

An Examination of the Correlation Between the Justification and Glorification of War in Charles

Mee's *Iphigenia 2.0*: A Director's Approach

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Charles Mee and the History Behind <i>Iphigenia 2.0</i>	4
Introduction	4
The Life and Works of Charles Mee	4
Just War	8
Production History and Reception	11
Survey of Literature	13
Conclusion	15
 Chapter Two: Play Analysis	 16
Introduction	16
Synopsis	16
Given Circumstances	24
Previous Action	26
Dialogue and Imagery	27
Character Analysis	29
Idea and Theme	34
Conclusion	36
 Chapter Three: The Design Process	 37
Introduction	37
Production Style	37
Director's Approach	38
Choice of Stage	38
Collaboration with Designers	40
Set Design	44
Costumes	46
Makeup and Hair	50
Properties	52

Lighting	53
Sound	55
Conclusion	56
 Chapter Four: The Rehearsal Process	 57
Introduction	57
Auditions and Casting	57
Rehearsals and Acting Strategies	60
Technical and Dress Rehearsals	64
Performances	65
Conclusion	67
 Chapter Five: Reflection	 68
Introduction	68
Design	68
Staging and Timing	72
Acting	73
Self-Analysis	77
Conclusion	80
 Appendices	 82
A – Photos Featuring the Set Design	83
B – Photos Featuring the Costume Design	86
C – Photos Featuring the Lighting Design	92
D – Photos Featuring the Concept Images	98
 Works Consulted	 102

Chapter One

Charles Mee and the History Behind *Iphigenia 2.0*

Introduction

Charles Mee's *Iphigenia 2.0* is a significant work in recent theatre history. The play was widely recognized and repeatedly produced for its unique take on contemporary issues, popular culture, and current events set within a framework of ancient myths and historical literature. Although the original story was written thousands of years ago, Mee's script is still relevant to a modern audience because of its themes dealing particularly with the military, family, and sacrifice. In the play, Agamemnon faces an impossible decision when his soldiers give him an ultimatum: sacrifice his daughter or they will return home. The playwright, Charles Mee, left the story and characters relatively unchanged from the original text. His main alterations involve the vernacular aspect of the play and expanding certain parts. By researching the playwright and his work, analyzing the script, studying the concept of just war, and emphasizing the theme of perspective, I will seek to show how the justification and glorification of war influence Agamemnon's final decision through my work as a director in a fully mounted production.

The Life and Works of Charles Mee

When examining a play, it is essential to research the playwright and his other works. Every playwright has a unique style which is important for directors to understand when producing their work. The playwright's life and history must also be taken into account. Many

writers base plays on events from their own lives or incorporate their personal views and interests into their stories. Therefore, studying their personal history can lead to a greater understanding of their shows.

Charles Mee, Jr., was born September 15, 1938, in Barrington, Illinois. According to the McCarter Theatre Education Department, Mee was active as a boy scout and a football player as a child. At the age of fifteen, he was diagnosed with polio, and his life changed. While in the hospital for one of his stays, Mee was given Plato's *Symposium* (McCarter Theatre Education). Plato's work was a major turning point in Mee's life and strongly influenced his studies of literature, philosophy, and history.

In 1960, Mee graduated from Harvard University with a degree in history and literature and planned to pursue a career in playwriting. His first few plays were performed at places such as La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Café Cino, and Theatre Genesis (Mee 102). Fairly early into his playwriting career, one of Mee's scripts was staged at the Ontological at St. Mark's. The production was given a scathing review by Jerry Talmer in *The New York Post* and devastated Mee (102). He took a twenty year hiatus from playwriting believing that he had not succeeded in writing for the stage.

After giving up his dream job, Mee became increasingly involved in anti-Vietnam War activities. His participation led him to political art and essays which pushed him towards historical writing. Mee spent twenty years composing political history books about America's international behavior and its negative effect on national life and politics (Mee 102). Although Mee still wanted to be a playwright, he was unsure whether he would achieve financial security to support his family while pursuing a theatrical career.

In the early 1980s, Mee returned to his first love. He had been in the process of writing another novel and was in financial need. Finally, at his lowest point, Mee threw away his novel. Afterwards, he changed his mind and decided to jot down some notes from his unfinished work that he wanted to remember. His notes took the shape of a trilogy of one-act plays which he completed in ten days (Mee 102).

In 1986, *Vienna: Lusthaus* was performed at the Public Theatre in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., and internationally in Venice, Paris, and Vienna. According to Mee's website, *Vienna: Lusthaus* is a dance-theatre piece—a combination of music, movement, and text. The story is set in Vienna at the turn of the century, and the characters include Freud, Hitler, and Egon Scheile. *Vienna: Lusthaus* was directed by Martha Clarke (103). Mee's play was honored with the Obie Award for Best Play.

Mee's plays quickly garnered success and were performed regularly. His works were produced by numerous directors including the famed Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (103). Mee continued to be recognized and was the recipient of multiple awards including the Steinberg Citation, the Laura Pels/Pen America Award, the 2001 Award for Distinction in Literature, and the San Francisco Bay Area Critics Circle best play award for Mee's play *Summertime* (103). The themes in his plays resonated with both audiences and critics leading to his growing success.

All of Mee's plays have a distinctive collage style with a mix of history, politics, pop culture, and physical movement. Mee is also noted as being an innovative playwright for offering fifty-five of his works for free online at his website entitled "the (re)making project." The plays are divided into categories such as solos, duets, comedies and romance, and others. Many of Mee's scripts are based on ancient Greek myths or stories, Shakespearean plays, and other famous works. On Mee's website, *Iphigenia 2.0* is included in a trilogy of plays entitled *The*

Trilogy: Imperial Dreams. All three plays are based on Euripides' pieces. The other two scripts are *Trojan Women: A Love Story* and *Orestes 2.0*.

Trojan Women: A Love Story takes place shortly after the Trojan War has finished. It is set in the modern world in the ruined city of Troy. The Trojan men are killed, and the women are alone. They are the ones who experience the worst suffering in war, and their stories are told in Mee's play. The victorious Greek soldiers justify their terrible treatment of the survivors by believing their triumph has given them the right to treat their prisoners as they wish. Similar to *Iphigenia 2.0*, a young girl is handed over to be killed. The world descends into chaos and agony.

The last play in the trilogy, *Orestes 2.0*, is also set in a contemporary time. It is an after-war piece in which the veterans of the Trojan War return home and discover the horrors of war have followed them and destroyed their homelands. Orestes has killed his mother, Clytemnestra, to avenge the murder of his father, Agamemnon. There is an abundance of physical movement and dance in the play. Mee incorporates a wide range of texts into his script such as Guillaume Apollinaire, William S. Burroughs, and *Soap Opera Digest* similar to *Iphigenia 2.0*'s collage style.

In continuation of the Greek theme, Mee has another play listed under the tragedy and history plays entitled *Agamemnon 2.0*, based on an ancient play by Aeschylus. Once again, the script is set in the modern world and follows the events of the Trojan War. Agamemnon has returned home, and his wife, Clytemnestra, is there to greet him. She pretends to be forgiving and excited to see her husband after his long absence; however, she has never forgiven him for sacrificing their daughter, Iphigenia, to start the Trojan War. Once she persuades him to enter the house, Clytemnestra draws a bath for Agamemnon. At that moment, Cassandra enters. She has been claimed by Agamemnon as his new concubine and is still traumatized by the horrific events

that destroyed her home. Cassandra sees Clytemnestra standing over Agamemnon in the bathtub with a knife clenched in her fist. She rushes in, hoping to die to end her suffering. Clytemnestra stabs and kills Agamemnon and Cassandra, finally gaining vengeance for her daughter's murder.

By studying Mee's body of work, the director can see obvious parallels between his plays, especially those in the same genre. The justification and glorification of war can be seen throughout his pieces, although it takes many forms. The Greek soldiers justify their behavior towards the captured Trojan women by glorifying their military prowess, Orestes rationalizes the murder of his mother by elevating his father as a military idol, and Clytemnestra has never forgiven her husband for putting the military before his family. Furthermore, this understanding of Mee's works gives me a more thorough comprehension of the characters Mee typically writes. They frequently have military connections, and many justify violence because of their glorification of war. Becoming more familiar with Mee's style of developing characters allows me more information to direct actors. I can draw connections to other characters and understand the importance of war in Mee's plays.

Just War

The just war theory has been studied thoroughly and examined in many works such as *Iphigenia 2.0*. The just war concept is divided into two parts commonly called *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. *Jus ad bellum* refers to the idea that armed force is justified in certain conditions while *jus in bello* encapsulates the concept that armed force should be limited in certain ways.

According to James Johnson, just war contains both religious and secular facets. Currently, most scholars believe that in order for a war to be justified, it must meet several *jus ad bellum* requirements. The most significant conditions are the war must be declared openly by an

authority, the war has to have a just cause, the offensive state must have just intentions, and the war's goal must be the foundation of a just peace (Johnson). Ever since World War II ended, additional conditions have been added; for example, there must be a reasonable probability of success, force should be the last resort, and the war's benefits must outweigh the anticipated costs (Johnson).

In *Iphigenia 2.0*, Agamemnon struggles with whether the war he is beginning is a just war. If there is no justification for this expedition, he would not need to sacrifice his daughter. The inciting incident for the war is the taking of Menelaus' wife, Helen. However, Agamemnon notes that it is possible that Helen went willingly, negating his responsibility to sacrifice his daughter.

FIRST SOLDIER. Your own brother's wife
Helen, we know, has been taken captive to Troy.
AGAMEMNON. Taken captive or been seduced?
FIRST SOLDIER. Will not be returned.
AGAMEMNON. I am to trade the life of my own daughter
for that of Helen? (Mee, *Iphigenia* 2.0 6)

Agamemnon also wonders if embarking on an unjustified war will endanger his own country. He ponders on the fact that all empires eventually destroy themselves by actions that are not always necessary. Agamemnon worries that if a country continues to strike out in self-defense, it will eventually want to preserve itself from insult and simply attack based off imaginary injuries. Agamemnon does consider the theory of just war and finds that if he violates the moral boundaries engrained in human nature, the world will turn against him and destroy him.

AGAMEMNON. Often, it seems,
men of affairs think that moral laws
offer no useful guide to behavior
that they are not meant for the practical business of the world
forgetting
that moral laws are nothing more nor less
than the accumulated folk wisdom

of millennia of human experience.
 And so it will happen
 That some moral law of an unforgiving nature is violated -
 A law against boundless desire,
 or cruelty
 a law against coercion
 or indifference to the humanity of others
 a law against initiating violence
 or being required
 in the pursuit of some goal,
 to commit an act that anyone might see
 is heinous
 something is finally done that is so deeply wrong
 that the world must rise and crush it
 in order for the world itself to go on. (Mee, *Iphigenia 2.0* 4)

The soldiers know that if Agamemnon does not openly support the war, they will not have justification to embark on their expedition. They also understand that there are moral boundaries which they will cross in battle. The soldiers demand that their leader show equal commitment to them before they are forced to commit terrible violence in war. They expect their commander to sacrifice his humanity by sacrificing his daughter.

Agamemnon's brother, Menelaus, also understands that war contains atrocities, but he justifies them as necessary evils. He recounts a story when he slew an entire family. A car had come through a street with explosives and killed three of his friends, so when the next vehicle came their way, they shot before it could get dangerously close. There were no bombers in the car, just a family with three children. Menelaus recalls his grief at their deaths, but rationalizes his actions by saying "we couldn't take the chance" (Mee, *Iphigenia 2.0* 8). Menelaus also glorifies war and violence by arguing that it is engrained in man's nature. He argues that men in the heat of battle are not responsible for their actions because of the emotions that sweep over them.

MENELAUS. As for war,
 make no mistake,

this call of nature
 longs to be tested -
 seeks to be challenged beyond itself.
 The warrior within us beseeches Mars,
 the god of War,
 to deliver us to that crucial battlefield
 that will redeem us into the terrifying immediacy of the moment.
 We pray to the war gods to guide us to the walls of Jericho
 so that we may dare the steadfastness and strength of our trumpet
 call.
 We aspire to be defeated in battles
 by powers so much greater than our self
 that the defeat itself will have made us larger
 than when we arrived.
 We long for the encounter that will ultimately empower us
 with dignity and honor.
 ...no one can change his feelings during that last rush
 the veil of blood before his eyes.
 He doesn't want to take prisoners,
 he wants to kill. (Mee, *Iphigenia 2.0* 12-13)

Iphigenia 2.0 puts the just war concept onstage in a tangible way where the audience can understand its impact. Agamemnon, the soldiers, and Menelaus have different perspectives of the justness of the war they are preparing to embark upon. They have different standards of morality in war which causes their division. Although Agamemnon has not objected to the war atrocities the military has committed in the past, he is appalled at the thought of sacrificing his daughter. Agamemnon's decision becomes more difficult as he understands that if their war is not justified, his daughter's blood will be shed in vain.

Production History and Critical Reception

An informed production looks at the play's performance history. Throughout this procedure, a director can learn which elements in design, style, and theme were successful and which were not. By reading critical reviews, a director can try to improve where other

productions failed. Directors can also use this information to look for the theme of the justification and glorification of war in other productions.

The original production of *Iphigenia 2.0* was off-Broadway at the Peter Norton Space in New York City (Zinoman 1). The show was directed in 2007 by the well-known Tina Landau and starred Kate Mulgrew, Tom Nelis, and Louisa Krause. During that time, Mee had already gained some recognition with his other works and was appointed as playwright-in-residence for the Signature Theatre Company (1). Other productions of *Iphigenia 2.0*, including one in Chicago at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, followed after the original show closed. The provocative nature of Mee's works created a divided opinion of the performances of his play.

In his review for the *New York Times*, Jason Zinoman remarks on the obvious political “wink” in the military tone of *Iphigenia 2.0* (1). Later, he states that *Iphigenia 2.0*'s “variety of references and acting styles don't just portray the bland shallowness of contemporary culture so much as reflect it” (1). Jeremy McCarter in *The New York Magazine*, however, disagrees with Zinoman, praising Mee's collage style of writing and saying “the brutal glimpses of American decadence really do turn a vital old play into a vital new play” (1). Another review by Dan Bacalzo in *Theater Mania* also praises *Iphigenia 2.0* as an updated and reinvented tale which still remains true to its original story. Bacalzo notes that “Mee's language ranges from contemporary slang to elevated poeticism, incorporating excerpts from works by people such as military historian Richard Holmes, leadership guru Richard Heckler, and Dave Grossman, a specialist in the psychology of killing” (1). All of the reviews of *Iphigenia 2.0*, both positive and negative, took note of the collage style of the play and the effect of the modern setting on the subject of war.

Reviews of *Iphigenia 2.0* varied widely. Many traditional, conservative audiences and critics disliked the show; however, younger and more artistic reviewers appreciated the eclectic, cutting-edge style. A majority of the reviewers though recognized the interaction of military and political themes with modern society and popular culture. Some of them noticed Mee's examination of the current society's influence in justifying war and violence through glorifying the ideals of sacrifice, immortality, and fame.

Survey of Literature

As previously explained, it is essential when examining a play to study all influences on it. The research is not complete until it takes into account other pieces that may have had influence on the writing. These other works usually include similar themes and, for the director, may provide ideas for the final production.

Iphigenia 2.0 is based on the myth of Iphigenia and the Trojan War. Charles Mee makes no secret that his play is based on Euripides' play *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Mee might also have pulled ideas and characterization from the famous Trojan War story detailed in Homer's *Iliad*. A film version of Iphigenia's story was also dramatized in a 1977 film entitled *Ιφιγένεια*. Although the movie is in Greek, there are English subtitles. All of these works influenced Mee's script.

Charles Mee adapted his script from Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* and, while many of the details are changed and the story is contemporized, the core issues and themes are still the same, demonstrating the timelessness of the problems addressed in the play. The main differences in *Iphigenia at Aulis* concern the circumstances leading to Agamemnon's decision and the ambiguous ending of the original. Instead of the soldiers demanding Iphigenia's death, the goddess Artemis is the one who requires her sacrifice and refuses to give the wind necessary for

the voyage to Troy until Iphigenia has been killed. However, the soldiers become edgy and crave bloodshed after their long wait. Agamemnon and Menelaus fear that if the soldiers discover their leaders are refusing to sacrifice Iphigenia, they will revolt and kill them and their families. After Agamemnon takes Iphigenia out to sacrifice her, he returns saying that her body was replaced by a deer, possibly an intervention of Artemis. Mee veers away from Euripides' ambiguous ending and creates more political tension by causing the ultimatum to be delivered by the soldiers instead of the gods. However, the justification for killing Iphigenia in support of war and violence is the same in both stories.

Homer's *Iliad* is probably the most famous of ancient Greek writings. It details the story of the Trojan War which takes place after Iphigenia's sacrifice. Agamemnon's character is portrayed as stubborn, prideful, and selfish in contrast to his characterization in Euripides' and Mee's plays. It is possible that Agamemnon's shift in character is explained through the agonizing decision he previously made. Since he has lost everything that is important to him, Agamemnon may not care about how he appears to others. The resentment that Agamemnon feels for the military, for Menelaus, and for Achilles may explain his self-centeredness and narcissism during the Trojan War. Sacrificing his daughter changed Agamemnon's character completely.

Ιφιγένεια directed by Michael Cacoyannis is available to watch online. The film closely follows the story of *Iphigenia at Aulis* with only a few major changes. The movie adaptation does not have Iphigenia change her mind and support her sacrifice. Instead, she runs for her life but is recaptured and brought back for the sacrifice. The end of the movie is also ambiguous, not showing whether Iphigenia is killed or rescued by Artemis and replaced with a deer. It does have a poignant shot of Agamemnon surrounded by his cheering soldiers as Iphigenia walks up to be

sacrificed by a seer. Although Mee has a definite ending with Iphigenia being sacrificed, he emphasizes the same theme of military responsibilities, justifying and rationalizing Agamemnon's final decision to allow his daughter to be sacrificed.

The information gathered in these three works was helpful in producing *Iphigenia 2.0* in both design and characterization. The similarities provided more information and a better understanding of the themes and issues in Iphigenia's story. In the end, the additional research on similar pieces served to support the justification and glorification of war that Charles Mee's play emphasizes.

Conclusion

It is crucial to a production to research the playwright and his or her past plays as well as the production's history and similar works that could have influenced the playwright's piece. Understanding each element of the play and the setting and circumstances in which the characters are placed will provide information necessary for me to successfully direct a production. The material from this analysis will strengthen my direction by giving me more insight into the characters, their struggles, and, most importantly to the thesis: the justification and glorification of war as influences on Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter within *Iphigenia 2.0*.

In the following chapters, I will further explore these details and discuss how a director's approach must incorporate themes and ideas discovered during an analysis of the play. I will also expand on how I took this information and incorporated it in my production. Then, in my conclusion, I will reflect on the strengths and failures of my production and attempt to provide solutions to these flaws.

Chapter Two

Play Analysis

Introduction

A thorough analysis of the script is necessary for a quality production. Not only does it show essential elements in the plot, it also shows given circumstances and story details necessary to inform and develop characterization. This analysis inspires artistic creativity and gives insight to the show. Without the analysis, the director cannot fully understand the story and would be incapable of directing it. In *Iphigenia 2.0*, analyzing the given circumstances, dialogue, imagery, and characterization influences the exploration of the justification and glorification of war.

Synopsis

Iphigenia 2.0 focuses on Agamemnon's dilemma of choosing between his responsibility to his family and his military obligations. Although *Iphigenia 2.0* does not have a specific time period mentioned for the show's setting, it is implied that it is modern day. The original script is written as one act with no scene divisions; however, for my show's purposes, I sectioned the show into thirteen scenes. The entirety of the play is set at the training grounds in the port city of Aulis while the soldiers are waiting to be deployed for their war against Troy.

Iphigenia 2.0 begins with an Old Greek Man sweeping the stage. After a few moments, Agamemnon enters. The Old Greek Man bows to him and retreats to a corner where he busies himself. Agamemnon begins sorting through his thoughts out loud. He reasons that all empires eventually destroy themselves by acting when it would be better to do nothing. As he continues

to speak, the four soldiers enter the stage in intervals. Agamemnon wonders if there is a way to avoid the inevitable collapse of a nation. He examines the relationship of morality to the government and questions whether doubt about certain actions is a warning. At the end of the speech, he order his soldiers “to call back the messenger” whom he had previously sent to summon his daughter to Aulis (*Iphigenia* 2.0 4). Agamemnon believes his doubts will perhaps save them from devastation. First Soldier tells Agamemnon it is too late for him to recall the messenger, and even if he did, the soldiers would then refuse to go to battle. First Soldier argues that every leader should be forced to prove their commitment before asking their followers to sacrifice. Agamemnon attempts to argue with the soldiers, but they remind him that he has already capitulated by sending for his daughter. When Agamemnon points out that he can send her back, they threaten to return home as well and leave other people’s lives in jeopardy. Agamemnon wonders whether others are actually in danger, and First Soldier brings up Helen who has been taken to Troy. Agamemnon retorts by asking whether she has been “taken captive or been seduced” (6). He questions whether he should give his daughter’s life for Helen’s. The soldiers state that his sacrifice demonstrates he stands with his men and for his country. Fourth Soldier threatens Agamemnon by saying that if he shirks his responsibilities then they might need to find another leader. Agamemnon then adamantly refuses to sacrifice his daughter.

Menelaus enters agitated, demanding to know if there has been a change of plans. Agamemnon informs Menelaus that they have been discussing it, but Menelaus points out that a decision had already been made. He refuses to listen to Agamemnon and insists on knowing if his brother is breaking his promise to sail to Troy and retrieve Helen. Agamemnon reminds Menelaus of the soldiers’ ultimatum and asks, “What father could do this?” (7). Menelaus tells his brother that he originally agreed to it, but Agamemnon says he can no longer proceed with

the sacrifice. Menelaus tries to act understandingly, but then questions Agamemnon's leadership abilities. He recalls stories of terrible, violent decisions that had to be made in the heat of battle and asks Agamemnon if he would want the soldiers to shrink from the dirty work of war. Then, the soldiers list off all the small things they ask for, ending with "some sense of commitment from their leaders" (11). Menelaus continues with his memories of war atrocities, noting that inside everyone is the longing for battle as a path to honor and glory. While he is speaking, the soldiers begin a drill. Menelaus tells him that if he wants his men to go to war, then he must be an example for them.

As Menelaus finishes speaking, Achilles, to whom Iphigenia is engaged, enters. He has just learned that Iphigenia was deceptively summoned to be married as a ploy to draw her out to be sacrificed. Achilles states that he volunteered to serve, as he considers being a soldier an honor. However, he refuses to lure Iphigenia to her death. He questions Agamemnon's use of lies as a foundation for a nation and demands to know why he did not discuss the matter with others. Agamemnon tries to soothe him, but Achilles refuses to listen. The young soldier warns Agamemnon that if he continues to act contemptuously without asking others, they will eventually try to kill him. Angrily, Achilles exits.

While Agamemnon is trying to collect himself, Iphigenia and her wedding entourage enter. Iphigenia runs to her father and hugs him. The rest of the bridal party enters, and they begin a joyous dance. The wedding group pulls the soldiers, Agamemnon, and Menelaus into the dance. When it ends, Iphigenia tells her father she is excited to be married but is curious about the timing. Although she is ready to be wed, Iphigenia wonders why they are being married before the war. Thoughtlessly, she labels the war "stupid" but then quickly apologizes (16). She says she understands that everyone has to go to war at times. Iphigenia immediately goes back to

talking about her wedding. Clytemnestra steps forward and greets her husband. She thanks him for bringing about the wedding and keeping it a secret. Agamemnon reiterates his happiness several times and asks about their trip. Iphigenia tells him that they celebrated the entire time. The three bridesmaids speak up excitedly. First Bridesmaid takes the attention and begins to talk about her friend's bachelorette party. The soldiers step in and ask about the honeymoon. They reminisce about all the wonderful places to have a honeymoon. Finally, Fourth Soldier asks when the wedding is to take place. Iphigenia turns to her father, and he allows her to choose the time. Iphigenia responds that she is ready, and Agamemnon suggests today. He leads the way to his quarters, so they can prepare everything. The bridesmaids, Iphigenia, Agamemnon, and Clytemnestra exit excitedly.

After they exit, Third Soldier sings a verse of a pop song. Then, the soldiers begin to analyze the qualities of good leadership. They examine different methods of becoming a leader and several leadership theories. Menelaus enters and informs the soldiers that they are waiting on them. As soon as he exits, a rap song comes on. The soldiers dance a hip-hop number to the song and then exit.

Once the soldiers exit, Clytemnestra reenters, partially dressed for the wedding. She calls out for her husband, and he enters. Clytemnestra asks him why there are no wedding plans. Agamemnon tells her that they weren't ready for them to arrive so soon, but Clytemnestra reveals that she has heard the true story of why they were lured to Aulis. Agamemnon tries to explain that it is merely irrelevant confusion because Iphigenia will be married. However, Clytemnestra refuses to let it go, so Agamemnon is forced to tell the entire story. At first, Clytemnestra does not understand that her husband originally meant to kill Iphigenia. However, after a few more questions, Agamemnon admits that his initial intention was to sacrifice his

daughter, but tells her it was a mistake. Agamemnon explains that he was trying to put the common good first, but changed his mind after thinking more about it. Rising, Clytemnestra says they will leave, but her husband stops her saying that it might not be possible anymore. The soldiers have begun to say that they will not let them leave alive unless the sacrifice is completed. Clytemnestra denies it, believing everybody will just go back home. Agamemnon responds that he cannot stop what has been started. Then, Clytemnestra threatens him: if he kills his daughter, she will utterly destroy him. She exits, and Agamemnon starts to leave after her, but then goes in a different direction. The Old Greek Man rises from the corner and speaks to the audience in Greek, hoping that someone will understand him. When no one answers, he returns to his stool in the corner.

Then, the bridesmaids run onstage, partially prepared for the wedding. Iphigenia enters after them, and they crowd around her. The bridesmaids and Iphigenia do a small dance together. The bridesmaids rush offstage and bring on items for Iphigenia. They begin preparing her for the wedding. While they are finishing, the soldiers enter and watch from a distance. When the dance ends, the soldiers mock the bridesmaids and Iphigenia until they exit. They perceive the girls' actions as frivolous and shallow in the face of the impending war. The soldiers continue to scoff at the bridesmaids and Iphigenia for a while before exiting.

After the soldiers leave, Achilles enters and crosses to a corner. Shortly afterwards, Clytemnestra enters. She approaches the Old Greek Man and whispers in his ear. He points to Achilles and returns to his corner. Clytemnestra introduces herself to Achilles. She begins to flatter him, but then tells him that she knows the truth. He admits that he only learned the truth recently, and Clytemnestra understands that they were both deceived. She asks him to marry Iphigenia so he can defend her against everyone else. Achilles is unsure as he does not know

whether he wants to be married. Clytemnestra tells him that this is a tangible way he can be a hero and save a life. She points out that he will have no right to defend Iphigenia against Agamemnon unless he marries her. Achilles retorts that he can stand up against anyone for what he believes is right. In desperation, Clytemnestra finally asks him to do it for her. Seductively, she tells him that she would owe him whatever he wished for the rest of her life. Achilles agrees to consider it. Clytemnestra continues to flirt with him and asks if he knows how to dance. She offers to teach him a traditional wedding dance, so he will not be embarrassed at the wedding where it is expected that he will dance with her. They dance a sensual number together; at the end, Clytemnestra tells him to ask her for whatever he wants.

Suddenly, the bridesmaids enter. They scold Achilles for not being ready yet, and he leaves, irritated. Then, Clytemnestra lectures the bridesmaids on the proper way to behave at a wedding. The bridesmaids agree to follow her direction. The soldiers enter, and Clytemnestra asks them if they are going to change. The bridesmaids laugh at their appearance, but the soldiers answer proudly that they have read a manners book by George Washington. Clytemnestra tells them that they “have some catching up to do” (36). The soldiers continue to recite rules from the book and give the bridesmaids advice which relates back to war. Then, Second Soldier begins to reminisce about his experience in war and why he initially became a soldier. He warns his enemies that he will completely destroy them.

Once he finishes his monologue, Iphigenia enters in her wedding dress. Everyone compliments her, and then Clytemnestra tries to tell her what has happened. Iphigenia is confused by what her mother is saying; she fears Achilles is unreliable and untrustworthy. Clytemnestra says she is just speaking of men in general. The bridesmaids and soldiers tell Iphigenia that men are liars. Clytemnestra continues by confessing the truth to her daughter.

However, Iphigenia refuses to believe her mother and runs out. Clytemnestra and the bridesmaids chase after her.

Once they have all cleared the stage, the soldiers begin speaking about their time deployed. They talk about their loved ones back home. First Soldier mentions a nine-page letter she sent to her spouse. She begins to recite a portion of the letter that is a poem about an attack with a chemical agent. The other soldiers relive the moment with her.

After they finish the poem, the soldiers break and begin setting up for the wedding. As they are working, the bridesmaids begin entering and exiting, preparing for the ceremony. Agamemnon enters with Menelaus behind him. All of the soldiers and bridesmaids are onstage when Clytemnestra and Iphigenia enter. Everyone is looking around, wondering where the bridegroom is. Finally, Achilles enters and takes his place by Iphigenia and Clytemnestra who asks for the music to stop. Once the music stops, Agamemnon states that they have all arrived. Iphigenia then tells her father that she knows the truth. Agamemnon attempts to deny it, but Iphigenia tells him he should sacrifice her. She explains that she wants to give her life for the common good just as he does. Agamemnon protests and says there has been a miscommunication, but Iphigenia continues. She demands to know why only men are allowed to be heroes and patriots and not women. Agamemnon tries to clarify what he means when Clytemnestra interrupts; she understands that her daughter is suicidal out of grief from her father's betrayal. However, Iphigenia tells her mother that she wants to emulate her father's example of sacrifice. Clytemnestra violently refuses the explanation and insults Achilles for doing nothing. Iphigenia orders her mother to leave Achilles alone; she tells everyone to celebrate her decision because it is the right thing to do. Clytemnestra scoffs at how the young generation is being erroneously socialized. Two of the soldiers awkwardly try to step into the

conversation. Ignoring their comments, Iphigenia continues by saying that everyone knows she is doing right. She declares that she wants her life to be meaningful. She tells her mother that she doesn't want to stay at home and live an ordinary life; nothing else will mean as much to her for this is her destiny. Iphigenia proclaims that this sacrifice will make her immortal and begs her father to kill her. At first, Agamemnon refuses, but he eventually gives in to his daughter's demands. Clytemnestra cries out. Iphigenia takes off her wedding dress and exits in her slip. After a brief hesitation, Agamemnon follows her and Menelaus trails behind his brother. After they exit, Clytemnestra falls to the ground, weeping.

Unexpectedly, music begins playing. The rest of the wedding party remains confused, not knowing how to respond. Some of the bridesmaids weep. Achilles begins to exit after Agamemnon, stops, and goes in a different direction. There is crying, comforting, and confusion. Suddenly, Achilles takes a wine glass and throws it against the wall, shattering it. As he stares at what he has done, a bridesmaid joins him and hurls another glass. Together, they begin to break all of the glass. The wedding cake and decorations are destroyed as mass chaos begins to unfurl. "Bit by bit, the world descends into a big party riot murder war[;] the home and war fronts combined dancing and embracing and weeping and throwing and breaking things" (Mee, *Iphigenia 2.0* 50). At the climax of the pandemonium, Agamemnon enters carrying Iphigenia's corpse in his arms. He is wailing in agony. As the people onstage see him, they slowly become still and quiet. Menelaus follows Agamemnon. Falling on his knees, Agamemnon lays his daughter's dead body on the ground as he continues sobbing. The play ends with the military leader mourning for his daughter.

Given Circumstances

Physical Environment

The entirety of *Iphigenia 2.0* is set in the port city of Aulis at the camp training grounds for the military. Mee's choice of setting raises the stakes for Agamemnon; he cannot delay his decision. It also gives the soldiers a position of power and justification in their perspective of supporting the military no matter the cost, while providing Iphigenia a place to glorify war and sacrifice as a means of immortality. The location of the play also drives Agamemnon's action by forcing him to make a choice. He is at a literal and figurative crossroads. From Aulis, they can either embark on a voyage for Troy or sail back home. Agamemnon is faced with the decision to choose between his domestic obligations and his military duty. Once his family arrives, he can no longer put off the difficult choice. Because of their location, the soldiers have gained power and justify their use of it. They even threaten to force the sacrifice, as there are no avenues of escape from Aulis.

Economic Environment

The characters are separated by economic status. Agamemnon, Menelaus, Clytemnestra, and Iphigenia are royalty and enjoy a wealthy lifestyle. The bridesmaids, Iphigenia's friends, are upper class and financially prosperous. Achilles is a young warrior who has started making a name for himself. He is upper class, but does not live luxuriantly. The soldiers are middle class but, while deployed, they lack many comforts of home. The Old Greek Man is lower class. He earns his living through providing information and other odd jobs. The approaching war threatens all of the characters. If the battle is won, the Greeks will gain an incredible amount of wealth; if the war is lost, everyone will suffer.

Political Environment

Politics shape much of the environment. Agamemnon and Menelaus are kings of neighboring countries, but they are also brothers. Because of their relationship, Agamemnon feels honor-bound to support his brother by attacking Troy even though he is unsure whether the cause is actually justified. While the king has considerable authority, the soldiers consolidate and gain the upper hand to give the king their ultimatum—sacrifice Iphigenia or they will return home. Additionally, Agamemnon's command is undermined by Achilles. The young, idealistic soldier is quickly becoming a famous military leader. His confrontation with Agamemnon in front of the rest of the men challenges the king's power. When Clytemnestra begins using politics as a way to protect her daughter, she also weakens Agamemnon's position. She convinces Achilles to support her and fight against her husband as she knows the young warrior has influence and power. Although Agamemnon is the king, the politics and power plays in the story challenge and undermine his authority.

Social Environment

The military's social life while on deployment is limited as they have only each other. When at home, the upper class has a lively social life. The women especially spend a good deal of time at parties, shopping, or socializing. Because the social environment is restricted for both groups, they have become set in their way of thinking. When both sides are forced to be together at Aulis, they interact with each other mainly through dance. However, neither group is willing to capitulate and look through another's perspective. Menelaus has been more focused on the military so, although he is upper class, he agrees with their perspective. Agamemnon is torn

between the two as he understands the soldiers' view, but also sees things through the lens of a father. In the end, Iphigenia is influenced by the idea of glory and fame to join the soldiers' side.

Religious and Ethical Environment

The characters are all polytheistic Greeks and worship a pantheon of gods and goddesses. The military primarily worships Mars, the god of war. However, the gods are not immediately influential on the characters' lives. They are more swayed by their personal moral codes. Clytemnestra firmly believes that her daughter comes first. She is willing to do whatever it takes to protect Iphigenia, including seducing her son-in-law to be. Achilles' morals refuse to let him be a part of Agamemnon's lie; however, he is later tempted by Clytemnestra to enter a deceptive plot against her husband, and he gives in. Menelaus adamantly holds his brother to his promise to his attack Troy and bring back Helen, selfishly thinking himself justified in this. Agamemnon struggles between his moral codes as a father and as a leader. In the end, Iphigenia convinces her father to kill her. Iphigenia's sacrifice is not for the gods but because she believes her martyrdom will gain her fame and personal glory.

Previous Action

Because *Iphigenia 2.0* is based on ancient Greek characters, it is easy to find their previous history. Once their backgrounds are clear, the information can explain the progression of the story. The characters are products of their actions before the script begins.

Part of the previous action is already mentioned in the play. Agamemnon is married to Clytemnestra, and their eldest daughter, Iphigenia, has been engaged to Achilles for a while. Agamemnon's brother, Menelaus, has requested assistance in attacking the city of Troy.

Menelaus' wife, Helen, has been taken by Paris, a prince of Troy. Although he is unsure whether Helen was kidnapped or if she eloped with Paris, Agamemnon has still summoned his army. They have journeyed to Aulis, a port city, from where they are planning to sail to Troy. However, once they have arrived at Aulis, the men refuse to embark on the ships until Agamemnon has sacrificed his daughter as a symbol of his willingness to suffer with his men. Therefore, Agamemnon has sent a messenger home in order to lure his wife and daughter to Aulis so he can kill Iphigenia. He has ordered the messenger to tell Clytemnestra and Iphigenia that he wants to marry his daughter to Achilles. However, while waiting for the wedding party to arrive, Agamemnon has been unable to decide whether he will sacrifice his daughter or allow the marriage to take place.

The inciting incident—the event that instigates the plot—actually happens before the play begins. The inciting incident is a “point of no return” in the story. The soldiers' refusal to sail to Troy without Agamemnon sacrificing his daughter triggers the entire crisis. Their ultimatum causes him to send for his daughter. Although he changes his mind later, the situation has already escalated beyond his control.

Dialogue and Imagery

The dialogue of *Iphigenia 2.0* is written in in a mix of prose and free verse, which emphasizes the modern retelling of this ancient Greek tragedy. The speech is heightened, though, through the use of rhythm and imagery. The characters frequently speak of their own environments and experiences as if to justify their perspectives.

The soldiers and Menelaus continually mention situations they faced in war. They recall atrocities they have lived through and participated in as well as chemical gas attacks and

deployment events. They also use military terms such as PX and EMS. The soldiers often mention the idea of leadership and leaders. They justify their ultimatum saying that good leaders must be willing to command by example. Their memories and experiences have shown them that they are expected to participate in the dirty, horrific parts of war; therefore, they expect their leader to do the same first to prove his commitment.

The bridesmaids see the world through rose-colored spectacles. They do not consider the deeper, harder things in life because of their environment and luxury lifestyle. They reference expensive items such as silk, lace, and tuxedos and tell stories about opulent bachelorette parties. The bridesmaids expect everyone to consider a wedding to be the most important event. They scold Achilles when he is not ready and mock the soldiers for their attire.

Achilles is constantly concerned with his honor as a soldier. He believes that Agamemnon has tarnished his reputation by involving him in a deceitful plan without asking him first. Therefore, Achilles confronts his superior and even threatens him for the sake of his honor. He informs Clytemnestra of how he discovered the truth to show that he is innocent of all wrongdoing. Initially, he even stands up to Clytemnestra and tells her he can fight for what is right no matter what. However, Achilles allows himself to be swayed from his moral code by Clytemnestra's seductions.

Clytemnestra is only worried about her daughter. Her background as a mother strongly influences her perspective. She wants only what is best for her daughter and spends most of her time talking about Iphigenia. Clytemnestra lectures the bridesmaids on the proper way to behave at a wedding so they will be model bridesmaids for Iphigenia. She confronts Agamemnon about a rumor she has heard and ends up threatening to kill him to protect her child. Clytemnestra is even willing to seduce Achilles for Iphigenia's safety. Initially, she begins by trying to influence

him with flattery and describing Iphigenia's vulnerability; however, she is willing to resort to seductive techniques in the end.

Iphigenia is focused primarily on herself and her father. In the beginning, she is thrilled about her upcoming wedding and speaks of nothing else. After her mother begins speaking to her about Achilles, Iphigenia thinks she is saying her fiancé is unreliable and untrustworthy. She instantly compares him to her father whom she believes is completely dependable. Even after her mother tells her the truth, Iphigenia refuses to see her view and calls her a liar. In the end, Iphigenia still sides with her father. She says she understands the concept of the common good, and she wants to follow her father's example. Iphigenia refuses to give up her perspective of glory through immortality. She glorifies sacrifice in war to such an extent that she believes she will gain lasting adoration through her death.

Agamemnon is torn between two different groups. He speaks to the soldiers about his role as a father and frequently mentions his daughter to them as if to soften their hearts. When he is trying to explain his behavior with his wife though, he uses his role as a leader to make excuses. Agamemnon also references the idea of the common good and being an example to his soldiers as justification with his wife.

Character Analysis

Agamemnon

The action of the play is focused primarily on Agamemnon, the protagonist of *Iphigenia* 2.0. The story centers on Agamemnon's choice between his daughter and the military. Through his character development, Mee explores the justification and glorification of war that leads to Agamemnon's ultimate decision. At the beginning of the play, Agamemnon tries to delay the

inevitable by evading questions, blaming others, and using deception to avoid confrontation. When this fails, he decides to do nothing and continues with the wedding. At the ceremony though, Iphigenia offers herself freely as a sacrifice. After arguing for a while, Agamemnon makes the decision to kill his daughter as he is swayed by her pleas for death and immortality. With the death of Iphigenia, Agamemnon is completely broken. When he carries her corpse back in, Agamemnon is crushed, weeping uncontrollably. He has capitulated to the soldiers and Menelaus' demands so the war against Troy can continue, but it has cost him his humanity and family.

Agamemnon's story impacts the audience, causing them to suffer along with him. The question of what he will decide drives the action throughout the entire play. It is finally answered in the final scene and decides Iphigenia's and Agamemnon's fate. The difficulty in examining Agamemnon is balancing his roles as father and military leader. The challenge is determining to which one he owes more responsibility and loyalty. This raises the stakes in the conflict further as both sides believe he owes allegiance to them.

Clytemnestra

Clytemnestra is the primary antagonist of the play. Though, as the play opens, she is seemingly in love with her husband and happy with his decisions, she quickly undermines him when she discovers his true intentions. She begins by confronting her husband. Once she realizes what he was initially planning, she collapses for a moment. Then, she rallies herself and immediately begins thinking of ways to save her daughter. At first, she plans on leaving right away, taking Iphigenia, and never seeing her husband again. However, when Agamemnon points out that the soldiers will not allow it, she threatens her husband with a terrible death if he goes

through with the sacrifice. She continually degrades him to Iphigenia by stating that men are liars.

All of Clytemnestra's actions are calculated and intentional. She uses multiple tactics to try to get Achilles on her side in an effort to oppose her husband. Clytemnestra uses flattery, vulnerability, and finally seduction to persuade Achilles to join her. She does whatever she can to overthrow her husband with both his own men and his daughter. Clytemnestra is motivated completely by her maternal instincts to protect her daughter. She uses multiple methods to ensure Iphigenia's safety. Clytemnestra fights Agamemnon bitterly all the way to the end. When all of her efforts fail, Clytemnestra is crushed and heartbroken. She grieves over the loss of her daughter and is enraged at her husband for his decision.

Iphigenia

Iphigenia is also an antagonist in the play. Initially, she is only concerned with her wedding and the preparations. Iphigenia is willing to follow along with her father's wishes and does not oppose them. She is even prepared to let him choose the date and agrees to be married the same day as her arrival. She does not even express a desire to see Achilles, but instead rushes off with her entourage to prepare. However, once Iphigenia discovers her father's true intentions, she refuses to believe they are true. She runs away and does not return until the wedding. At the wedding ceremony, Iphigenia tells her father she will follow his original wishes, but he has changed his mind and wants the wedding to go through. Iphigenia becomes an opponent then and argues with Agamemnon. She claims that it is her destiny to be killed, and it is for the common good. Iphigenia glorifies her sacrifice saying it will give her immortality. Eventually, she convinces her father to do as she wishes against his better judgment and moral beliefs.

Iphigenia's actions are primarily influenced by selfishness. In the beginning, she is willing to go along with her father's wishes because she wants to be married. Iphigenia is ready to marry Achilles, as he is handsome, young, and rapidly becoming a great warrior. She also is excited to be the center of attention. However, at the wedding when she argues with her father and asks that he kill her, Iphigenia is motivated mainly with her desire to be immortal. She understands that if she lives an ordinary life at home, she will die unremembered. Offering herself as a sacrifice will ensure her lasting fame and glory. She will forever be remembered and celebrated which will, in a way, grant her immortality. In the end, Iphigenia gets her way and is killed by Agamemnon.

Achilles

Achilles is a secondary-level character serving as a minor antagonist. At first, he directly opposes Agamemnon by confronting him. He refuses to be a part of the ruse to bring Iphigenia to Aulis to sacrifice her. However later, Achilles covertly agrees to stand against Agamemnon with Clytemnestra. He is influenced by her seductive appeal and agrees to marry Iphigenia so he will have an undisputable right to fight against Agamemnon. Initially, Achilles' actions are motivated by his sense of honor. Once he meets Clytemnestra though, his intentions are driven by her seduction. However, when Agamemnon takes Iphigenia out to be sacrificed, Achilles does nothing even after Clytemnestra goads him. In the end, Achilles is unchanged. His ideals have been shattered, but his intentions of remaining on the outside of the situation have stayed the same.

Menelaus

Menelaus is another minor antagonist. He continually offers direct opposition to Agamemnon. In the beginning, he brings up the promise his brother made to him to retrieve his wife and fight against the Trojans. Menelaus challenges him by recalling past experiences in war and demanding that Agamemnon provide the example of self-sacrifice that he asks of his soldiers. He follows Agamemnon into the wedding to be a physical reminder of his oath. Menelaus even accompanies Agamemnon when he goes to sacrifice Iphigenia to ensure that he completes the deed. Although he does follow at a respectful distance afterwards, Menelaus is only concerned with getting his objective and does not care at all for his brother's dilemma. Menelaus is motivated by selfish reasons. He wants to go to war with the Trojans because they stole his wife. Menelaus wants revenge and does not care that his niece will be the first casualty of war. Throughout the story, Menelaus stays the same; he cares only for himself.

The Soldiers

The soldiers are third-level characters which serve as a chorus to comment on the military commitment demanded of Agamemnon. They argue with Agamemnon at the start of the show and tell him they expect him to lead them by example. The soldiers know that there will be self-sacrifice in war, so they demand that Agamemnon prove his commitment to them and the campaign by being the first to sacrifice. They refuse to set sail without Iphigenia's death. They even threaten to depose Agamemnon and choose another leader if he does not capitulate. Later, Agamemnon discovers a rumor passing through the soldiers that they will murder all of the women in the wedding party if they do not hand over Iphigenia to be killed. The soldiers are

primarily motivated by their unspoken code to one another. They are brothers-in-arms and expect their leaders to show the same loyalty they expect in return.

The Bridesmaids

The bridesmaids are third-level characters serving as a chorus to comment on the domestic and familial obligations in the play. They serve primarily as a reminder of another perspective and environment. They bring memories of home and a luxurious, opulent lifestyle which contrasts sharply to the soldiers' environment and experiences. They propel the action by making the wedding a reality, forcing Agamemnon to make a decision. They also create havoc at the end as they grieve in confusion. The bridesmaids came specifically for the wedding, and when it has turned into a sacrifice, they do not know what to do. Therefore, they take part in destroying the wedding and creating chaos.

The Old Greek Man

The Old Greek Man is a fourth-level character. He speaks only once in Greek and stays onstage the entire play. He assists the action of the play by providing information to different characters. He also helps set the stage for the wedding. The Old Greek Man represents the audience's point of view as he watches everything that happens, but does not strongly participate in it.

Idea and Theme

Through this analysis, the idea of the justification and glorification of war was examined multiple times. The entire play hinges on the extent of Agamemnon's justification of war. If it is

strong enough, he will agree to sacrifice his daughter. In the end, the main question is whether Iphigenia's glorification of sacrifice in war will influence Agamemnon enough to change his mind and kill her. The setting of the training grounds at Aulis, the constraint of time, and the characters' interactions with one another reinforce these themes of the justification and glorification of war.

Though justification and glorification of war are the primary themes, it is important to examine others in the play. The theme of leadership is prevalent in *Iphigenia 2.0*. Agamemnon's leadership is constantly called into question. The reason he is faced with this impossible choice is because of his position as leader of the army. If he proves to be a weak leader and they return home, Agamemnon knows that the country will fall into anarchy and chaos because no one will trust his leadership. He will also have let the enemy believe there are no repercussions for their actions, leading to the possibility of attacks in the future.

The theme of family is also a significant theme in the play. Agamemnon is desperate to keep his family. Not only does he not want to sacrifice Iphigenia, but he also does not want his deception to be discovered by his wife or daughter as he knows this would destroy their family. When his wife does uncover his original intentions for bringing them to Aulis, Agamemnon realizes his relationship with Clytemnestra is ruined, but he still tries to deny the truth to his daughter. When she asks him to kill her, Agamemnon understands that no matter what choice he makes, he will lose his family. If he refuses to kill his daughter, he will have to face both her and Clytemnestra's enmity forever, and there is a possibility that the soldiers will kill them all anyway. If he sacrifices his child, he will lose Iphigenia and Clytemnestra will never forgive him, but he will at least have Iphigenia's respect. In the end, Agamemnon chooses the latter.

The themes of leadership and family support an examination of the justification and glorification of war and lead to the director's approach (or unifying vision) of *perspective*. These themes and my thesis illustrate the different perspectives that the characters hold. The soldiers and Menelaus justify their actions because of the battle, Clytemnestra puts her family first, Achilles and Iphigenia believe in glory through war, and Agamemnon struggles as a leader between all of the differing perspectives.

Conclusion

In analyzing *Iphigenia 2.0*, I wanted to connect Mee's choices in character development, dialogue, and content with the concepts of the justification and glorification of war. This analysis not only gave me ideas for characterization in rehearsals, but additionally influenced my design choices as well. The recurring themes of leadership and family throughout the script served to reinforce my concept. Mee's demonstration of these ideas is at the core the play and understanding them is crucial to directing *Iphigenia 2.0*.

Chapter 3

The Design Approach

Introduction

The collaboration with designers is vital for the success of any production, especially with a tech-heavy show such as *Iphigenia 2.0*. Charles Mee does not specify a time period for his play, but he does mention numerous pop-culture references which point to a contemporary setting (Mee, *Iphigenia 2.0* 62). After examining the script, I chose to place it in present day. The modernization of a classic Greek story creates opportunities for designers. However, every independent element must work together to create a cohesive production that supports the thesis of the justification and glorification of war. As director, it is my job to communicate my vision clearly and collaborate with the designers, so we are able to create a production that visually and aurally supports the story told through the actors' interpretation of the script.

Production Style

Production style is determined primarily by the writing in the script. The director takes the style of the text and adds an original concept that supports the story. The unique concept is called a director's approach, and it influences and unifies the production style. The performance's visual elements are influenced by the production style. *Iphigenia 2.0*'s production style is a postmodern tragedy with classic Greek elements. The script contains many postmodern aspects such as unexplained occurrences, spontaneous dance and movement, and themes of individualism and relativism. The story follows the tragic downfall of the main character, Agamemnon, and contains many classic Greek features including plot structure, setting, and names. *Iphigenia 2.0*'s design and blocking are strongly influenced by the production style.

Director's Approach

During the design and production process, a director must have an artistic concept that guides the development of the show: in other words, a director's approach. This creative approach ensures that the production is different than other performances of the same script. The director's approach is inspired by extensive research of the script and a unique perspective of its design and performance.

For my production of *Iphigenia 2.0*, I chose *perspective* as my director's approach. This theme appears frequently throughout the story and could be easily represented in all design elements as well as through characterization in acting. The military's perspective is in favor of Iphigenia's sacrifice while the others reject the plan. The design of the show can illustrate this concept of perspective by showing positions of power, leadership, and authority. Individual perspectives can also provide a foundation for characterization, offering motivation for actions. Thus, all facets of the show would share a unified focus which would work together to support the theme of *perspective*, drawing individual elements together through the director's approach.

Choice of Stage

Iphigenia 2.0's story of leadership, war, and loss has been performed on a variety of stages. However, one of the most common venues the show is played on is a proscenium theatre. Proscenium theatres house the stage behind a large arch which hides the wings on the sides. Typically, the audience is seated a short distance from the front of the stage. This creates a space between the actors and the viewers, allowing the audience to distance themselves from the show. However, I chose to go the opposite route because I wanted the audience to watch the show actively rather than passively.

East Texas Baptist University's stages are the Mabree Recital Hall and the Black Box Theatre. I chose the Black Box Theatre. In contrast to proscenium theatres, black box stages are smaller and more intimate. The audience and the acting area are both placed in a single space which allows for flexible seating arrangements around the stage. The Black Box Theatre fit my needs and vision better than Mabree Recital Hall's proscenium stage. *Iphigenia 2.0* seeks to confront its viewers with difficult questions of leadership and the justifications of war. I wanted the audience to empathize with the individuals onstage and feel personally invested and involved in the performance so they could better understand the inherent difficulties in leadership and different perspectives. The Black Box Theatre pushed the audience closer to the action and characters, allowing the intimacy necessary for the intensity of the emotions and story.

The Black Box Theatre had many natural positives and negatives. For instance, the small space closed the distance between the audience and the actors and made viewer interaction easier. The intimacy of the room allowed the audience to observe subtleties in the acting and follow the different stories in the riot scene that showed the characters' different perspectives and how they are changed at the end of the story. The proximity also enhanced the technical elements. Lighting was much more flexible in the Black Box, allowing for a complex design with special effects. In the smaller space, the sound was able to surround the audience, making them feel as if they were in the story. Being immersed in the performance would help the audience empathize and understand the different perspectives of the characters.

While there were many positives in the Black Box, it also had its drawbacks. The size of the stage and placement of the audience forced me to cut a set piece from my original design for the wedding at the end of the show and replace it with smaller items because the actors could not be seen with the initial piece. The closeness of the audience also compelled the actors to be

cautious in the last scene as they rioted. I constantly had to remind them to be globally aware so they did not hit the audience with either prop or costume pieces. The same applied to the choreography; the actors had to continually be conscious of where they were in relation to the audience as they danced. These drawbacks threatened the exploration of my thesis. While I wanted the audience to be involved and care about the characters, I still had to make sure they stayed in the show by maintaining the illusion. In spite of these difficulties, the Black Box proved to be the better choice for *Iphigenia 2.0*.

Collaboration with Designers

Collaboration in theatre is essential to the success of the production. The director must coordinate with the designers to ensure that each aspect supports the overall vision and theme to create a cohesive final performance. The most difficult part of *Iphigenia 2.0* was finding a way to make sure the director's approach of *perspective* was evident in each design element. By collaborating with the designers, we were able to create a final production that brought out the theme in every technical aspect without overpowering the creative artistry. However, before I was able to communicate and work with the designers, I had to do extensive research on what I wanted.

My first step was to examine other productions of *Iphigenia 2.0*. While I appreciated their work with the contemporary side of Charles Mee's work, I felt that several productions ignored the Grecian influence. Therefore, I researched Greek buildings, clothing, and style. I especially looked at the theme of forced perspective in Greek architecture. I noted the use of Greek facades, columns, and pediments in ancient temples such as the Parthenon. In costumes, I looked at pictures of Greek paintings and statues to observe the lines and style of ancient Grecian clothing. I also listened to Ancient Macedonian music to get a feel for the music of the time period. Most

of the research I needed to do was readily available on the internet. I also could reference textbooks, lectures, and projects I had saved from previous history and theatre courses.

I realized that because *Iphigenia 2.0* is set in the present day, my research could not be confined simply to Ancient Greece. Therefore, I began looking at pictures of training grounds for the military today. I found that the military frequently uses equipment with levels to create climbing challenges for soldiers. I also researched pictures of soldiers' uniforms and military-inspired dress suits. Because Charles Mee places great emphasis in his works on popular culture, I listened to pop and hip hop music. In the end, my production was inspired by a mixture of both Ancient Greece and modern culture, culminating in a contemporary style that had an Ancient Greek influence.

Iphigenia 2.0 is clearly set in the port-city of Aulis. The Euripidean play, which Charles Mee based his script on, was also set in Aulis (Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1). The setting is an important element of the story as it represents a crossroads for the protagonist. There are several references in the script to the army being stalled at Aulis, a transition point for the military before they sail to Troy.

AGAMEMNON.	<p>When we first arrived the soldiers and I here at Aulis preparing to embark to Troy they were ready to go, the soldiers, or so I thought. And then, for whatever reason, because they were suddenly filled with fear or they came to feel, on thinking more about it, that the war was not a necessary war or because as, finally, in fact, they said to me that the leader of an army needed to show he as prepared to make sacrifices commensurate with their own-</p>
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that this was only right and just in a real and absolute sense,
 and as a prudent precaution
 as a check on a leader's possibly rash judgment
 to make certain he had really thought about what he was
 doing-
 they demanded that before they would sail for Troy
 I should make such a sacrifice
 to prove my worth
 and the worth of the enterprise.

CLYTEMNESTRA. A sacrifice?

AGAMEMNON. That I should bring myself face to face
 with what I was asking of them-
 of the dreadful things I was asking them to do
 and to have done to them.
 And so I ought to sacrifice my own child
 before they would set sail. (*Iphigenia 2.0* 24-25)

I wanted the set design to contain Greek elements, such as a pediment and traditional columns, while still being modern. I wanted the set to look as if it were a training ground for the soldiers while they waited for their commander to make a decision. The location would then drive the action and build suspense as the characters wait for Agamemnon to make a decision from which he can never return. Setting the location as a training ground also strengthened the soldiers' position in forcing Agamemnon to make a decision because they are already sacrificing their comfort in this setting.

An idea I toyed with throughout my research process was the idea of forced perspective, an optical illusion which makes it appear as though objects are farther or closer than they really are. The idea of forced perspective fit naturally with my director's approach of *perspective* and would add an interesting visual element onstage. However, I was also drawn to the historical side of Ancient Greece. I found many images of ancient altars, temples, and theatres that inspired me. After exploring many options, I finally settled on an image of the ruins of the Library of Celsus that showed the rocky hills and bushes to the side and the blue sky and white clouds in the background (see Fig. D.1). The photo provided the ancient Greek feel I was inspired by while

also representing the idea of forced perspective in the passageways behind the pediments. The color palette also fit the theme of *perspective* by showing earthy tones contrasted by ethereal shades. The image reflects the glory of the ancient Greeks while still giving a sense of inevitable defeat. The overriding image of the ruins of the Library of Celsus served as the basis of my communication with designers to discuss the visual components such as line, shape, and color.

In order to begin communicating with my designers, I held a design meeting where I presented my director's approach to them. Using a Prezi slideshow to provide illustrations, I laid a foundation for my designers and answered any questions they had for me. The Prezi, which I made available to my design team after the meeting, contained images which could serve as reference points for every technical element. The photos I collected of military-inspired scaffolding, ancient Greek buildings, and pediments were the basis for the set (see Fig. D.2). I also based each character on an ancient Greek column style: Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian (see Fig. D.3). I provided a picture of each of the columns as well as inspirational images for costumes (see Figs. D.4 and D.5). The lighting was also inspired by my overriding image of the Library of Celsus. The color palette included both the earthy tones such as greens, golds, and dark reds as well as lighter jewel shades like pinks, blues, and yellows (see Figs. D.6 and D.7). In the Prezi, I also supplied examples for sound which consisted completely of music. I wanted the music to emphasize the theme of *perspective* with each major character's personal perspective represented by a type of music. For instance, the soldiers danced to hip hop music whereas the bridesmaids were choreographed to a pop song. There were also Macedonian songs and ancient Greek inspired music with a modern twist which referenced back to the Euripidean text.

Throughout the semester, I met with the designers frequently, both individually and at scheduled design meetings. The designers regularly brought their own creative ideas and

suggestions which added to the strength and artistry of the production design as a whole. Meetings were scheduled often when needed by the designer or by myself, but there were also spontaneous conversations which led to brilliant ideas. For example, the costume designer and I spent a lot of time together outside of classes and rehearsals. In one of our conversations, we talked about how to make Iphigenia stand out from the bridesmaids, Electra, and Clytemnestra. The costume designer had the idea to put her in a dress which would incorporate all the colors of the other wedding entourage who wear solid colors. Throughout the design process and communication with the designers, I reminded them of the theme of perspective which in turn supported my thesis of the justification and glorification of war by emphasizing different characters' stances.

Set Design

As previously stated, I wanted my set to contain ancient Greek elements while still resembling a temporary training ground for the soldiers. From the beginning, I knew that I wanted to work with scaffolding to provide different levels and present the idea of forced perspective (see Fig. A.1). Because the marching band was kind enough to loan us their scaffolding free of charge, the set was constructed much more quickly than we had previously expected. As soon as the scaffolding was erected, my set designer provided the plans for the facade which was attached to the front of the scaffolding (see Fig. A.2). It was designed to resemble a bombed-out ancient Greek building, which the soldiers had occupied and turned into a training headquarters. We filled the upstage corners with set pieces to make it appear as though the soldiers had taken over the area during their training (see Figs. A.3 and A.4). The set provided a physical representation of the military's perspective with the façade showing the

perceived glory of leadership. The deterioration of the building illustrated the fragile and damaged soul of the leader with its weaknesses, scars, and failings.

While there were some problems with the set, we were able to spot them early on and find solutions. There were strategic cut-outs for hands and feet in the columns to allow the soldiers to scale them to the second level of the scaffolding. This provided a challenge in the supplies used for the columns. The original material was made of thick cardboard which provided the rounded shape for the column; however, it was not sturdy enough to support the weight of the soldiers. Therefore, the set designer, technical director, assistant technical director, and I held a quick meeting to decide how to fix the problem. We eventually chose to reinforce the thick cardboard with wood, so the soldiers were able to step on the wood instead of the cardboard. We were also concerned with the height of the pediment as it might hit the lighting grid, which supported the lighting instruments above the stage. The set designer was hesitant to shorten the pediment as it would lose the Grecian triangular shape. In the end, we cut out sections of the pediment through which the lighting grid passed through. It ended up looking as though it had crumbled from bombs, so it fit with the rest of the façade beautifully.

The only other set pieces we had were elements used for the wedding scene. My set designer wanted all of those pieces to appear as though they were created from objects the soldiers had picked up around the training camp to demonstrate that leadership must sometimes improvise in tight situations. Originally, we planned on having two tables and a canopy. The tables were constructed from sawhorses and plywood. With white tablecloths on top, they resembled banquet tables which had been created quickly by the soldiers. Unfortunately, the wedding canopy did not work as well. It was a beautiful piece and represented the Grecian altar effect we wanted. However, not only did it take too long to construct, it was impossible to take

down in an efficient manner. It also was not stable enough for the choreography I had planned and blocked audience sight lines, making it difficult for certain sections to see main characters at crucial points. In the end, I made the decision, in conjunction with the set designer, to cut the canopy and replace it with four pedestals with vases of flowers (see Fig. A.5). The placement of the pedestals still gave the altar effect we wanted while not blocking sight lines. It also provided extra pieces for the actors to work with in the riot scene and was able to complement the costumes and prop bouquets.

The set visually represented the themes of perspective and the justification and glorification of war. The stationary set represented the viewpoint of the military while the wedding pieces showed the domestic side. The scaffolding as the training grounds for the soldiers showed the justification of war as the soldiers are already sacrificing for their country. The wedding bouquets on pedestals symbolized an altar, representing the glorification of war by Iphigenia, the soldiers, Achilles, and Menelaus.

Costumes

The size of the cast in *Iphigenia 2.0* was challenging for the costume designer and wardrobe crew as most of the characters had multiple costumes. Also, the script demanded specific pieces such as military uniforms and wedding apparel. Keeping the soldiers and Menelaus in their military uniforms supports their perspective of justifying war while Iphigenia's removal of her wedding dress illustrated her glorification of war through sacrifice and martyrdom. Additionally, the design concept called for modern clothing with an ancient Greek influence. My costume designer strove to stay true to the design concept as well as the director's approach of *perspective*.

The soldiers were the only characters who remained in the same costume the entire show. They were in green camouflage uniforms in keeping with the modern style and the color palette of earthy tones (see Fig. B.5). My costume designer had a difficult time finding enough uniforms to fit all four actors because they could not be purchased locally. I was able to connect her to a theatre I had worked for in Longview, and she borrowed several fatigues from them. The rest of the uniforms she bought online. Authenticity was an important factor, so she also made sure they each had a pair of steel-toed boots as well as military hats. Unfortunately, the purchases took quite a bit of time, and she was unable to finish all of the detailing she wanted on their uniforms such as the badges and name strips. However, by the final performance, the soldiers' costumes looked authentic, signifying their dedication to the military which justifies their view of war.

Each actor in the wedding entourage (Electra, Orestes, and the three bridesmaids) had two costumes. Their first outfits were more casual while their second costumes were formal wedding apparel. In keeping with the theme of *perspective*, their color palette contrasted with the military's earthy tones in lighter jewel tones. Because of the limited budget, the costume designer used many clothes that the actors owned for their first costumes. The girls all wore light colored casual dresses while the actor playing Orestes was in a pair of khaki shorts and a short-sleeved polo. All of their colors were in Iphigenia's dress as well, causing her to stand out from the rest of the cast (see Figs. B.3 and B.4). The underclothes for the girls were also designed to set Iphigenia apart from the other girls in color and style (see Fig. B.6). All of the girls' wedding clothes were purchased while Orestes wore a black suit that he owned, along with a black bow tie. After doing quite a bit of research and talking with me, my costume designer went shopping for formal dresses. She was able to find four dresses for the three bridesmaids and Electra that had the Grecian style we were looking for. They were also in a pale purple which went well with

the light jewel-color palette (see Fig. B.7). The costumes for the wedding entourage were able to indicate their high status and prodigality even during wartimes, illustrating their naïve perspectives.

The main characters had two costumes as well. They owned some of their outfits, but others were either borrowed or purchased. An East Texas Baptist University student who is a veteran provided his military dress suit as well as his medals and hat. He also provided valuable military knowledge and advised our costume designer specifically on Menelaus's costume. Together, the costume designer and I decided that Menelaus should remain in the same costume for the entire show to represent his stance of loyalty to the military. The only thing he added for the wedding was a military beret (see Fig. B.8). On the other hand, Achilles changed from his fatigues to a black suit and tie for the wedding to represent his changed perspective after he was influenced by Clytemnestra (see Figs. B.7 and B.10).

Iphigenia's first dress, which was owned by the actress, fit perfectly in the color palette and contained all of the shades of her bridesmaids' dresses. Her wedding gown was purchased at a bridal store. After doing research, my costume designer and I agreed that we wanted Iphigenia's dress to be long, flowing, and a straight silhouette in the style of ancient Greek gowns. I also requested that the dress not be white as I was worried about the lights reflecting off the dress, and I wanted it to be a different shade from her slip. My costume designer was able to find all of the Greek elements in a beautiful wedding dress that was an extremely light shade of pink (see Fig. B.9). When Iphigenia chose to strip off her wedding dress to her slip, she demonstrated her perspective of glorifying war; although there was glory in being a virgin bride, Iphigenia is willing to elevate the war above her wedding. An interesting challenge that my costume designer faced was the blood on the slip. As the slip had to be used for every show, it

could not be stained as Iphigenia stepped out of her wedding dress onstage. In the end, my costume designer created two identical slips. Iphigenia wore one under her wedding dress and revealed it to the audience when she took off her gown onstage. Then, she changed into the bloodied slip backstage (see Fig. B.11).

The actress playing Clytemnestra owned her first dress. Although it was a darker jewel shade than the rest of the wedding entourage, I decided to have her wear it anyway as it fit her beautifully, and it indicated her power over the bridesmaids (see Fig. B.4). Her second gown was purchased from a bridal shop. It was a champagne colored dress cut in a contemporary Grecian style. The main difficulty with her costume was the restriction of movement. Because Clytemnestra had an intricate dance number in her second costume, the actress and I were concerned about her ability to move freely. The costume designer addressed the problem by shortening the hemline, which gave the actress more mobility (see Fig.10). Unfortunately, the shortened dress did force the actress to be conservative when she crawled on the ground. However, the adjusted hemline ended up being the better choice. While Clytemnestra's dresses were flattering, they added to her maturity, which in turn supported her perspective of a mother doing whatever she could to protect her child.

After studying the script, I asked the costume designer to create a disheveled appearance for Agamemnon at the beginning of the show, so it would appear as though he had spent a sleepless night (see Fig. B.2). This fit into the director's approach of *perspective* as it showed Agamemnon's view of being at an impossible crossroads. As the show proceeded, he gradually straightened out his appearance until the final scene where he appeared in his wedding suit, which indicated his shift in trying to be a strong leader in supporting the wedding instead of the sacrifice (see Fig. B.9). However, his daughter ends up taking his power by convincing him to

kill her against his better judgment. Our costume designer also gave him a double shirt, so he changed at the same time as Iphigenia to a bloody shirt (see Fig. B.11).

Although the other clothes required a more complex design, the Old Greek Man's costume was simple. My costume designer and I agreed that since the Old Greek Man represented the audience's perspective, we wanted him in neutral tones. The actor provided his own costume: a tan shirt, a pair of jeans, a pair of black shoes, and a hat (see Fig. B.1). For the entire design, my costume designer and I met frequently and conversed through text message and emails to create costumes which supported both the director's approach and vision. We were successful in the final design, which indicated the characters' perspectives of war.

Makeup and Hair

Makeup and hair once again reflected a modern style with Greek roots. While makeup was fairly light on most of the actors, Agamemnon was a challenge because the actor needed to appear quite a bit older than he was. Agamemnon's makeup showed the stress of leadership weighing upon him. The decision he has been forced to make aged him. The rest of the actors merely used corrective makeup, and some of the girls added heavier eye, lip, or cheek makeup. Because of the intimacy of the Black Box Theatre, Agamemnon's makeup had to look fairly realistic. In a show during the previous semester, the makeup designer experimented with an old-age technique which was latex-based, so she decided to use the same method. The latex was applied to the actor's face as she or he stretched the skin backwards. As the latex dried, the skin was released to form folds and creases in the dried latex, creating the effect of natural wrinkles. The first few attempts in rehearsal did not work as the latex did not dry properly and began to fall off onstage, making it seem as though the actor's skin was peeling off. However, the makeup designer experimented more and was able to perfect the technique. In the final performance, the

actor playing Agamemnon did appear much older without the makeup being obviously noticeable.

Hair proved to be rather difficult because the makeup and hair designer had a problem keeping deadlines. I repeatedly asked to see possible hairstyles and finally had to set a concrete date to view hair. We also had to meet several times to discuss haircuts. It was important to me for the soldiers to look authentic, so most of the men had to have their hair cut as the military demands short hair. I also asked for the soldiers and Achilles to shave as the military typically has clean-shaven faces. I allowed Menelaus and Agamemnon to keep their facial hair to highlight their position as leaders and add age to Agamemnon's face. The makeup and hair designer also added white dye to Agamemnon's hair and facial hair to make it look as though it was turning grey in order to age him further.

The women's hairstyles were far more difficult than the boys because they had two different looks in order to contrast the bridesmaids against Iphigenia. When the wedding entourage first entered, the bridesmaids all had their hair down while Iphigenia wore hers in a braid. During the wedding, the bridesmaids wore their hair up while Iphigenia had hers down in loose curls. Originally, the makeup and hair designer used a shiny headband in Iphigenia's wedding hair, but I asked her to use something else because the headband looked too juvenile. The designer traded the headband for gold leaves which added to the Greek feel and looked more mature.

While the makeup and hair designer was very creative and artistic, she had difficulties in budgeting her time and resources. In the beginning, she wanted to add fake tattoos to the soldiers and Menelaus. While it would have added authenticity, it was unnecessary as the tattoos would only been seen in two short scenes. Additionally, there were more important elements than the

tattoos, so I finally made the decision to cut the tattoos completely to save time. While they were a creative idea, they were superfluous. The tattoos also did not support the thesis; they did not add to the soldiers supporting the military or justifying their actions. The time spent on the tattoos would have been more useful in scheduling haircuts, which had to be fit in at the end. The haircuts supported the thesis in showing the soldiers dedication to the military while the tattoos did not.

The makeup and hair design reinforced my thesis by showing the effect that war has on the different characters. Aging from stress and dedication to the military can be illustrated through the design. While we faced a few difficulties with the hair and makeup, we were able to create a final design which illustrated the thesis.

Properties

Iphigenia 2.0 is a prop-heavy show although most of the props are used only in the last scene. The wedding scene required a large amount of detailed props, especially food, drink, and breakable glass items. I collaborated with the props designer to come up with a list of pieces I wanted for the riot scene, so that the actors could interact with them. These included a layered wedding cake, nuts, mints, wine, silverware, fruit, bread, cheese, and breakable glasses and bottles. While most of the items were cheap or easy to find, the wedding cake and breakable glass were a difficult but necessary challenge to show the violent reaction to Agamemnon's leadership decision.

After experimenting with several cakes, my properties designer ended up making a three-layered cake with a cake mix and a tiny bit of coloring to make the inside of the cake the same shade of pink as Iphigenia's wedding gown. The icing of the cake was made primarily with lard and confectioners sugar to stick to the cake. The props designer decorated the wedding cake with

gold leaves and greenery in keeping with the Grecian theme. As the wedding cake was destroyed every night, the props designer had to create a cake for each performance. The breakable glass took far longer to experiment with. Originally, the props designer tried to make her own breakable glass using a mold and recipe for sugar glass. However, the first glass she tried to make did not work at all. It was still sticky, took too long to make, and was an unattractive shade of brown. Therefore, we ended up ordering a shipment of breakable glasses and bottles which worked perfectly.

The rest of the wedding props were designed to coordinate with the set pieces and costumes. The wedding bouquet carried by the lead bridesmaid was composed of purple, pink, and white flowers which matched the bouquets on the pedestals and all of the dresses. The napkins, table centerpieces, and wine pitcher were all gold to match the costume and hair accessories. Additionally, the props designer painted some white paper doilies the same shade of gold to appear as though they were solid gold chargers for the table setting.

While there were numerous props for the wedding scene, they served to provide a sense of authenticity to the wedding. They also gave the actors many options to interact with during the ending riot. The breakable glass and wedding cake, which were destroyed every night, added to the intensity of the scene.

Lighting

Lighting played an important part in *Iphigenia 2.0*. My lighting designer and I talked several times about color in lighting, and she was very interested in using LED lighting instruments so we could change the color at will. Fortunately, we were able to borrow several LED lighting instruments from the Mabee Recital Hall. My lighting designer found a way to mount some of the LED lights on the wall. This enabled us to shoot the light across the stage. In

keeping with the color palette, the lighting designer used green light with the soldiers while keeping the brighter, softer shades for the wedding entourage. I also spoke to her about using cooler tones for Agamemnon in the beginning to illustrate his perspective of being alone as a leader. Contrastingly, red lighting was used in intense scenes when others were attempting to pressure Agamemnon to change his perspective (see Figs. C.1, C.4, C.7, and C.8). Additionally, my lighting designer used gobos to create the effect of light coming through trees for several scenes (see Figs. C.2 and C.10). During the final riot scene, my lighting designer used both color families to present a contrast, representing the struggle between the different perspectives (see Figs. C.9 and C.10).

In the beginning, I discussed a specific scene with my lighting designer in which the soldiers are talking about a green poisonous gas. I asked her if we could make it appear as though the soldiers were in a green fog. We were able to place lights underneath the audience seating, so it would shine on the floor, which was painted a glossy black enabling the light to reflect off of the ground. The green light did appear as though it were a green mist in which the soldiers were enveloped (see Fig. C.3 and C.5). Because of the lighting instruments placed under the house, we were also able to shine a single red light across the ground at the end of the show for when Agamemnon sets Iphigenia's corpse on the ground (see Fig. C.11). The placement and lighting colors added to the intensity of the show, creating an environment in which the audience could feel involved. The lighting supported the thesis by highlighting the characters' reaction both to war and to Agamemnon's final decision.

Sound

For the sound design, I decided to only use music because the script did not call for sound effects. Charles Mee focuses on music and offers numerous suggestions for pieces throughout the script. I used some of Mee's options but also chose a few different songs for the dance numbers. I chose different styles to reflect different group's perspectives in keeping with the director's approach. For instance, the soldiers danced a hip hop routine to a rap song while the bridesmaids were choreographed in a jazz routine to a pop song. I chose a different piece than the one suggested by Mee for the bridesmaids because his choice was somewhat dated. I also selected a different number for the dance between Achilles and Clytemnestra, settling on an Argentinian tango piece. I felt that the sensual tango best represented Clytemnestra's perspective of placing her family first and taking extreme measures to protect her daughter. The riot song was the most difficult to settle on because I was looking for a piece that would enhance the riot scene without overpowering the actors. In the end, I settled on a suggestion from my theatre advisor, a number featuring ceremonial drums and a dark melody; it was intense without overshadowing the characters.

My sound designer selected all of the pre-show pieces. I spoke to him about the idea of modernizing ancient Greek music. He found several artists who specialized in this style of music. Together, we listened to a selection of their music and picked an assortment of their pieces for the pre-show. The biggest challenge for those numbers was the volume level because some of the songs were too loud and others were too soft. In the end, we found a balanced level between all of the songs.

For the curtain call music, I chose to do something slightly different than usual. My younger brother frequently composes music, so I asked him if he was interested in writing a

piece for my show. I explained to him the story of *Iphigenia 2.0* and told him my director's approach of *perspective*. I also sent him my design presentation and included several sound clips for him. After conducting his own research, he composed a beautiful piece that had a haunting melody which fit the show. To incorporate the idea of *perspective*, he wrote several melodies which layered over each other in the piece.

Although it was difficult to find pieces that fit the show, we were able to create a sound design that supported the director's approach of *perspective*. The different styles of music and songs demonstrated the characters' perspectives and stance on war. The justification and glorification of war was strengthened through the mood, genre, and melody.

Conclusion

The design for *Iphigenia 2.0* was essential in conveying the idea of *perspective* to the audience. The concept of *perspective* highlighted the difficulties of leadership and the justification and glorification of war. The technical elements affect every aspect of the final production including the actors. The blocking, choreography, and movement are strongly influenced by the set, lighting, costumes, and sound. All of the design aspects work together to create an environment into which the actors can thoroughly immerse themselves. The stronger the environment is, the more the audience will be invested as well. Although the visual and aural elements greatly add in illustrating different perspectives of war, it falls to the actors to portray the story of a leader faced with an impossible choice and the varying justifications and glorifications of war held by the rest of the characters.

Chapter 4

The Rehearsal Process

Introduction

The rehearsal portion of the production is when the director and actors work together to explore different ways to bring to life the action of the play. *Iphigenia 2.0* is a challenging show for all of the actors because each of the characters experience moments of selfishness, weakness, inner turmoil, and loss. Each also manipulates others to try to obtain their personal objective. Part of my job as the director is to communicate my vision to the actors and encourage them to make bolder, deeper emotional choices. The work during rehearsal, combined with the design process's outcome, should produce an impactful performance that supports the integrity of the script as well as the director's concept/approach influenced by the thesis of this project.

Auditions and Casting

One of the factors that attracted me to *Iphigenia 2.0* was the relatively large cast. In both of my directing classes, I had worked with casts of two or three people, so I wanted to challenge myself with a more sizeable cast. Auditions for *Iphigenia 2.0* were originally supposed to be held February 23, 2015, with callbacks the next day on February 24. However, due to inclement weather, I was forced to postpone callbacks a few days to February 26. In both auditions and callbacks, I had actors read monologues and scenes from the script with several people. I needed to see if they would be able to command the stage by themselves as well as noting chemistry between actors. The monologues which I chose were difficult pieces that required a strong stage presence and an ability to capture and hold the audience's attention. The scenes were a wide

variety which mostly allowed me to observe relationships between characters. I was looking for specific aspects in different characters, especially how they were able to capture and portray each character's perspective. The first day of auditions took approximately three hours.

During callbacks, I attached another element to the process. Because Charles Mee stresses movement and dance in his script, I added a choreography section to the beginning of callbacks. I brought in actors by groups to test their ability to learn choreography and movement. I also wanted to see how willing they were to try what I asked of them. All of the actors I was considering for the part of the soldiers came to the hip hop and martial arts movement auditions. Everyone I was interested in for the role of Iphigenia or the bridesmaids came to the jazz callbacks while all of the Achilles and Clytemnestra possibilities learned a section of the Argentine tango.

One of my greatest challenges during casting was deciding who could best portray the leading roles. The rest of roles were based off of the lead parts. I was able to cast the soldiers fairly easily; however, the rest of the roles were much more difficult. I narrowed the three leading male roles to three men, but I wasn't sure who to place in which part. I decided to cast the male characters based off of the protagonist, Agamemnon. I needed to see age, depth, and paternal instincts in the actors. I also reduced the role of Iphigenia to two equally talented actresses. One of the girls I was considering was a mature actress who was able to portray the depth of role but struggled with the energy of character. She was also a little older than my target age range for the character. The other actress was able to embody the liveliness and vivacity of Iphigenia but didn't quite find the depth in the character. However, I had previously directed the second actress in a scene, so I knew I would be able to guide her to the stronger and deeper choices in characterization.

In the end, a lot of the casting came down to chemistry. I released the rest of the actors and kept only those I was considering for Agamemnon and Iphigenia. Then, I had all of them put down their scripts and walk the floor. One at a time, I had both of the girls go out on the stage and physicalize Iphigenia. After a few seconds, I sent out one of the men to interact with the actress. This enabled me to see completely natural chemistry between the two of them. I gave them a little while before switching out the men. Once I saw every possibility, it was much easier to cast. The chemistry between a few of the actors did not read as a father-daughter relationship and instead looked more romantic. This influenced my final decision on the roles of Agamemnon and Iphigenia. I knew their chemistry would strengthen the struggle in Agamemnon between two different perspectives. When I had settled on those two characters, the rest of the cast fell in place. My only concern was the two bridesmaids, because I had three girls I wanted to cast. Fortunately, my faculty advisor gave me permission to add an extra bridesmaid, so I was able to finalize the cast list.

One of the difficulties with casting was the role of Clytemnestra. I wanted to cast my faculty advisor in the part, but we were concerned about the administration allowing her to be in the role. Although nothing overtly sexual happens onstage, Clytemnestra toys with her future son-in-law, encouraging him to protect her daughter and dances an Argentine tango with him. She is also married to Agamemnon, who was one of the theatre students. I still wanted to cast her in the role though because she definitely auditioned the best for the part, and I firmly believe in casting the best candidate. I also knew that we could handle all of the difficult moments with professionalism during the rehearsal process and use it as a learning process. Therefore, my faculty advisor and I spoke to the Dean of the School of Fine Arts. He approved of my cast list, and he and my faculty advisor went to the administration. Fortunately, they trusted my judgment

and allowed me to cast as I wished. Once I received permission, I announced the cast list, and we began rehearsals.

Rehearsals and Acting Strategies

Unfortunately, because of the snow days, I lost almost a full week of rehearsal. With the shortened rehearsal time, it was essential that we used every moment wisely. My stage manager and I worked together to make sure that rehearsal time was used efficiently and focused on telling the story through the characters and their action. In rehearsals, I wanted to create a safe environment to explore leadership, perspective, justification, and glorification of war. As a director, I had to balance my vision of the characters with the actors' interpretation of their roles. Collaboration between the director and actor was vital. Both of us had to listen to what the other was communicating to avoid a shallow or weak performance. Additionally, I had to create a visual story for the audience through blocking and choreography as well as an aural experience with inflection, rhythm, volume, and diction.

Before the rehearsal process began, I had to create strategies for the acting style of the production. The objective of these strategies was to supply methods of developing characterization, the performance's foundation. Because of the play's postmodern setting and story, I chose a nonrealistic acting style. While all acting was still rooted in emotional honesty, nonrealism allowed my actors to break with traditional acting methods. They were able to break the fourth wall and address the audience directly as well as explore stronger physical choices. At the same time, the acting and story still had to be believable and keep the audience's sympathy and attention.

The first rehearsal was scheduled for March 2, 2015, but due to the delays of callbacks and the announcement of the cast list, we had to postpone to March 5. During this rehearsal, I had all of the actors read the script aloud. We also played a few icebreaker games to begin building a foundation of trust and cooperation in the cast. For the last part of rehearsal, I invited an Army veteran in to speak to the cast about his experiences in the military and combat. After he finished speaking to them, he answered any questions they had. Listening and speaking with the veteran provided the actors information for their performances. It was especially helpful for the soldiers as it gave them a foundation for their characters' backgrounds and exposition. The combat memories that the veteran shared provided the actors with a basis for their characters' perspectives. It also showed the actor playing Agamemnon the importance of leadership in war.

I urged the actors to memorize their lines as quickly as possible to aid their performances. Because *Iphigenia 2.0* contains such an emphasis on movement and choreography, I wanted the cast to be able to start working on physicality as soon as possible, which meant they needed to be able to put their scripts down. Most of the actors memorized their lines fairly quickly. I was especially impressed by how fast the leading characters were able to get off-book. However, other actors struggled to memorize their lines on time, and I had to remind them of the necessity of memorization.

I divided the first week of rehearsal into scenes to block. Because of the size of the cast, we were not able to block the show in chronological order due to outside conflicts. However, I was able to schedule it so that we had the entire show roughly blocked by the first week. We were also able to hold a choreography rehearsal and learn the soldiers' hip hop number the first week. All of the scenes were organically blocked initially. Although I had complete blocking sketched out for every scene, I had the actors move instinctually through the space and create

their own blocking. Then, we explored different options, always moving to stronger choices. Visual storytelling can define relationships and symbolically represent leadership and different perspectives. Movement can illustrate how a character is weighing problems and conflicts as well as demonstrating their methods for justifying their actions.

After the first week, we continued to work on blocking and characterization. I also scheduled choreography rehearsals to teach the rest of the dances. Some of the most difficult scenes involved the soldiers. Because they had to work as a single unit, they required quite a bit of attention. Some of the actors had personal problems with each other and continually aggravated one another, affecting their performance. However, after I had a meeting with them and discussed the importance of supporting and encouraging each other, they did much better. We had to rehearse their scenes multiple times, so their movement became muscle memory. We also had to focus on their posture, stance, and movement so they realistically portrayed soldiers.

I encouraged the actors to think about their characters' perspective in the show and ways for them to obtain their objectives. While many of their perspectives were fairly obvious, we had to work on different methods and tactics for the characters to use to try to reach their goals. The characters in the military such as the soldiers and Menelaus continually justify their stance and use that position to pressure Agamemnon. The actors playing the soldiers and Menelaus had difficulty connecting with their roles, but once they realized their characters' reasons for justifying the war, they were better able to tap into their roles and make stronger choices. Similarly, the actress playing Iphigenia also had difficulty in the beginning. We had to explore why her character desired death in the end and urged her father to kill her. At first, the actress was aiming towards obvious choices such as anger and sadness, but we worked on her character's perspective which in turn affected her acting choices. I talked to her about

Iphigenia's view of personal glorification through war, and she was able to portray that in an intensely moving performance.

One of the actors who had the most challenging part was Agamemnon. He had a difficult time balancing both the strength and weakness of his character. Agamemnon has to show his strength both as a leader and as a father standing up for his daughter and family. However, he also displays weakness in being unable to make a final decision. In the beginning, the actor portrayed Agamemnon's strength, but it was a one-dimensional performance that made his character appear hard and cold. After I spoke to him about working on Agamemnon's weakness, he went the other extreme, and Agamemnon turned into a completely weak-willed character that bent to anyone's will. I had a difficult time communicating with the actor to find a balance between the two extremes. The actor did not seem to be putting much original thought into the character and only focused on trying not to get critiques from me. I was not sure what was going on with him and why he was having such a difficult time. Therefore, one night, I ended rehearsal early and only kept him behind to discuss character choices. I found out that he was struggling with personal issues which were keeping him from acting confidently. Once he talked about his difficulties though, his performance definitely improved. Although there still were parts I would have liked to work on, his final portrayal of Agamemnon was much deeper and stronger than his original characterization.

Towards the end of the rehearsal period, people began to tire and energy dropped especially during the final scene of the play which was the most intense and energetic. I had to encourage my actors to keep their energy up and put as much emphasis on the end as the beginning. I tried to give notes as quickly as possible to release the actors early from rehearsal so they could get more rest. The rehearsal process assisted the examination of the justification and

glorification of war as we explored different methods of communicating the characters' perspectives through their action and emotion. The themes of leadership, sacrifice, and family also influenced our work in rehearsals supporting the thesis.

Technical and Dress Rehearsals

During the theatrical process, technical rehearsals are the penultimate step. This is the point where we add in all of the technical elements to ensure they are functioning correctly and complementing the production. The day before the first technical rehearsal, April 9, 2015, I met with my lighting and sound designers along with my stage manager to hold paper tech, a verbal run-through of the script to communicate where the twenty-one sound and the fifty-three lighting cues were to be called in the show. My lighting designer also brought her design ideas for where she wanted to place additional lighting cues.

The next day, technical rehearsals began. There were three technical rehearsals scheduled. The first one was scheduled for five hours, the second for seven, and the third for nine hours. While seemingly extensive, a show this technologically demanding needs this attention, and we typically did not stay the entire time. During the first technical rehearsal, we held a cue-to-cue where we only ran sections of the show in which there were lighting or sound cues. Once we finished, we ran the entire show, stopping as needed for our tech crew. We continued this way for the next two technical rehearsals, working on perfecting the timing of the cues as well as adjusting certain lighting and sound cues.

Dress rehearsals began on April 13, 2015, three days before the show opened. During tech and dress rehearsals, the cast began improving greatly, playing their action and ramping up their emotional intensity and honesty. Once they were completely surrounded by the technical

aspects, the actors felt the environment of the play coming to life and worked harder. While the show was improving every rehearsal, I stayed alert for anything that could be a potential problem. My main concern involved the final scene after Agamemnon and Menelaus have taken Iphigenia out to sacrifice her and the rest of the characters respond by rioting all over the stage hurling costume and prop pieces. During dress rehearsals, we added in the food props as well as breakable glass for the cast to work with. Proximity quickly became a concern for audience safety. While we were able to remove two audience chairs which were closest to the riot scene, I continually reminded the cast to be aware of the audience to avoid pelting them with food, drink, glass, or costumes. As dress rehearsals came to a close, I stood back and prepared for the show to open.

Performances

On Thursday, April 16, 2015, *Iphigenia 2.0* opened for the general public. We had heavily advertised the show on campus, social media, and by word-of-mouth and, by opening night, we had sold out every performance. The production was favorably received with audience members being deeply moved by the content in the show. With each performance, the actors settled into their characters and became more comfortable in their roles. Fortunately, we did not have too many difficulties throughout the run of the show.

The few issues that happened during performances were easily resolved. During the last scene, many of the actors accidentally got small pieces of food or drops of the juice on their costumes. Once our costume designer realized what was happening, she and the wardrobe crew examined every costume and cleaned them quickly before they could stain. They also had the actors check the bottom of their shoes every night and clean off all of the excess food and drink.

Every night, I sat in a different area in the audience to view the show from new angles to make sure the entire audience was receiving an equally rich performance. In several areas, I noticed that it was more difficult to hear the actors. I took notes of specific moments or lines where the volume was being lost. The next day before the performance, I communicated these notes to the actors, who worked on fixing the problem by projecting more and improving their enunciation.

Being a director and performer, it is difficult for me to view any work as being perfectly complete. I believe that everything can be improved and continually strive for the best performance possible. Because of this, I continued to take notes throughout the run of the shows and communicated them to the actors so they could continue to enrich their performances. While I took notes in the production, there were moments where I was so caught up in the play that I was able to put down my pen and simply watch the story unfold. During these times, I was also able to observe audience reactions. This was especially gratifying during the final scenes where many of the audience members were crying or tearing up. To have touched the audience and caused them to think deeply was truly a rewarding experience.

Following all of the performances, we had a talkback session where the audience was invited to stay and ask questions or make comments on any area of the production. All of the comments were positive, and many of the spectators seemed to understand both the concept and thesis. In all of the productions, the audience praised the scope and design of all of the technical elements as well as the emotional intensity, rawness, and honesty of the actors. While they did not agree with Agamemnon's final choice, the audience did not condemn him outright because they understood his perspective which justified his final decision. The mothers also identified with Clytemnestra, empathizing with her perspective as a mother protecting her family first.

They complimented the visual storytelling of the blocking including the choreography. After months of hard work from the designers, technical crews, actors, and myself, it was a fulfilling experience to hear their positive comments. After I explained my thesis and design concept, they appreciated the environment and acting even more.

Conclusion

As a director, I had to consider not only the actors' interpretation of the characters, but also how they interacted with the production as a whole. Not only did they have to be based in emotional honesty, they also needed to support the story and interact with the design concept so that the entire show supported the thesis and director's approach. While this production was not perfect, it was a quality show, and I was pleased with the end performance. One of my goals was to use this show as a learning experience. I felt that everyone including myself was challenged during this production and became stronger, more mature artists.

Our performance of *Iphigenia 2.0* brought my thesis to life onstage. The justification and glorification of war was illustrated through the different characters' perspectives. The show was able to let us explore my thesis through an artistic and creative method which allowed for greater emotion and depth. I think the audience was moved more deeply by the performance and characters than by the analysis and research that they were based upon. I was personally influenced by the story and emotion in *Iphigenia 2.0*, and the entire process has influenced my growth as an artist and a person.

Chapter Five

Reflection

Introduction

While every director aims at excellence in their production, it is impossible to create a perfect performance. There is always some element that can be improved. However, many times, it is challenging for a director to critique his or her production. The amount of time placed into the show, the collaborative work with designers and actors, and emotional attachment to the script can make it difficult to be objective. Nevertheless, it is essential for a director to judge the production procedure and performance to understand how to better the process the next time. In light of this, I will use the final chapter to examine and discuss weaknesses and strengths in *Iphigenia 2.0* and offer viable answers, considerations, and responses.

Design

The purpose of the design is to support the aural and visual environment of the play led by the director's design concept. The design should neither overpower the actors nor overwhelm the audience, but strengthen the story of the script. In my design concept presentation, I provided visual images or aural examples whenever I could to communicate my design effectively and give the designers a foundation. While studying *Iphigenia 2.0*, I realized that although the story discusses many different issues and conflicts, it does not support one side. Rather, Charles Mee examines his story through many characters' viewpoints. Thus, I was led to use perspective as my design concept. The views held by the military, Clytemnestra's stance, Iphigenia's mindset,

and Agamemnon's internal struggle all demonstrate different perspectives in conflict. This concept of perspective also supports and illustrates my thesis: the examination of the justification and glorification of war in Charles Mee's script.

The set design physicalized the concept of perspective, strengthening the exploration of my thesis. While some of the set was easily assembled, other pieces proved more difficult. The stationary set was finished very early into the process. I requested for the scaffolding to be completed as soon as possible, so the actors could begin working on it. The technical crew was able to erect the scaffolding within the first two weeks because the ETBU band generously loaned us theirs. The façade was added soon afterwards. The wedding portion of the set proved to be the most difficult as the wedding tables required six sawhorses to be built and the original design for a canopy did not work. The design for the tables was rather complicated and necessitated quite a bit of communication from the set designer to the technical director as they needed multiple sawhorses and pieces of plywood. Once they were finally able to sit down and talk, the sawhorses were built quickly. The canopy was much more of a challenge. We had to wait for a specific piece to come in before it could be built. Once the piece arrived, the set designer and technical director realized that the poles for the canopy had to be much larger than what was originally anticipated. The width of the canopy blocked the audience's view of the main characters and made it difficult for the actors to do their blocking naturally. Additionally, the canopy was supposed to be a stable piece so the actors could swing from it during the final riot scene. However, the piece ended up not being steady and was a safety concern. Because of all of these negatives, I made the decision to cut the canopy. Although it was rather late in the process, my set designer was able to replace the canopy with a formation of four vases of flowers

elevated on pedestals. This served the same purpose of creating the altar shape without blocking the audience sightlines or causing difficulties for the actors.

Miscommunication caused some frustration, but we were able to work quickly to correct things before it was too late. Although there were some misunderstandings with the wedding tables, they were worked out, and the tables were made on schedule. The canopy proved to be the biggest set challenge as the set designer's original estimations were incorrect. However, he came to me as soon as he realized they were incorrect. The technical director and assistant technical director also came to me with their safety concerns right away which enabled me to make the decision to cut the canopy much sooner than it would have been without the communication.

In the final production, the stationary set and wedding pieces were impressive and impactful. The levels and use of the scaffolding caught the audience's attention right away, and the wedding pieces added to the effectiveness of the design. The theme of perspective was clearly shown with the contrast between the stationary set and the wedding additions. While the pedestals and vases were not my original design, I ended up liking them. Overall, the set was exactly what I wanted, and I was quite pleased with it.

The biggest miscommunication error took place with props. Breakable glass was used at the end of the play when, after Agamemnon has taken Iphigenia out to sacrifice her, the other characters begin rioting. Achilles broke the first glass illustrating the shattering of his perspective of the glories of war as an honorable action. When we were discussing the breakable glass, the props supervisor wanted the props designer to experiment with molds and sugar glass. I had reservations about this process as it sounded difficult and the procedure would take quite a bit of time. I thought I asked the props designer to order breakable glass along with the mold just in

case the sugar glass did not work. However, the communication was not clear, and the breakable glasses were not ordered. When the mold failed, we had to rush to order the breakable glass and ended up paying more for shipping. We also missed several rehearsals where we could have worked with it. As director, I should have followed up with the props designer and made sure she ordered the breakable glasses instead of assuming that she understood me. I also should have completely negated the idea of using the mold and sugar glass because I knew they would not work. This would have kept us from wasting time and money on unnecessary items. Fortunately, the breakable glasses worked and the actors adapted to them well.

Makeup and hair were also challenging areas to work with. The makeup and hair designer struggled with deadlines and kept working on unnecessary items instead of focusing on the important aspects. At first, I let her work on her own timetable but, eventually, I had to remind her of deadlines. She spent a considerable amount of time on tattoos which were superfluous as the audience would hardly be able to see them. While I appreciated her effort, I would rather have had her focus on the essential parts of her job. Instead, some of the actresses had to come up with their hair designs based in ancient Greek style and fix each other's hair. As director, I should have cut the idea for tattoos at the beginning. While the hair and makeup looked beautiful in the final production, it was a stressful process and was not carried out as it should have been.

I had few difficulties with costumes, sound, and lighting. The costume designer and I were constantly communicating and agreed with each other the entire process. There were very few changes that I asked for, and she completely understood and agreed when I asked for alterations. The only challenges I faced with sound was the volume of a few songs. These were easily fixed and, by the show's opening, the volume levels were set. Similarly, lighting was

fairly easy to work with. My main concerns with lighting were certain areas of the stage being too dark in several scenes. I communicated my issues with the lighting designer, and she adjusted the lighting levels quickly. The contributions of these departments enabled me to spend more time focusing on the props, set, and makeup and hair.

It is essential for all the elements of design to work together in support of the director's concept. Each design aspect in *Iphigenia 2.0* pointed back to the theme of perspective. The illustration of perspective supported the exploration of the justification and glorification of war by providing physical representations of different views.

Staging and Timing

Effective staging is an important aspect of a production. If the play is not visually stimulating, the audience will quickly become bored and stop watching the performance. To keep the audience engaged and interested, the blocking cannot be static and stale. The director must block the actors so they appear realistic while still being engaging and dynamic. *Iphigenia 2.0* proved to be a challenging show to block because of the size of the cast and the seating arrangement of the audience. Because of the large number in the cast, it was difficult to place the actors when they were all onstage so that they did not block each other. While most theatres have the audience seated in front of the stage, *Iphigenia 2.0* used a thrust configuration which meant the audience was seated on three sides of the stage. This made it difficult for the blocking as it meant that one part of the audience would be unable to see an actor's face. I had to make sure that the actors placed themselves on angles so that the majority of the audience could see at least one face all the time.

Fortunately, blocking does not fall entirely upon the director alone. My faculty advisor and cast provided a great deal of helpful input. Many times, the cast came up with much of their own blocking, and I would only adjust certain parts to make them stronger. Additionally, I had several previews for faculty members. Because they came in without any prior expectations or knowledge of the play, their opinions were very helpful and unbiased. They were able to tell me which parts did not make sense for them, so I could change or adjust them. Through this collaborative procedure, we created the stage movement for each character driven by their action. The blocking also had to show the varying perspectives of the characters in their individual pursuits of what they desire most whether family, personal honor, glorification, or justification. Following the entire production, I received a final critique from my faculty advisor on the process as a whole, which provided another perspective of the show.

One of the hardest challenges during the process was getting the actors to play their action. Every character has a goal in mind and an action to achieve their objective which drives and shapes a character. Therefore, it is essential to know what the action is and for the audience to be able to understand it through characterization and blocking. Many of the actors, particularly Agamemnon and Menelaus, struggled with playing their action. While I worked with them to find an action word, they found it difficult to interpret the direction in performances. The lack of drive also had a negative effect on the show's tempo as it caused certain parts to drag and rushed other moments. The solution to this problem involved rehearsing the actors many times and having them choose different actions until we settled on one which they could portray. I also had to sit down and talk with a few of my actors, so they could understand the importance of playing their action for the timing and staging of the show.

Acting

I was proud of my cast's performance. *Iphigenia 2.0* is an extremely difficult show. Not only does it require intense emotional honesty, it also involves effective physicality, bold choices, and risks. It is also challenging to tell the story of *Iphigenia 2.0* without making it a political message. I wanted to focus on the story of Agamemnon's agonizing decision between his family and the military without making the production political propaganda. For the audience to empathize with all of the characters, we had to portray all perspectives so there was equal sympathy for every part. This led to an effective ending where the audience understands why the military, Iphigenia, and Agamemnon justify and glorify war to such an extreme extent. As a director, I had to encourage my actors to take risks and be vulnerable to create and own their characters instead of having me dictate their parts for them.

The bridesmaids, children, and Old Greek Man were some of the easiest characters to work with. Because the Old Greek Man represented the perspective of the audience, he was not a difficult character to create as he was rarely involved in the action. My only concern with the children was their tendency to steal the focus from the main characters, but after talking to them, they did much better and were very touching in the final riot scene. They were able to support the domestic view and the desire for peace. The bridesmaids were also a pleasure to work with during rehearsals. They were very willing to experiment and take risks while still taking directions. My main concern with their characters was depth. It would have been easy for their characters to turn into shallow stereotypes as their characters view the world naively. However, the three actresses did a beautiful job at fleshing out and defining their characters. Their characters began with unrealistically optimistic views of the world, but their perspectives were

shattered and broken at the end. Although one of them struggled with emotional honesty in her facial expression, she improved greatly throughout the process of the show.

The soldiers required quite a bit of attention. At first, they did not work well together and kept antagonizing each other. After I sat down and talked to them about the importance of supporting one another, they did much better working as a single unit. Physicality was a challenge for the soldiers as most of them had poor posture and made weak physical choices. I constantly had to remind them to stand up straight, put their shoulders back, and keep tension throughout their body. The girls especially struggled with being too feminine. However, by the final production, their physicality was commended by the audience who appreciated their authenticity. The only other challenge with the soldiers was their relationship to their characters. Some of the actors did not empathize with their characters making it difficult for them to play their action. Once we sat down and talked, it was much easier for them to understand their characters. The soldiers believe they are brothers-in-arms and expect Agamemnon to support them as he is their military leader. They justify their demand for Iphigenia's sacrifice through this perspective.

Achilles and Iphigenia were not too challenging to work with. Both were experienced actors who followed direction well and made bold choices naturally. My biggest concern with Achilles was his tendency to be too weak and dark with the character instead of portraying the young, idealistic side of the soldier. However, once we discussed his action, he was able to tap into the fiery idealism of his part. This strengthened the shattering of his perspective of war as a glorious and honorable action in the end of the play. Iphigenia played her action strongly, but her main difficulty was choosing actions that were too obvious and simple. Her character was not complex and deep enough for the audience to sympathize with her. We worked for depth of

character to make her more realistic, so the audience understood her perspective of glorifying war through her own death.

Clytemnestra and Menelaus were the only two in my cast who were ETBU faculty and staff members. While I had to work extensively with Menelaus, I had no trouble with Clytemnestra. As an experienced actress, she made strong, bold choices and took risks. The biggest challenge for her was the choreography for her Argentine tango with Achilles. I had to adjust some of the moves for her because her ankles were unable to support some of the more difficult movements. However, she portrayed Clytemnestra's perspective of family first beautifully with her actions and emotion. Menelaus had not acted for a while and required more work. His physicality was an obstacle as he had many habits that we had to train out of him, so his character would look natural and realistic as a soldier. It was important that he was strong and compelling onstage as his character is confident in his perspective of justifying the war. If his physicality was weak, it would undermine his perspective. The actor also had a southern accent that I had to get him to drop. He also had a difficult time playing his action, so we spent a while experimenting with many action words until we found the right one for him. Although he had many areas we had to work on, Menelaus definitely worked harder than any other actor. Before rehearsals began, he would walk the space and practice his character on his own time.

Agamemnon was one of the most challenging characters to direct. The actor had to portray his character's strength as a military leader while still showing his weakness and indecision in his relationship with his wife and daughter. At first, the actor was only making strong choices which made him appear hard, arrogant, and one-dimensional. Then, he went the other extreme and was purely a weak character that bent to anyone. This made Agamemnon seem cowardly, unsympathetic, and shallow. For a while, I could not understand why the actor

was struggling to grasp the character as he usually did not find acting so difficult. Finally, I set aside a time during one rehearsal to just work one-on-one with him. While we were talking, I discovered that the actor was having a difficult time in his personal life which was affecting his acting. He was struggling with certain issues which were psychologically blocking him from being vulnerable enough to explore his character fully. Once we spoke, he was able to release the stress and issues that were holding him back, and his character improved drastically.

Overall, I was very pleased with the acting. While there were still parts I would have liked to work on and perfect, I was proud with the final production. I saw improvement in all of the actors and was impressed with the maturity in many of them. They were all able to communicate their different perspectives allowing the audience to see how war is justified and glorified through the characterization.

Self-Analysis

It is important for a director to be able to self-critique their own work. While it may be difficult, I believe it is essential in order to grow as an artist and person. Therefore, this last section is devoted to examining my own strengths and weakness as a director.

I think one of my strengths as a director is my ability to cast. My casting philosophy is based on talent. Appearance does hold much weight with me. I have always believed the actor who auditions the best should win the role. This means that they must understand the role as well as have chemistry with the other actors. I believe that casting is a major portion of the final production. If the director gives a part to someone who does not understand the character, the process of developing characterization will be much more difficult. If the cast is correct, the director's job is easier. I look for actors who can capture the essence of their characters, are

willing to take risks, make bold and strong choices, and work well with others. I believe that my casting choices in *Iphigenia 2.0* made the process and final production much easier and stronger.

Over the past few years, I have found that one of my strengths is movement. I excel in shows or pieces with physical movement such as Viewpoints compositions, physical comedies, and postmodern pieces. Because *Iphigenia 2.0* is a postmodern play with an emphasis on physical movement, I believe that my directing style fit very well with this show. I was able to choreograph my own dance numbers which made them support and fit into my show seamlessly. Additionally, it did not overwhelm me to work on sections with constant movement such as the ending riot scene. Although I was definitely open to other people's suggestions, I believe I had natural instincts for the type of movement necessary for this show.

During *Iphigenia 2.0*, I was good at spotting problem areas. I knew which parts needed work and were not reading to the audience. I think I had good instincts for knowing where the issues were, but I did not always know how to fix them. Although I knew the problems existed, I did not have the strategies to remedy them every time. I think with more experience and time I will add to my knowledge of how to deal with problem areas.

One of my weaknesses during *Iphigenia 2.0* was waiting too long to confront an actor. I knew the actor playing Agamemnon was struggling; however, I waited to see if he would pull through by himself. I was not sure what was going on with him, so I gave him time. Unfortunately, I should have pulled him aside earlier. His issues were not actually theatrical as much as they were psychological. He was refusing to be vulnerable with his character and was mentally blocking himself from exploring his part. Waiting to speak to him was a mistake because all he needed was to release his pent-up stress and emotions. If I had talked to him sooner, we would have been able to work on more of his characterization earlier. As I did not

pull him aside until later in the process, I wasted time we could have used later on enriching his character. Because of this, we were not able to develop his character as fully as I would have liked.

Although I was grateful to all of the faculty members who previewed the show and gave their opinions, I struggled with taking in all of their notes. They had varying views which made it difficult for me to discern which ones were the most important to work on. In the beginning, I tried to fix all of their notes. This stretched me too thin and did not give me enough time to focus on the really important areas. For instance, I spent too much time on the soldiers and not enough with Agamemnon and Menelaus. I needed to learn how to juggle all of their suggestions with my own opinions on what were the most important issues.

Another aspect I struggled with was expecting too much of the audience. *Iphigenia 2.0* is a very difficult show for the audience to watch. Additionally, it is one of the most challenging shows we have done at ETBU. This region is not used to postmodern, cutting-edge theatre, so this production was a new experience for many audience members. It also asks the viewers to examine hard-hitting, political issues from many perspectives. Some of my original ideas would have been too much for our patrons. Fortunately, my faculty advisor helped hold me back from asking too much of the audience. In the end, I think we created a strong, impactful performance for a majority of the audience, although there were a few viewers who told me they would not be able to watch multiple performances as it was too intense for them to handle again.

Conclusion

Directing *Iphigenia 2.0* stretched me as a director and person. My time as a director taught me about not only theatre but also about life. I believe in using every show as a learning experience, and *Iphigenia 2.0* certainly grew me.

Research into the play showed me Charles Mee's examination of the justification and glorification of war in this heart-rending story. I illustrated this examination by visually and aurally demonstrating these two perspectives onstage and discovered others in the process. Analyzing each character in depth revealed multiple perspectives from both the domestic and military sides. While some characters perceive the world optimistically, naively, or idealistically, others view life through darker perspectives forcing them to place family, the military, or themselves above everything else. The design concept guided the designers, technical team, and helped the actors portray my thesis through their own unique contributions. I believe *Iphigenia 2.0* embodied the perspectives of justifying and glorifying war I hoped to instill in my production.

Iphigenia 2.0 ends with an examination of every character's viewpoint. Similarly, I hope that every person involved in the production was able to contemplate the issues presented in this show from multiple perspectives. Although there were challenges and difficulties through the process, it was definitely worth the journey to have the privilege to present an artistic visualization of my thesis for people. We had talkback sessions after every show where the audience could stay afterwards and ask questions or give us their opinions on any aspect of the performance. During these talkbacks, we received a lot of positive feedback. The mothers in the audience seemed to connect to Clytemnestra's view of family first and were deeply touched by her grief. However, they and the rest of the audience understood the rest of the perspectives

including the justification and glorification of war. Although they would never agree with the ending of the play, they did empathize with the other perspectives. It is my hope that *Iphigenia 2.0* provoked deep thought and conversation among the audience, crew, cast, and myself that continued beyond the process and performance.

Appendices

Photographs by Magdalena Altnau, Caroline Donica, and Josh Closs

Appendix A

Photographs Featuring the Set Design



Figure A.1 – A Front View of the Set



Figure A.2 – Top Center Section on the Scaffolding



Figure A.3 – Upstage Left Corner of the Set



Figure A.4 – Upstage Right Corner of the Set



Figure A.5 – Set with Wedding Decoration

Appendix B

Photographs Featuring the Costume Design



Figure B.1 – Old Greek Man's costume for Scene 1



Figure B.2 – Agamemnon's Costume for Scene 1



Figure B.3 – Electra, Agamemnon, and Iphigenia’s Costumes for Scene 4



Figure B.4 – The Bridesmaids, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, and Agamemnon’s Costumes for Scene 4



Figure B.5 – The Soldiers’ Costumes for Scene 5



Figure B.6 – The Bridesmaids, Electra, and Iphigenia’s Costumes for Scene 7



Figure B.7 – The Bridesmaids, Achilles, and Clytemnestra’s Costumes for Scene 9



Figure B.8 – Menelaus’ Costume for Scene 12



Figure B.9 – Agamemnon and Iphigenia’s Costumes for Scene 12



Figure B.10 – The Soldiers, the Bridesmaids, Orestes, Electra, Achilles, and Clytemnestra’s Costumes for the Riot



Figure B.11 – Agamemnon and Iphigenia's Costumes for the Riot

Appendix C

Photographs Featuring the Light Design



Figure C.1 – Scene 2



Figure C.2 – Scene 4



Figure C.3 – Scene 5



Figure C.4 – Scene 8



Figure C.5 – Scene 11

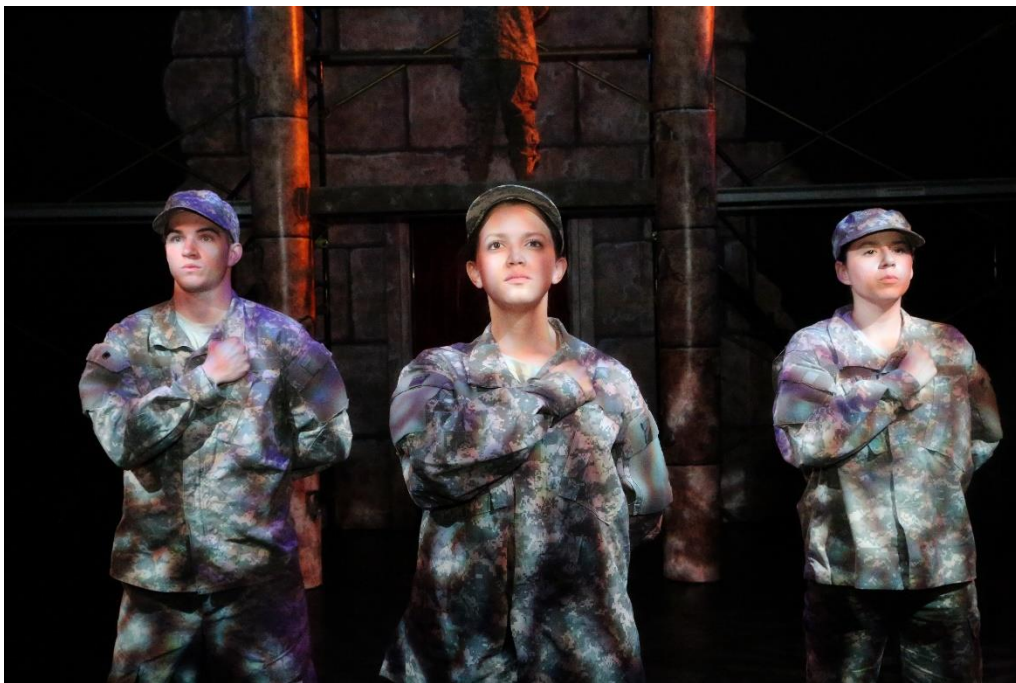


Figure C.6 – Scene 11



Figure C.7 – Scene 12



Figure C.8 – Scene 12



Figure C.9 – Riot



Figure C.10 – Riot

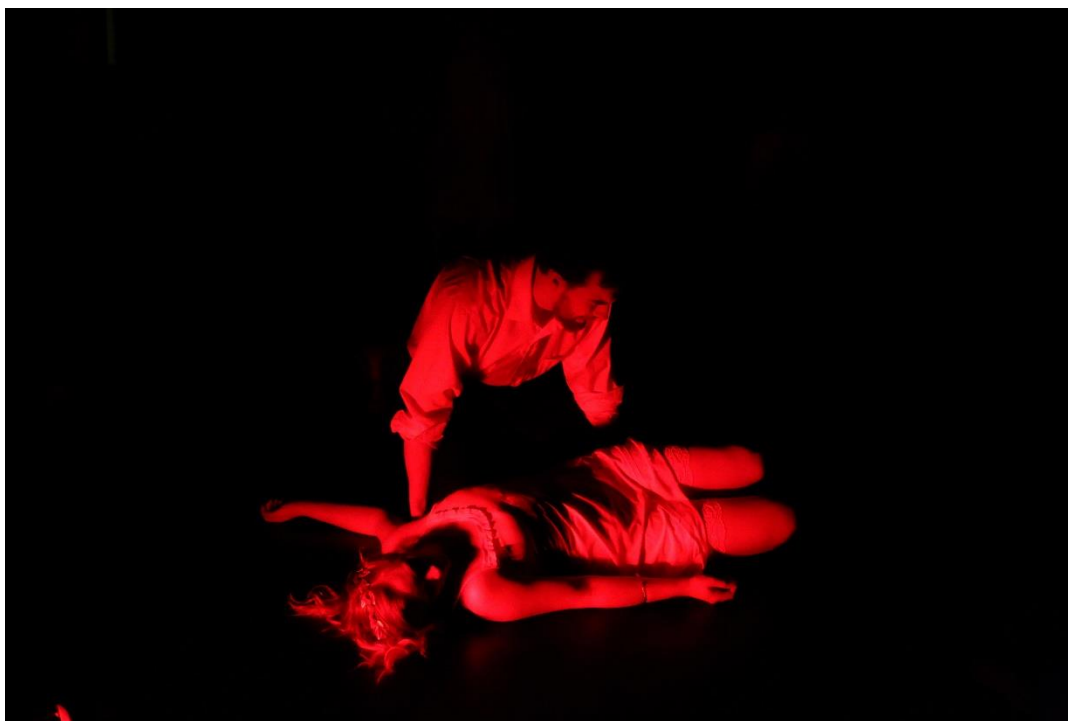


Figure C.11 – Riot

Appendix D

Photographs Featuring the Concept Images



Figure D.1 – Library at Celsus (Overall Concept Image)



Figure D.2 – Greek Pediment (Set)

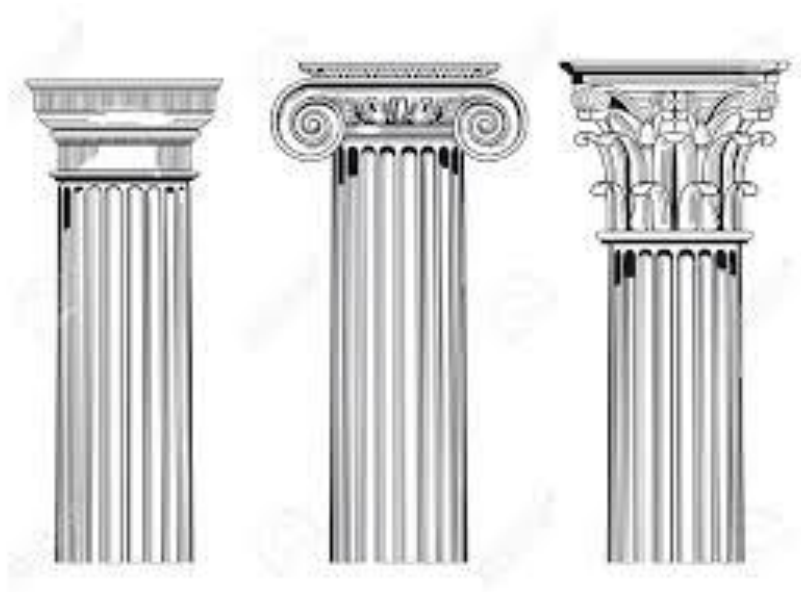


Figure D.3 – Greek Columns (Set/Costumes)



D.4 – Grecian Wedding Dress (Costumes)



D.5– Military Uniforms (Costumes)



Figure D.6 – Warm and Cool Light (Lighting)

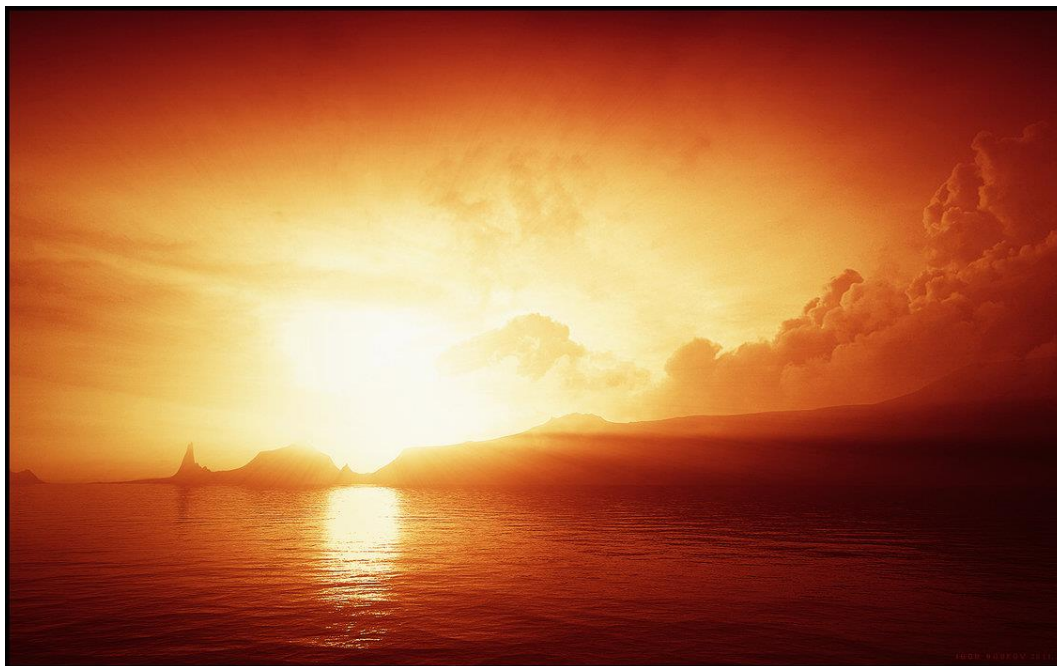


Figure D.7 – Warm Light (Lighting)

Follow the link for more concept images.

http://prezi.com/aupikk5esuy1/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

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