Hades

A Retelling of the Persephone Myth

By
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DEDICATION

To Julian and Christina,
who still believe in the magic of the world …

To the ghosts that haunt our building--always watching
in silence and support.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

This play was commissioned for The Nest, a community theatre program, and was produced in October 2009 to many local accolades. It played to a sold-out house for the entirety of its run. Cast list:

AGAMEMNON: Keith Martin
MENELAUS: Ediel Bernal
AEGISTHUS: Marco Regalado
ACHILLES: Marlow Bigler
CHARON: Jay Martinez/Keith Martin
CLYTEMNESTRA: Alyssa Torres/Sofia Regalado
HELEN: Rebecca Gonzalez/Alyssa Torres
CASSANDRA: Sofia Regalado/Jessica Martin
HADES: Adam Escamilla/Marco Regalado
PERSEPHONE: Jessica Martin/ Rebecca Gonzalez
HERMES: Bobby Garcia
ENSEMBLE OF THE DEAD: Horacio Vela, Christina Salinas, Benjamin Morales, Arturo Crake III, Jossue Velasquez, Shelby Bigler, Eloy Martinez.

STORY OF THE PLAY

As Lord of the Underworld, Hades' life is perpetually dark and dismal. His only companions are an ensemble of the dead composed of many of the Greek heroes of the Trojan War as well as the bitter and resentful queens, Helen, Cassandra, and Clytemnestra. They are all tortured souls, especially after being in the lowest dregs of hell for centuries.

Then Hades kidnaps Persephone, the goddess of spring, who is young and carefree. Although initially she is desperately unhappy, Hades works hard to make her comfortable, and they learn the intricacies involved in dealing with one another. Soon Persephone's presence makes flowers bloom and food grow, causing the tone of the underworld to brighten dramatically. Ultimately she faces a decision: Should she eat the seeds of a pomegranate to stay with her new love Hades in the underworld forever or return to earth to save her loved ones from death?

A flamboyant Hermes and crotchety Charon add plenty of humor to this play which explores the many facets of love. Dance movement, choral work, and beautiful tableaux add additional richness to this dramatic play.

Performance time: About 80 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Approx. 7 m, 4 w, 1 flexible and ensemble)

AGAMEMNON: King of Mycenae and Argos, leader of the Greek Armies at Troy, husband of Clytemnestra, "owner" of Cassandra, arrogant/self-assured.

MENELAUS: Brother to Agamemnon, King of Sparta, madly in love with his wife Helen.

AEGISTHUS: Lover of Clytemnestra, first cousin of Agamemnon and Menelaus, cunning, seeks vengeance.

ACHILLES: Leader of the Myrmidons, protects bones of his cousin Patroclus, lived for glory and honor.

CHARON: Rower of the dead across the River Styx.

CLYTEMNESTRA: Wife of Agamemnon, lover of Aegisthus, had daughter sacrificed by Agamemnon, resentful, jaded, controlled in her emotion, despises her sister Helen.

HELEN: Wife of Menelaus, lover of Paris, sister to Clytemnestra, bitter, too aware of the reality of relationships.

CASSANDRA: Youngest sister of Hector and Paris, daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba. Slightly insane from her ability to foresee the future. Had twins with Agamemnon. She and her children murdered by Clytemnestra.

HADES: God of the Underworld. Dark, not used to laughter or great bouts of emotion.

PERSEPHONE: Daughter of Demeter, goddess of nature. Father rumored to be Zeus but never explored. Bright, full of love for all things, naïve, never been exposed to the truth of life. Matures as play progresses.

HERMES: Messenger of the gods. He is the only god who has free passage between the realm of the living and the dead. Happy-go-lucky, bright, fearless, and irreverent.

ENSEMBLE OF THE DEAD: Souls who have been condemned to the lowest dregs of hell for committing crimes against others. They are the villains in the tragic stories of Greek myth.

CERBERUS, THE DOG: Flexible, non-speaking. Guards the gates of the underworld.

SETTING

The throne room of Tartarus, the lowest pit in Hades.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

This show explores love. The primary story delves into the budding relationship between Hades and Persephone and the intricacies involved in learning how to deal with another. How far do you allow someone to change you? Is change necessary in one's self in order for a relationship to survive? The secondary stories explore the effects of love on individuals that survived the siege of Troy. We meet the husk that has become Cassandra, the bitterness that surrounds Helen, and the need to be in control of Clytemnestra and realize that "love" has destroyed all they once were. Add the men who surrounded them in life, and a different picture of the idea of love begins to emerge. The final story deals with the men of the House of Atreus. Agamemnon and Menelaus are brothers who have sacrificed much for the pursuit of some ideal or another, while Aegisthus has used "love" as a means to create an alliance with Clytemnestra to wreak vengeance on his cousins. It would be easy for a director to focus on creating an atmospheric Hades and concentrate only on the primary story, but that would be a disservice to talented actors and an injustice to the intent of the play.

With this in mind, the script was written with formal language for the chorus and ensemble and more modern and informal language for the primary characters. This allowed the director more freedom to choose the vision of the show. It amalgamates two forms of theatre into one piece.

The ensemble plays a significant role in the pacing of this show. Their work involved intricate dance movement, along with choral work, and song. Each aspect added another layer to the development of the key issues of the piece. Their choreographer created beautiful tableaus as the play

progressed which froze the characters in different aspects of their burgeoning relationships. The inception of the chorus is essential to the success of the show. Their “faceless” presence never allowed us to forget that none are exempt from death and all must make choices about how much importance to place on love- whether it be for another, for a friend, or for family.

The only god (other than Hades) to make an appearance was Hermes. His character took on a decidedly flamboyant air which was fine-tuned by a razor sharp wit and attitude. Hermes is meant to be a foil for the darkness that is Hades.

The music used in this show was created by our in-house musicians. They used organic sounds like rain and thunder, then added an electric bass and guitar, a bodhran, flutes, baglamas and anoyanakis (Greek guitars) to create dance rhythms for the chorus. Initially it was a cacophony of sound that jarred the senses. It was particularly effective in Persephone’s descent into the underworld. Then we slowly intertwined the sounds until they became so natural to hear in the play that they merged with movement.

Costuming for this show can be as elaborate or as simple as the designer chooses. We filled our world with material such as linen, chiffons, and leathers. Our costume colors were derived from the minerals that were found in the earth or in caves. We used a lot of copper, rust, browns, gray, and bits of color to represent all the jewels found in these locations. The dog was played by an actor who had a headpiece with two heads. His own face became the third. He wore matching makeup and ears to make the third head.

Our set had a communal water source located upstage that allowed the chorus to access it at different times during the progression of the show. Our lighting designer installed small pin spots throughout the outcroppings and crevices to create illusions of shadows and movement throughout the piece.

Give free reign to the imagination. This play lends itself wonderfully to the task.

End of Freeview

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