Theatre Arts 150
Rehearsal and Performance

ELECTRA by Sophocles, a new version by Nick Payne

Directed by Mitchell Thomas

Overview

“…Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.

--The Tempest, Epilogue, William Shakespeare

From the earliest moments of human history, people have represented the joys and vicissitudes of human life through literature, theatre, dance, painting, sculpture, and music. Though the various literary and artistic forms have diverse purposes, they share the potential to deepen and enliven people’s understanding of what it means to be human, and offer distinctive insights into how people formulate, make sense of, and at times challenge the nature and shape of reality. According to the quote from The Tempest found above, Shakespeare believes that aesthetic enjoyment is necessary to the human spirit. Located at the end of his last play, the speech can be thought of as a kind of “last word” regarding what Shakespeare finds important about life. Like Shakespeare, Westmont believes that the literary, performing, and plastic arts are important to a fully rounded educational experience. In the Theatre Arts Department, we believe that the study of Theatre and Drama is a sure way to become more lively, sensitive, and expressive individuals, while becoming conversant in the history, theory, and practice of the field. Finally – but significantly – aesthetic enjoyment is one way that people participate in the ongoing process of Creation, and receive the innumerable gifts that stream from God.

The Theatre Arts performance classes are fundamental to Westmont’s Theatre program. In these courses, which include Theatre Arts 31, 50, 131, and 150, students create, rehearse, and perform in plays and dance concerts. The courses offer a great diversity of theatre experiences – classical and new plays; adaptations of literature; original, devised theatre; performance art; ballet, jazz, and modern dance; and many others. The performance component of our program offers an opportunity for students to integrate their studio and classroom work with both small and large-scale performances where students develop and test their performance abilities before paying audiences. In a very real way, the performance courses contribute to the overall cultural life of Westmont by presenting theatre and dance that entertains, teaches, and raises important issues and concerns. These performance courses are not exclusively for Theatre Arts majors. All students are invited to audition and take part in the opportunity to put their education into
action. Toward this end, the department’s upper division performance courses – TA 131 and 150 – satisfy the General Education requirement for Competent and Compassionate Action. In these courses, students commit themselves to intensive, community-building artistic work; learn what it means to communicate with a full range of expressive behaviors in an environment of mutual support and understanding; and experience the rich rewards that come from rehearsing and performing some of the most exciting plays from the world repertoire.

**Title and Team**

*Electra*, by Sophocles, in a new version by Nick Payne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Mitchell Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer / Music Director</td>
<td>Eric Ederer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scenic Design</td>
<td>Bob Hamel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costume Design</td>
<td>Miller James</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting Design</td>
<td>Bob Hamel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dramaturge</td>
<td>Andrea Fishman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Director</td>
<td>Bob Hamel</td>
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**The Production**

*Electra* is one of the masterpieces of the Western theatre tradition. Written by the great tragedian Sophocles in 5th century B.C.E., the myth of Electra examines the curse of the house of Atreus, and explores the nature of revenge, family, justice, and grief. This new version of the play by British playwright Nick Payne is a fantastic homage to the structural elegance and complexity of the original script while creating an urgent and haunting world for a contemporary audience. In many ways, this production represents the end of a two-year process for me of studying, considering, and working Greek texts and plays that began in a Greek text immersion at Harvard’s Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, D.C during Summer 2012. I am thrilled and grateful to get to work on such a fantastic play that is relentlessly alive today and at the same time connects us with our theatrical roots and the ongoing, universal struggle to make sense of the human condition.

**Auditions, Casting, and Scripts**

**Preliminary auditions for Electra will be on Thursday, October 24 at 7 pm.** Please sign up for an individual time in which you will do a monologue from material from the show. **Callbacks will be held on Saturday, October 26 beginning at 10 am.** I am looking to cast a company of 6 -10 actors for the production to play the Greek chorus and major characters.

**Performance Dates**

January 31 and February 1, 2014
February 6, 7, and 8, 2014

*All performances will be OUTDOORS in a site-specific performance location on the Westmont campus. Performance times TBA.*
Rehearsals

For this production, we will be engaged in a “split” rehearsal process.

PART ONE will commence in early November and continue thru mid-December. Rehearsals will generally be held Monday thru Friday evenings from 7-10 p.m.. During this time, we’ll be playing with text, music, improvisation, ritual, and Greek choral tradition. I’ll be working around existing fall schedules for this phase of rehearsal.

PART TWO will commence on January 6 – thru the end of January. Rehearsals will be held MW from 7:30 -10:30 pm, TTH from 2-5 pm, and Saturday from 10 am – 1 pm. Part One rehearsals will be flexible according to the schedules of those cast. Part Two rehearsals are mandatory and not flexible, so you MUST be available at those times during January, with no exceptions.

** Note about the MLK holiday on January 20. Though we will not be rehearsing the entire day, this will be a significant tech/dress day for our production. You should plan on extended rehearsals on Saturday, January 18 and Monday, January 20. **

Credit

Every Westmont student is eligible for 1-2 units of TA 150, Rehearsal and Performance to be credited to the spring semester.

TA 150 satisfies the Productions and Presentations section of the Competent and Compassionate Action component of Westmont’s General Education program.

About the Audition

1. Please prepare a monologue from one of the three following selections. You may choose any speech that interests you. Memorization is preferred but not required.
2. Please prepare a short (30 seconds or so) acapella spiritual song, chant, or lament. I am interested in sound that is timeless and universal rather than contemporary and technical. If you are not a singer, that is fine! Prepare a short chant of a psalm or poetic fragment of Sappho.
3. Sign up for an audition time on the departmental callboard.
4. Fill out the enclosed information form and bring it with you to the audition.
5. You are allowed to check out a copy of the play from the theatre office. Other versions of Electra are also available online and at the library.
Audition Information Form for ELECTRA
(Please bring completed to the audition)

Name: _________________________________ Email: _________________________________

Phone: (at school) ________________________ Year (in school) _____________________

Major: __________________________ Minor: __________________________

Units carrying this semester: __________
Units carrying next semester: __________

List any theatre classes you’ve taken, and where you’ve taken them:

List any theatre experience (show, role, theatre):

Do you have any experience with Greek plays/text?
________________________________________________________________________

What languages do you speak? ________________________________________________

Do you sing? __________ Voice part? ___________ read music? __________

Do you play any instruments?__________________________________________

Do you work? ______ if yes, where and how many hours/wk: ___________________

NOV/DEC rehearsals
* Will you have any conflicts with the rehearsal schedule in the fall (M-F 7 to 10 pm)?
________________________________________________________________________

* conflicts in the fall will not exclude you from casting – be honest!

JAN rehearsals
Do you understand that you must be available in the spring for ALL rehearsals
(MW 730 – 1030 / TTH 2-5 / SAT 10-1)?
Please initial to confirm that you understand this condition for casting __________
Do you know why I chose the name Iphigenia?
Your father claimed to have been told that its meaning was ‘born to strength’.
After she was born, I relayed this to a friend.
It means ‘strong born’, I said, excitedly.
My friend gazed on uneasily.
What, I said.
I’m sorry to have to tell you this, she said, but that is not its true meaning.
It means sacrifice, she said.
I’m still yet to let go of the expression that shaped her eyes as she screamed.
The whites of her eyes, outstretched and pleading.
The whites of her eyes as she cried out.
Your father’s knife as it glided across her throat.
I have long lived in the shadow of your sister’s murder.
It haunts me.
Why Menelaus couldn’t have taken the life of one of his own daughters, I have never understood.
Why your father saw fit to draw the blood of your sister quite so quickly, I have never known.
I sometimes wonder whether your father loved Menelaus’ children more than his own.
BEAT
I am sorry that you feel the way you do.
But what you must try and understand is that your father’s reasoning was simply no longer reliable.
I have urged you any times toward a compassionate judgment of my actions.
I have no regret.
I make no apology.
ELECTRA

Often, before the sun’s up, when it’s like this, when it’s dark, like this, I often think that I can hear him.
I think that I can hear him speaking to someone.
I feel as is he’s home.
Come back.
It can feel as if he’s come, back, home, to me.
I go into his room.
Morning, I say.
But it’s not him. It’s another man and for a moment I don’t know who.
I don’t know who he is. In my father’s bed, head on my father’s pillow.
My mother crawls out from underneath my father’s sheets.
She’s cradling the stranger’s hand in her own.
They’re barely clothed, naked virtually.
I stare at them, blank, not quite knowing what to say.
What are you doing, my mother says.
You shouldn’t be in here.
This is our bedroom.
Electra, you need to calm down.
No.
No.
You need to wake up, I say.
I return to my room and I crouch on my bed and I pull my knees to my chest.
I know now where my father is.
And I know that I cannot see him.
There is a mark on my floor, a mark on the floor of my bedroom.
I tell myself not to look at it.
Day after day after day.
Don’t look at it, I say.
This is the spot where your father died, I say to myself, do not glance at it again.
Arm in arm, we struggled
From the bathroom to my bedroom.
His entire body logged with water, wounded.
His skin loose and thin.
His feet, soaking wet, slapped upon the floor as we walked.
When we reached my bedroom, we fell to the floor.
I picture him endlessly.
STROPHIUS

Well.
Well.
Your son was on his way home.
Here.
He was on his way here.
He had walked for miles.
His feet were battered and his, his neck, the back of his neck was intensely sunburnt.
As was his face for that matter.
I came across him in a field south of my home.
He was bent over, his hands on his knees.
I wandered over toward him and, already, I could see that his skin was red and split and peeling.
Are you alright, I said.
He wasn’t, alright.
At all.
He was fatigued and weak and exhausted.
He didn’t say much, initially, so I’m not sure, I’m afraid, how far he had travelled, but it was clearly a tremendous distance.
I took him home.
My home.
I invited him inside.
In the morning though, by the time I woke, he was gone.
I assumed he had simply decided to leave very early.
Later that day, there was a knock at my door.
There’s a body, a neighbor of mine said.
Nobody knows who it is, she said.
There’s a body in the river.
Three of us were needed to pull his body up onto the bank of the river.
His skin was so white it was almost yellow.
Translucent, really.
Milk in color.
One of the women who had helped us with the body tried speaking to him.
She cleared the weeds and reeds away from his face and placed an ear just above his lips.
We layered his arms across his chest and we carried his body away from the river.
I’m sorry.