

SOPHOCLES'
ELECTRA

translated by E.F. Watling

July 30, 31, August 1

Presented by

Centre for the Performing

Arts

and

The Elder Conservatorium of

Music

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY

1987

Electra - by Sophocles

CAST

| | |
|---|------------------|
| ORESTES, <i>son of Agamemnon</i> | Basil Schild |
| ELECTRA, <i>daughter of Agamemnon</i> | Anne-Marie Peard |
| CHRYSOTHEMIS, <i>her sister</i> | Ann D'Angelo |
| CLYTAEMNESTRA, <i>her mother</i> | Robyn Trebilcock |
| AEGISTHUS, <i>husband of Clytaemnestra</i> | Phillip Parslow |
| PYLADES, <i>friend of Orestes</i> | Eugene Minge |
| A TUTOR <i>to Orestes</i> | Craig Weatherill |
| A HANDMAIDEN <i>to Clytaemnestra</i> | Irene Petrovs |

CHORUS of women of Mycenae

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Bianca Willems | Megan Verity |
| Leesa French | Jane Sansom |
| Pip Milroy | Avril Fennell |
| Mary Geyer | Mary-Anne Haddad |
| Julie Letch | Louise Vlach |
| Sarah Knaggs | Fran Tonkiss |

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Director | Max Mastrovasas |
| Assistant Director | Graham Lugsden |
| Musical Director | Grahame Dudley |
| Choreographer | Kathryn Lowe |
| Production Manager | Pennly Attwood |

MUSICIANS/COMPOSERS

*From the Elder Conservatorium Composers'
Workshop*

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ed Elksnitis | -Guitar, Piano |
| David Kotlowy | -Bass guitar, Synthesizer |
| Robert Kral | -Synthesizer |
| Peter Dutton | -Piano, Voice |
| Peter Leech | -Violin, Voice, Recorder |
| Derek Brookes | -Piano intestines, Vibraphone |
| Michael Giddings | -Organ, Recorder, Voice |
| Becky Llewellyn | -Violin, Clarinet, Voice |
| Michael Liddell | -Flute |
| Tim Edhouse | -Violin, Percussion |

CREW

SET DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION

Bianca Willems
Ann D'Angelo
Leesa French
Basil Schild
Pip Milroy
Mary Geyer

COSTUME

Pennly Atwood
Lillian Girardi
Julie Letch

PROPS

Sarah Knaggs
Leesa French
Megan Verity
Eugene Minge
Phillip Parslow

LIGHTING

Jane Sansom
Craig Weatherill
Avril Fennell

PUBLICITY

Madeleine Misirdjieff
Mary-Anne Haddad
Louise Vlach
Robyn Trebilcock
Fran Tonkiss

ELECTRA - A Modern Mythic Perception

*Must this roof see
The sorrows of Pelops age after age repeated
To the end of time?*

The saga of the house of Atreus began as an Homeric anecdote in "The Libation Bearers" (ODYSSEY, III). Its powerful and diverse vision inspired the three great tragedians of the classical world in markedly different ways.

Aeschylus, in 458 BC, expanded the Homeric account to make overt the issue of matricide and, further, had Orestes "tried" for the murder of Clytaemnestra.

In 413 BC, Sophocles' tragedy saw a stark overturning of Aeschylus' moral decision. Orestes' vengeance becomes imbued with an heroic quality, and is supported by the elevation of Electra to the central position of the play.

In what is believed to be the same year, Euripides' version was performed, adding a new moral and psychological dimension to the original story. The ethical imperatives and mental insight which inform the Euripidean work form the basis of many of the modern interpretations of the Electra/Orestes myth. However, contemporary playwrights have drawn upon the questions at the centre of Sophocles' work.

In MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA, Eugene O'Neill uses the inheritance of death to show the decline of the Anglo/Puritan aristocracy in New England. Reducing the statuesque Clytaemnestra to the voluptuous and weak Christine, and Orestes to the psychotic Orin, O'Neill gives his Electra figure, Lavinia Mannon, a Sophoclean centrality. It is she who will live out the expiation of her family's evils.

Jean Giraudoux's 1937 piece ELECTRE, concerns itself with the Sophoclean question of justice. Electre, representing *justice integrale*, is opposed by Aegisthe, *justice humaine*. Writing on the eve of French occupation, Giraudoux considers the relentless pursuit of justice irrespective of circumstance,

"...until thousands of innocents have died an innocent death, so that the guilty will live a guilty life."

Modern readings see the acquittal of Orestes as the victory of father-right over mother-right in the Heroic Age, underscoring the Sophoclean vision of reclaimed patrimony. For T.S. Eliot the matricidal act is a release which becomes a religious experience (THE FAMILY REUNION, 1939), while for Jean-Paul Sartre, it is revolutionary defiance- the assertion of an existential freedom which knows no guilt (THE FLIES, 1964).

The tragic resonance of the Electra myth shows itself to be as real in this century as it was for the ancients. As theatre seeks to invest each text with impact as a contemporary document, so this production of Sophocles' ELECTRA locates its understanding in a modern tragic consciousness.

Fran Tonkiss
Dramaturg

Max Mastrovasas - Director

Max is a graduate of the Medical School of the University of Adelaide, and for several years was a Drama teacher with the Education Department. He has been involved in theatre as an actor, designer and director. His acting credits include Vladimir in Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*; Gloucester in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which he co-directed for the Theatre Exchange; and Caliban in *The Tempest*. He has designed productions of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Euripides' *The Bacchae*, and Genet's *The Balcony*. Max is currently the Lecturer in Drama at the University of Adelaide, Centre for the Performing Arts, for which he has directed *In the Heart of the British Museum*, and *Brecht on Brecht*. His next project will be as Director of the Theatre Exchange's production of Garcia Lorca's *Yerma*.

Kathryn Lowe - Choreographer

Kathryn began her artistic career in Hollywood films at the age of nine. She trained in classical ballet with Nijinska, before dancing with the San Francisco and Chicago Ballet Companies, and the Paris Opera. Kathryn worked in modern dance with Martha Graham, Charles Weidman and Lester Horton. Following her move to Australia in 1964, Kathryn worked as an actress, teacher and choreographer. From 1977-82 she was Dance Officer for the Theatre Board of the Australia Council. In 1982 Kathryn moved to Adelaide, tutoring at the C.P.A., and holding the position of Assistant Director/Dance Co-ordinator for Carclew Youth Performing Arts Centre. Kathryn is currently a teacher of dance, drama and dance history. In November she will be choreographing *The Csardas Princess*, directed by Dennis Olsen for the State Opera.

Grahame Dudley - Musical Director

Grahame has been involved professionally in composing and conducting music theatre for many years. In London, he was director of the Cockpit Arts Centre, and his own experimental music theatre ensemble. Since taking up a post at the Elder Conservatorium, he has worked as composer and conductor with the State Theatre Company (*As You Like It*), Adelaide Chamber Orchestra (*Music Is*), and the State Opera (*Purcell's Dido and Aeneas*, *Angelique* and composed *The Snow Queen*).

In this production he has worked with the composition students of the Elder Conservatorium to produce a musical score. Some music is the work of individuals, other pieces are a group effort; all are performed by the composers themselves. It has been a worthwhile and exciting exercise.

Acknowledgements

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