared with the Chorus during the show.

The Medea Myth

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from The Argonautica of Apollonius: literary studies, Apollonius of Rhodes: Argonautica III, Euripides: Cyclops, Alcestis, and Medea, and Jason and Medea.

Greek audiences were quite familiar with the Medea myth before Euripides' play was first produced in 431 B.C. Since the myth was common knowledge, the play has little expository material. The Greeks found this myth horrific but fascinating. When the play was first presented at the City Dionysia festival, it took third place. Some critics believe that this was because the audience was shocked to see such a bloody tale brought to life on stage. The high emotional level of the play has not changed with time, and it fascinates audiences today just as it fascinated the Greeks. Consequently, Medea has been revived several times since its first production and is presented all over the world. There have been no less than twenty different versions written by playwrights. The myth appears as drama, dance, opera, poetry, and there was even a one act domestic burlesque written for Victorian audiences called "Medea, or the best of mothers with a brute of a husband".

If there are so many varying treatments of the myth, there are certainly many different versions of the myth itself. Varying versions focus on the exploits of Jason and the Argonauts, the horrid infanticide that occurs later in the myth, or the love story between Jason and Medea.

In order to achieve the most complete version of the myth, I have looked at different sources, regardless of the source's focus. What follows is a rendering of the Medea myth drawn from various sources, in keeping with Euripides' classic play.

Jason, the son of Aison, grew up with his parents in the kingdom of Iolcus, which was governed by his uncle, Pelias. Pelias had received an oracle that he should beware of a man wearing only one sandal. One day, Jason appeared wearing only one sandal after losing the other crossing a stream. Pelias became convinced that Jason posed a threat to his life, so he decided to rid himself of any danger by eliminating Jason. Rather than murdering him outright, Pelias thought that it would be a better idea to give Jason an impossible task that would mean his death. So, Pelias told Jason to go to the kingdom of Colchis and recover the Golden Fleece. (In some versions of the myth, Pelias also tells Jason that he was warned in a dream to recover the Golden Fleece in order to dispel Zeus's anger over bad sacrifices. Zeus's anger will play a part later in the myth.)

Jason gathered together all of the greatest heroes of the day. He and his followers set off in a ship called the Argos, which was partly built by Athena. These followers of Jason are commonly known as the Argonauts. Jason and the Argonauts had some heroic adventures along the way in the tradition of Odysseus, which are recounted in The Argonautica of Apollonius. Eventually, they reached Colchis.

Aietes, the king of Colchis, told Jason that he could have the Golden Fleece if he accomplished some rather extraordinary feats. These feats included plowing the fields with the fire-breathing bulls he must yoke, sowing the dragon's teeth in the

plowed earth, and killing the armed soldiers that would grow from the dragon's teeth. Aietes intended Jason to be killed while trying to perform these feats, and he surely would have without any assistance.

Medea was Aietes' youngest daughter, and she was loyal to her father and her family. She fell in love with Jason on sight. The decision she faced was monumental - she had to choose whether she would remain faithful to her family, or assist the man she loved. This decision filled her with despair because she knew that assisting Jason would mean banishment from her home and alienation from her family. She wept alone in her room throughout the night. In The Argonautica of Apollonius, the Greek verb that is used for Medea's groans is the same verb that Homer used in the Iliad as the groans of dying soldiers. Medea contemplated suicide when laboring over her decision, but Hera intervened and caused her to decide in favor of Jason. The two met at the temple of Hecate, and she told him of her decision. Medea then used her expertise in magic and drugs to ensure Jason's success. With Medea's help, Jason was able to plow the field, kill the soldiers, and recover the Fleece.

After recovering the Fleece, Jason, Medea, and the Argonauts returned to Aietes's home for a banquet. During the banquet, Aietes, knowing of Medea's betrayal, intended to burn the Argos and kill Jason, but Aphrodite, who was fond of Jason, filled him with the desire to sleep, and Jason and the Argonauts escaped, taking Medea with them.

Medea's brother Apsyrtus, to revenge his family, swore to kill Jason and return home with Medea. Once again, Medea used her magic powers to assist Jason. She lured her brother to a private meeting with Jason, where Jason then murdered him. By this point, Medea and Jason were partners in murder, and it was impossible for her to return to Colchis after betraying her father and her country. Medea was now a prize of war, and Jason took her with him back to Iolcus.

Upon their return to Iolcus, Jason and Medea married. Pelias was rather surprised that Jason returned after his quest, The oracle still loomed in his mind, and he planned to ensure Jason's death. Medea, knowing the danger that the situation held for her husband, used her magic powers once again. She tricked Pelias' daughters by killing an old ram, cutting it up, and then boiling it with magic herbs. The ram emerged alive and young again. The daughters were convinced. They decided assist their father by helping him recapture his youth. After they had finished the ghastly deed, Medea withheld the magic ingredient, and Pelias was murdered. After the death of Pelias, Medea and Jason were banished from Iolcus, and they moved to Corinth. There Medea bore two sons, the oldest of which was called Medeios.

After some time in Corinth, an opportunity presented itself for Jason to elevate his position. He broke his oath to Medea and deserted his children, and married Creusa, the daughter of Creon, the king of Corinth. Fearing Medea's wrath and knowing

of her magical powers, Creon banished Medea and her sons. Jason breaking his oath angered Zeus and Themis, the enforcers of oaths. (One of the more common oaths of the day called for the loss of all the oath breaker's progeny.) Jason's fate was sealed when the gods were angered. Medea became a tool of the gods in their revenge, and in Euripides' play, the chorus calls her Erinyes, one of Zeus' agents.

Medea began to consider Jason's punishment. She decided to murder the princess. Using her magic powers, she poisoned a crown and veil. Then, she sent her two sons to deliver the gifts to the young and vain Princess Creusa. The princess put on Medea's gifts, and was immediately engulfed in flames. Her father, Creon, threw himself on her in an attempt to remove the crown, but it was immovable, and both burned to death. At this point, the death of Jason and Medea's children, the myth splits into different versions. In one version, Medea caused their death involuntarily while trying to make them immortal. In another version, the children were killed by the Corinthians as revenge for the death of Creon and Creusa, and the Corinthians put out the story that Medea killed them. The final version, which Euripides adopts and which is the most commonly accepted, is that Medea intentionally killed them. Medea, by murdering the princess and the children, brought upon Jason the greatest penalty for the breaking of the oath - the loss of all progeny. The god's revenge was now complete. In Euripides's play, Jason's final speeches suggest that the gods now have a score to settle

with her, and Medea responds by claiming that she was not responsible for her actions because of divine intervention.

To escape the wrath of Jason, Medea fled from Corinth in a magic chariot sent by her grandfather Helios, the god of the sun, to Athens, where she sought asylum with King Aegeus. She married King Aegeus and had children with him. Later, she attempted to kill Aegeus' son, Theseus, but was unsuccessful. Once again, she was forced to flee for her life, and was never heard of again.

Obviously, this was beneficial to know because I needed to know the entire story of Medea in order to properly develop the character. The one aspect of the story that I think we could have included in our production was the idea that Medea was the tool of the gods. If our goal was to make her sympathetic, that could have worked in our favor to make her more sympathetic to the audience.

Past Productions

from Greek Tragedy on the American Stage

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p. 48 Robinson Jeffers rewrote Euripides' *Medea*, which opened in October of 1947, for his favorite leading lady, Judith Anderson...She toured worldwide with Jeffers' play, and each time she took the stage, critics and audiences alike hailed her performance. Anderson's interpretation of *Medea* has dominated American theater history, but it should be noted that while Judith Anderson stands at the center, she shares the limelight with two other fine actresses who brought the role alive, Margaret Anglin in the 1920s and Zoe Caldwell in the 1980s.

p. 49 One of the earliest interpretations of *Medea* was that given by Margaret Anglin at Carnegie Hall in February 1918...The role itself permitted Anglin to display her talents in portraying two very different sides of the heroine. While the reviewer concedes that there were perhaps depths to *Medea*'s character that the young actress could not reach, he admits that she was "consummate" both in tenderness toward her children and violence in her rage.

p. 50 The 1918 performance by Margaret Anglin had become the standard by which to judge any actress playing the title role.

p. 51 "If *Medea* does not entirely understand every aspect of her whirling character, she would do well to consult Judith Anderson. For Miss Anderson understands the character more thoroughly than

Medea, Euripides, or the scholars, and it would be useless now for anyone else to attempt the part." - Brooks Atkinson

p. 55 In the spring of 1982, Judith Anderson returned to the American stage in *Medea*, but this time as the Nurse, playing the servant to Zoe Caldwell's *Medea*...Thus the young actress had to re-create *Medea* in the setting her elder supporting actress had made famous. To the majority of New York critics her attempt was eminently successful. Frank Rich, writing in the *New York Times* (3 May 1982), asserts that Zoe Caldwell "brought her special flame" to the revival. Her "intense psychological realism" brought her audience into "the thunderclap of Euripides' tragedy," leading them to believe in her warped logic. Her physical appearance set her off from those around her: she looked the part, states Rich, as well as interpreting it. He praises her wit, her sexuality, and her speech.

p. 56 It was through Judith Anderson's vision that, once again, Jeffers' *Medea* was brought to critical acclaim. While Anderson's portrayal of the Nurse was praised, she herself willingly accorded the top laurels to Caldwell, whose acting "completed the circle." Responding in an interview about the production, Judith Anderson said, "It's a great role, all right, and it was written for me. Once it was mine. Now it belongs to Zoe."

p. 58 In the winter of 1991, the Guthrie Theater mounted a

performance of Euripides' *Medea*...Its grandeur and power lay in the acting of Brenda Wehle as *Medea*...At first Wehle felt some trepidation about playing the title role in this play. Wright (the director) thought it important that *Medea* be played by a mother, but Wehle had to come to terms with a woman who would slay her own children. In an interview with Mike Steele in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* (11 January 1991) Wehle spoke about her relationship with the play's main character. To experience *Medea's* passion, she stated, "was scary, no fun at all." But as she developed the character, she came to understand drama itself as a cleansing ritual, one that allowed people to admit their darkest fears and not carry them out. At last she achieved a balance between her anger and her sadness, all the while amazed at Euripides's understanding of *Medea*.

p. 59 Zoe Caldwell won a Tony Award in 1982 for her portrayal of the title role of the Euripides/Jeffers play, as had Judith Anderson in 1947. The award was granted to an actress in the ancient play once again in 1994. Diana Rigg, who first created the role in London, brought life to Euripides' text (in a new translation by Alistair Elliot) on the New York stage, and most printed reviews pointed out her talent.

This information had no bearing on our production, but it was helpful to me just to have an understanding of the history of the role, especially in America.

After completing my research, it was time for the rehearsal process to begin. Although research is an important tool in preparing for any role, it is impossible for an actor to play the research. So, now it was time to store all of the information into the back of my mind and be guided by the script and music.

When blocking the scenes, we would begin by listening to the music that would be underscoring the scene and sharing our emotional responses. Using those responses, we would block the scenes.

While the actors were blocking the scenes and learning the lines, the dancers were learning their choreography. The next step was to incorporate the dancers into the scenes. The result was a production that was interesting not only aurally but visually.

Personally, one of the greatest tools that I used was music. As an actress, I have always relied on carefully selected music to help myself get into character. During my research, I ran into a quote in *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage* that hit me like a brick wall - "After all, Medea was just a Madame Butterfly who showed a little proper spirit." Being an opera lover and knowing *Madame Butterfly* very well, I knew that this music would be a marvelous help. I made a tape that incorporated music from *Madame Butterfly*, *Tosca*, *Faust*, *Aida*, and other operas. I listened to this tape before rehearsals and performances, and it helped me to clear my mind, focus, and prepare myself for work.

The Production

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All of this research was used in our production. The goal was to create a synthesized show based on all of the different influences. I believe that we reached that goal. There was only one person that I talked to who could identify an influence - one person who was familiar with *Kabuki* theatre recognized the Japanese elements in the show. Otherwise, no one realized just how much information had been packed into an hour and forty-five minute show.

The greatest challenge that we faced was combining the dancers with the actors. We did achieve a balance, but I felt that we could have gone farther in combining all of the elements if we had more rehearsal time. Either the dancers had to adjust to the actors, or the actors had to adjust to the dancers. If we had more time, there could have been a much better give and take relationship.

Personally, I was pleased with what we accomplished. This was a world premiere, and no one was certain how it was going to be received. We took a risk, and it paid off. Hopefully, the Theatre Department will be more willing in the future to take risks in selecting and forming its productions.

The ACTF Response

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Simply for interest's sake, I have included the written response from Dr. Diane Rao of ACTF. First of all, I should explain exactly what this is.

The Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival is a national theatre education program whose aim is to identify and promote quality in college-level theatre productions. *Medea* was an associate entry, which means that a responder from ACTF sees the production, makes comments, and nominates outstanding performers for the Irene Ryan Acting Competition on the regional level with the possibility of going on to compete at the national level.

I have included Dr. Rao's comments to give an idea of other reactions to the production.

ACTF -- Written Response to Associate Production

Responder: Dr. Diane Rao, Muskingum College
 Production: Euripides' Medea, adapted by Clint Mahle
 School: Ball State University
 Date: April 16, 1997
 Director: Clint Mahle

Response

Choice of Play:

Adaptation of Euripides' Medea created by the director. Goal was to make the story accessible to college students, to modernize the visual aspects, to pare down the references to Greek culture, to simplify the script, to emphasize the psychological question of the play. The adaptation was successful, particularly in its goal to be accessible to students (who comprised approximately 75% of the house). The goal of staying true to the structure and sensibility of Greek tragedy was not as decidedly met, although for the most part this was not a problem. (Addition of a scene where Medea poisons the children was inconsistent.) The adaptor admits that the script is intentionally biased toward Medea; Jason is portrayed as a philanderer, not a strategist. In making the chorus reflect Medea's "passions," the adaptation's resultant lack of *agon* reflecting society's opinion of Medea's act is missed. Style of production was well adapted to the strengths of the academic program; incorporated both theatre and dance majors fully. Apart from the single notation that the script was "adapted" by the director, there was no mention in program notes of the extent to which liberties were taken. Student audiences may not be aware how different this script is from Euripides', or why the adaptation was used instead of the original.

Production Elements

Set: Spieltreppe glided on silently in a wonderful scene shift which actually surprised audiences. Images of faces on side flats evoked an indistinct and appropriate mood. Steps seemed noiseless and well constructed. Actors and dancers had enough room to move on step landings. Emblem hanging in the preset was not perfectly circular, a minor distraction.

Costumes: Medea costume and wig appropriate and brilliant. Chorus' robes were evocative; revealed Medea's raw spirit beneath a smooth exterior. Symbols on second chorus costumes were not clear; not repeated elsewhere in design. Straps on those costumes were distracting; unclear whether the variety of dual straps combinations (both up, one-up) was intentional, and if so, for what purpose. Convention of half-masks and make-up was well used to signify Medea's alien surroundings. Not entirely clear why Medea's children did not (but once did) wear these masks. Golden fleece was disappointing, as was not seeing Medea's magical garment-gifts to the new wife. Makeup coordinated with Medea's symbols. Only when dancing chorus came down for opening sequence was the artificiality of the mask distractingly visible. Other character costumes (Jason, Creon, Messenger, Nurse, Aegeus) were remarkable and looked detailed.

Lighting: Responsible for creating a mood of anticipation during the preset. Colored spots (mostly warm colors) on an emblem hung in the "sky" created a provocative mood. Use of color on the cyc helped reflect emotional content of music and message. Lighting side flats at various times revealed faces painted subtly on them; unclear of the pattern or significance of when this revelation occurred in terms of the script and action.

Sound: Musical underscoring throughout the entire play was largely successful. Music was often well-matched by the director and sound designer to the pace and movement of the story. Only occasionally was the music oddly incongruous with the action. Music did not sound culturally specific; more international sounding, which helped create a feeling of a far-off yet contemporary place. Actors were miked to aid their competition with the strong musical aspect. This made it possible to hear, but also created a distancing effect. Occasionally, the mic sound was manipulated very successfully (reverb, heartbeat), however at times of great passion, actors overpowered microphone volume capacity.

Notes to the Director

Acting: Strongest part of the vocal aspect was the emphasis on good diction supported by each of the speaking characters. Narrator at beginning was particularly adept at telling a story while watching the story unfold. Didn't get much opportunity to hear Medea speak since this adaption gave her very few lines and instead made her inner thoughts pronounced by the chorus leader and her inner feelings physically enacted by a chorus of her passions. Whenever the script permitted, however, the actor playing Medea showed emotion both physically and vocally, proving to be particularly adept using restraint as a tool. Actors sometimes lacked stage business; most physical spectacle was provided by dancing chorus.

Movement and Ensemble: Perhaps the single most interesting visual aspect of the show. The chorus of Medea's passions was a wonderful team of dancers who created a mood-creating ensemble. The choreography, as well as the improvisational dance, helped show the beats created by the director and seemed very well matched to the musical selections. The student choreographers who shaped this very significant element helped to create many complex and successful images. Only occasionally did the dances seem to last a little too long, usually they continued to build with enthusiasm and importance.

Scoring the Action: Pace of the show was created primarily by musical underscoring and corresponding dancers' movement. Much of the show was wordless; several of the most moving scenes were those without dialogue (and of these, Medea's memory of Jason's courtship was the strongest). Music was well chosen to create mood, however occasionally, the music and pace seemed inconsistent with the highs and lows of the story itself. Messenger's expository monologue relating the deaths of Creon and his daughter was oddly unenthusiastic. Stage pictures reinforced Medea's importance, particularly her psychological makeup, though visual emphasis on the three parts of the Medea character. Stage pictures, particularly those employing a moving chorus, were successful and used a great portion of the space available. Use of house aisles for opening sequence and curtain call provided nice frame and brought the story down to the audience, reinforcing the director's intention to use a partial Brechtian style.

This was an enjoyable show, a wonderful spectacle, and a happy reward at the end of a four hour car ride. I found that your trust in the student choreographers paid off; their contribution to the visual aspect of your show was invaluable. The chorus-actors' expressive bodies embodying the musical mood of the show, coupled with your creation of interesting pictures on the massive stage, added with the refreshingly good diction of your speaking actors, were the most effective parts of the afternoon. It was an energetic performance, and that energy was passed on to your audience. It's not often I leave the theatre and hear student audiences responding to classics with phrases like "That was so cool." That was the strength of this production and adaption -- your ability to meet the goal you set yourself -- to make the Medea story accessible to your student population in an interesting and provocative way.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Rao

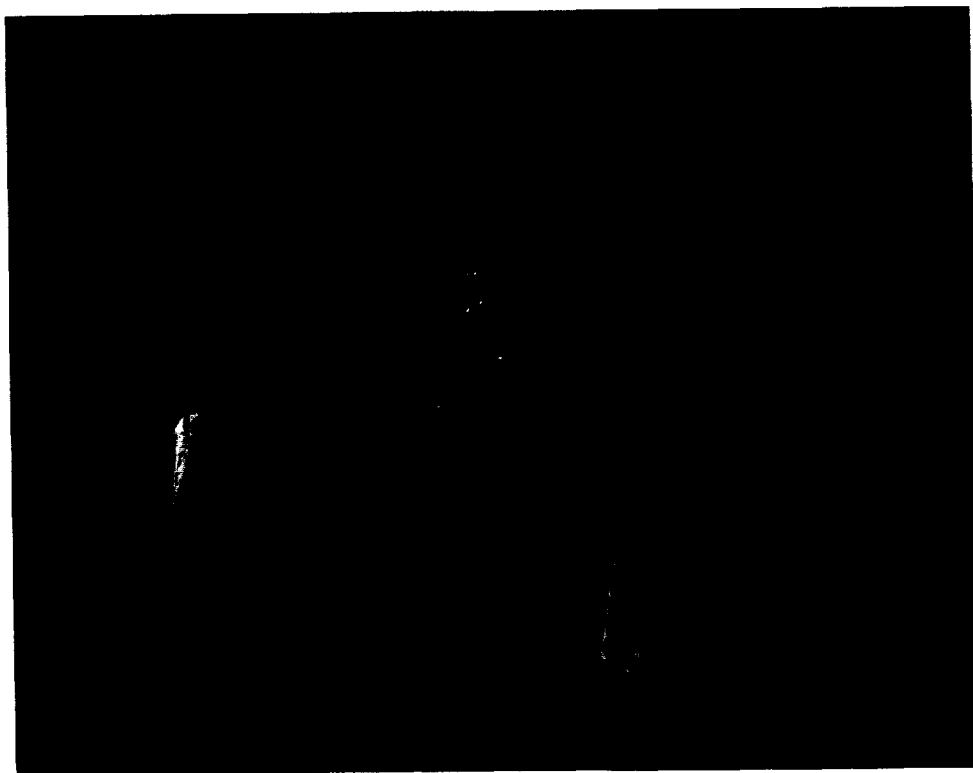
Irene Ryan Nominee: Dana Nichols



Movement 3 - Joining the Souls



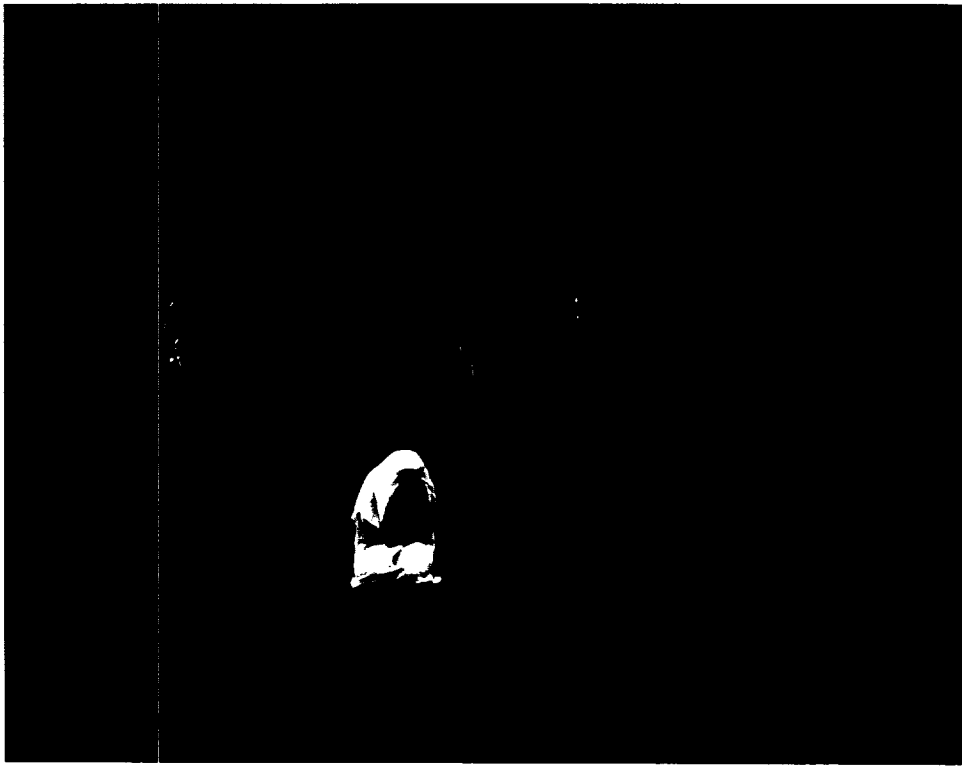
Movement 5 - The Dance of Love



Movement 6 - The Dance of the Harvest



Movement 7 - The Quest Story Part 2



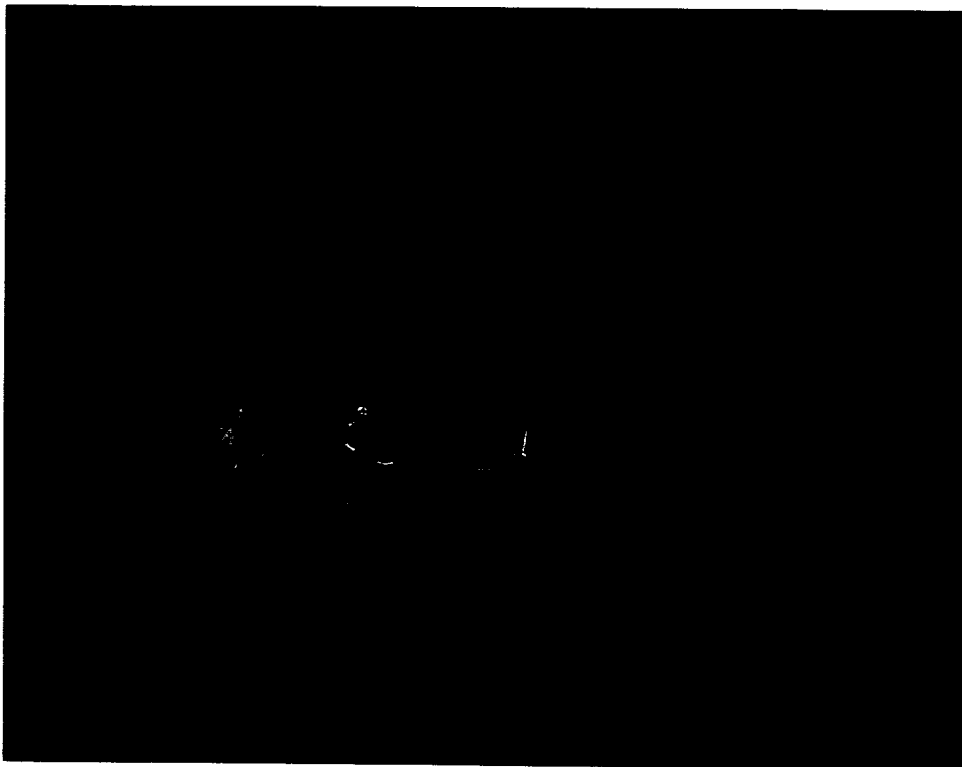
Movement 11 - The Dance of Pain



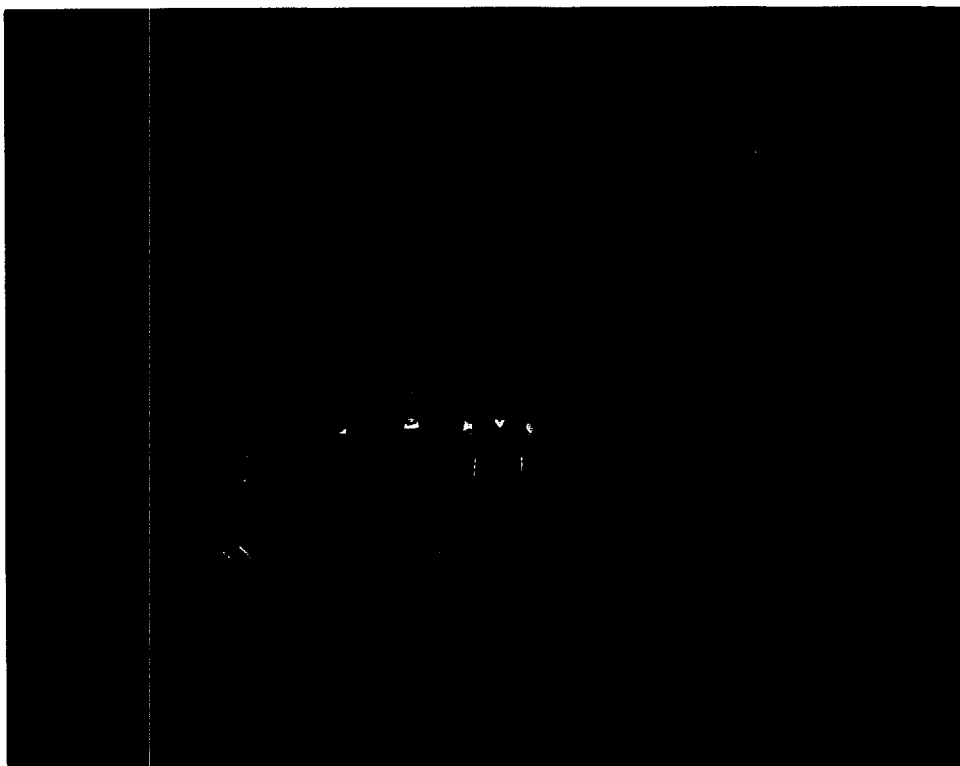
Movement 13 - Fear and Dignity



Movement 14 - The Dance of the Tempest



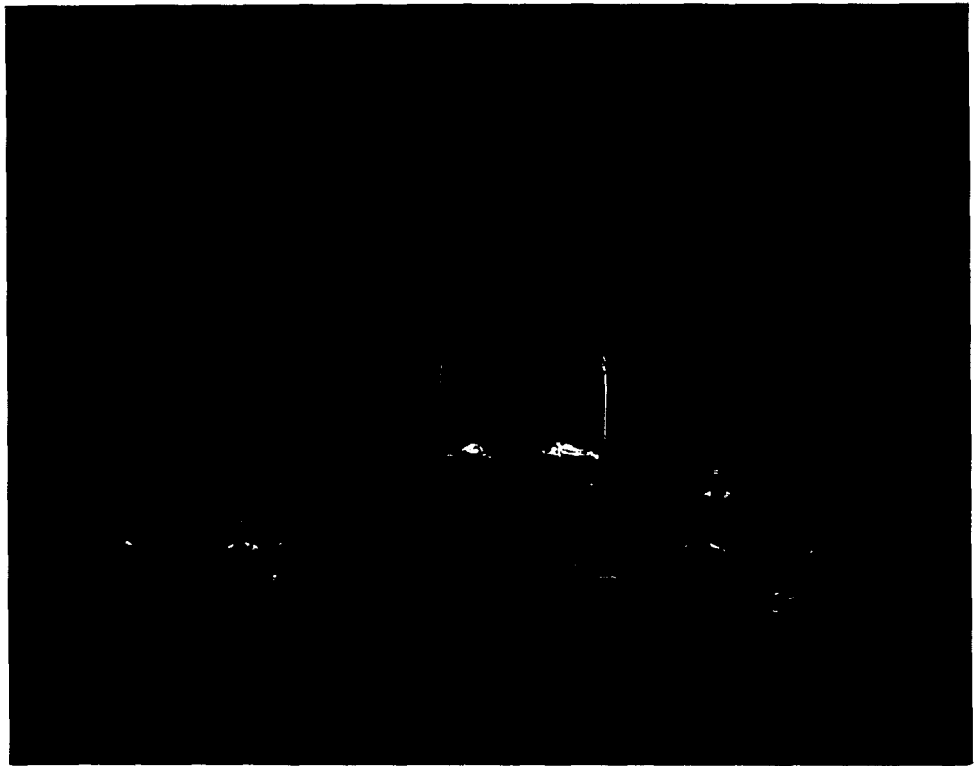
Movement 15 - The Seduction



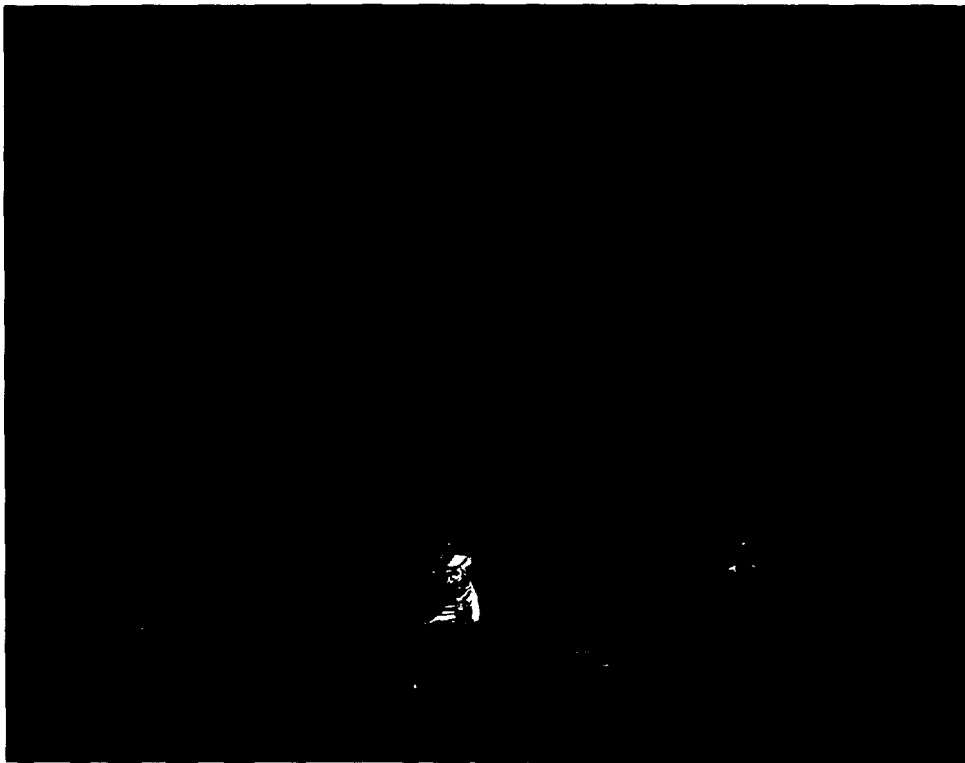
Movement 17 - Playful Friends



Movement 22 - The Dance of Remembrance



Movement 29 - The Dance of Dreams



Movement 26 - Messenger's Score Part 3

Epilogue

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Now that the production is over, I realize just how much of my life Medea controlled! After my initial jitters over playing a role that was 2,500 years old and had such a rich history, I threw myself into the work, and the rewards were immense. We had a marvelous production that was well received. This was the first time that I had ever worked on an original production, and it was an amazing learning process. The challenges helped me to grow as a performer, and I genuinely hope that I will have the opportunity to work on a production similar to this again.

My sincerest and most heartfelt thanks go to Clint Mahle, who trusted me not only as a playwright, but as a director. His faith in me and guidance throughout the process are appreciated more than I can ever say.

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