

EURIPIDES' *HECUBA* IN PERFORMANCE
THA 180B
Brandeis University - Spring 2009

Instructors:

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*** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see us at the first meeting of the class.**

Aims and Scope of the Course

This course aims to familiarize students with ancient Greek drama while they will be training for the production of Euripides' *Hecuba* by the Brandeis Theater Company in Spring 2009. Throughout the semester we will work on two levels: a cultural approach to ancient theater combined with an interpretation of the *Hecuba* and a production and performance approach to the play with specific emphasis on techniques designed to accommodate the demands of Greek theater, including Suzuki method, lamentation and singing. Additionally, we will introduce students to the realities of ancient Greek theater in its original context. We will focus on the conventions of composition, acting, and dancing; the role of theater as a public medium in a ritual and social context; and Greek tragedy as a genre that aims to shape emotional life and ideology. Turning to Euripides' *Hecuba*, we will discuss aspects of language and interpretation, especially the ethical questions the play raises regarding the effects of war. We will work on parts of the adaptation for the production script focusing on how we can most effectively translate into our own culture the play's central issues that remain topical. We will also look at the reception of the play since antiquity. At the same time, through direct training in aspects of Suzuki method and other training forms, students will physically, vocally and emotionally have a direct experience of the play that will be translated into a final production with several performances.

We have conceived of this course to bring together students from both Theater Arts and Classical Studies. Our goal is to allow the students from Theater Arts acting in the production of the *Hecuba* to develop an awareness of Greek theater in its original context and to understand better how their own work fits in the long tradition of the reception of Greek drama, while allowing students from Classical Studies to bring their expertise in Greek language, ethics, and culture to the class that will be crucial to how the play is adapted for the contemporary stage. At the same time, students from Classical Studies will participate in a number of the exercises during the actors' training so that they too will become familiar with the realities of theatrical production and performance which are so often emphasized in classes on Greek theater.

Required Text

Euripides, Hecuba trans. by R. Mitchell-Boyask (Focus Publishing)

Schedule

Tu. Jan. 13: Introduction to Greek Theater: the Athenian state and the festival context; myth and tragedy

Fr. Jan. 16: Suzuki training – Stomping and Shakuhatchi

Tu. Jan. 20: Brandeis Monday

Fr. Jan. 23: The actors and dancers of Greek theater: the theatrical space; conventions of acting and dancing on stage; the gender question (for actors and audience)

Tu. Jan.27: Suzuki Training: The Walks

Fri. Jan.30: The chorus in tragedy: performance and identity; choruses in the religion and social education of the city-state

Tu. Feb. 3: Suzuki Training: The Walks

Fr. Feb. 6: Euripides' place in the ancient tradition and his *Hecuba*. Reading of the play focusing on the ethics and politics of pity in war. Lamentation in ancient Athens - lamentation today.

Tu. Feb. 10: Reading of the *Hecuba*.

Fri. Feb. 13: Suzuki Training: Statues

Tu. Feb. 17: No Class - Midterm Recess

Fri. Feb. 20: No Class - Midterm Recess

Tu. Feb. 24: Suzuki Training: The Marches

Fri. Feb. 27: Group work on parts of the adaptation

Tu. March 3: Suzuki Training: The Marches

Fri. March 6: Group work on parts of the adaptation

Tu. March 10: Rehearsal

Fri. March 13: Rehearsal

Tu. March 17: Rehearsal

Fri. March 20: Rehearsal

Tu. March 24: Rehearsal

Fri. March 27: Suzuki Training Review

Tu. March 31: Suzuki Training Review
Fri. April 3: Modern reception of the *Hecuba*

Tu. April 7: Suzuki Training Review
Fri. April 10: No Class - Passover

Tu. April 14: No Class - Passover
Fri. April 17: A comparison with Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

Tu. April 21: Suzuki Training Review
Fri. April 24: Reading of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*

Tu. April 28: Closing discussion

Readings

(excerpts and articles to be distributed in class)

Mossman, J. (1995) *Wild Justice. A Study of Euripides' Hecuba*. Oxford

Du e, C. (2006) *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy*. Austin

Goldhill, S. "Collectivity and Otherness – The Authority of the Tragic Chorus: Response to Gould" 244-256 in Silk, M. S. (ed.) (1996) *Tragedy and the Tragic*. Oxford

Goldhill, S. (2007) *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today*, Chicago

Gould, J. "Tragedy and Collective Experience" 217-243 in Silk, M. S. (ed.) (1996) *Tragedy and the Tragic*. Oxford

Nussbaum, M. C. (1986) *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge

Hawkins, A. H. (1999) "Ethical Tragedy and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*", *CW* 92.4: 337-357

Suzuki, T. (2003) *The Way of Acting: The Theatre Writings of Tadashi Suzuki*. Trans. by T. Rimer. New York